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**Theology, Ritual, and Confessionalization: The Making and Meaning of
Lutheran Baptism in Reformation Germany, 1520-1618**

Michael James Halvorson

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2001

Department of History

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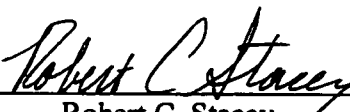


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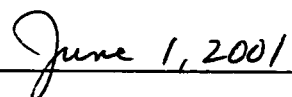


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Abstract

Theology, Ritual, and Confessionalization: The Making and Meaning of Lutheran Baptism in Reformation Germany, 1520-1618

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How should the identity and religious behavior of 16th century Protestants be investigated and understood? This dissertation uses Lutheran baptism as a vehicle for assessing the religious, political, and cultural values of German Lutherans during the Protestant Reformation, from the publication of Martin Luther's *Babylonian Captivity of the Christian Church* (1520) to the beginning of the Thirty Years' War (1618). Baptismal ritual can be fruitfully evaluated as 'rite of passage', using the anthropological language of Arnold van Gennep, and it can be analyzed through the study of theological and liturgical texts dating back to late antiquity and the New Testament. During the Reformation period, Lutheran baptism acted as both a public ritual of incorporation into the Christian Church, and as a 'sociological' sacrament that identified the newly baptized person as a member of the local political community (*Gemeinde*). This dissertation places Lutheran baptism in a theological, political, and cultural context, describing how Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed (Calvinist), and Anabaptist groups interpreted the ritual, and how baptism became an important marker of confessional identity. The geographic

center of this study is Lower Saxony (*Niedersachsen*), a territory in Northern Germany. In this region, baptism was used as an ecclesiastical tool to reform urban and rural areas, and the sacrament contributed to the institutional process of state building known as confessionalization, a development in which religious, social, and political forces worked collectively to integrate and control German cities and territorial states. Baptism was also shaped by, and contributed to, several cultural and intellectual discourses in early modern Germany, including discussions about gender and rank, childbirth, godparentage, witchcraft and magic, exorcism, adiaphora, social discipline, and the display and patronage of powerful German princes. This dissertation is supported by evidence from a variety of sources, including archival records, Lutheran church orders, visitation reports, sermons, letters written by parents and godparents, contemporary printed books and chronicles, and artistic evidence from early modern paintings, fonts, and church architecture. A comprehensive analysis of these elements shows that baptism ranks among the core social and religious institutions of the early modern period.

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Introduction

In a recent essay examining Protestant ritual and confessional identity in Reformation Germany, Bodo Nischan posed a fundamental question about the consequence of religious change in early modern society: “What impact... did the movement spawned by Martin Luther and John Calvin have on people’s religious beliefs and practices? Or, put differently, how did those early, second and third-generation Protestants comprehend and express their historical identity?”¹ Historians have approached these questions in different ways, focusing alternatively on the impact of complex socio-political forces and institutional processes such as confessionalization,² or the roles that theology, doctrine, and scriptural interpretation played in the creation of denominational identity and individual piety.³ Recent scholars have also used the

¹ Bodo Nischan, “Ritual and Protestant Identity in Late Reformation Germany”, in Bruce Gordon, ed., *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, vol. 2 (Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1996), p. 142.

² E. W. Zeeden, *Die Entstehung der Konfessionen, Grundlagen und Formen der Konfessionsbildung* (München/Wien, 1965); Heinz Schilling, *Konfessionskonflikt und Staatsbildung: Eine Fallstudie über das Verhältnis von religiösem und sozialem Wandel in der Frühneuzeit am Beispiel der Grafschaft Lippe* (Gütersloh, 1981); R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe, 1550-1750* (London: Routledge, 1989).

³ Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, vol. 1, trans. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1962); Alister McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1987).

methods of cultural anthropology to investigate the ritual behavior of early modern Europeans.⁴ These studies have examined liturgy and worship materials, popular festivals, social institutions, sex and gender, kinship, witchcraft and magic, popular thought-modes, patronage, and important 'rites of passage' to understand what was characteristic about early modern spirituality and denominational identity.⁵

This dissertation is also an attempt to understand the identity and religious practices of Protestants in Reformation Germany through the analysis of theology, ritual, and culture. The institution that I plan to use for my investigation is Lutheran baptism, one of the two sacraments retained by Martin Luther and the Wittenberg reformers after their break with Rome in the 1520s. During the Reformation period, Lutheran baptism acted as both a public ritual of incorporation into the Christian Church, and as a 'sociological' sacrament that identified the newly baptized person as a member of the

⁴ For an historiographic analysis of this approach and a review of the recent literature, see Bob Scribner, "Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Europe", in *Problems in the Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Europe*, edited by R. Po-Chia Hsia and R. W. Scribner (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997), pp. 11-34; Richard van Dülmen, "Historische Anthropologie in der deutschen Sozialgeschichte", *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 11 (1991), pp. 692-709; Dieter Groh, *Anthropologische Dimensionen der Geschichte* (Frankfurt, 1992).

⁵ Some important examples of this method include Robert Scribner, "Ritual and Popular Religion in Catholic Germany at the Time of the Reformation", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984), pp. 47-77; N. Z. Davis, "Charivari, Honor and Community in Seventeenth-Century Lyon and Geneva", in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle*, ed. J. J. MacAloon (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984), pp. 42-57; Mark R. Forster, *The Counter Reformation in the Villages: Religion and Reform in the Bishopric of Speyer, 1560-1720* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992); Susan Karant-Nunn, *Reformation of Ritual* (London: Routledge, 1997); Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Christine Peters, "Gender, Sacrament, and Ritual: The Making and Meaning of Marriage in Late Medieval and Early Modern England", *Past and Present*, vol. 169 (2000), pp. 63-96; Craig M. Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450-1700* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 2000).

local political community (*Gemeinde*).⁶ For these reasons, baptism was a very controversial sacrament in early modern Germany. Anabaptists rejected the infant baptism of Catholics, Lutherans, and the Reformed (Calvinist) traditions, arguing that only mature, believing adults should be baptized and truly called Christians. The mainstream churches reacted with horror at the Anabaptist position because, as Ernst Troeltsch has described, Anabaptist baptism transferred the allegiance of Christians from the greater Church and community to the sect, which refused to obey local laws, provide sworn testimony in courts, own personal property, exercise dominion over others, or take part in wars.⁷ In addition, infant baptism became a major point of contention for theological reasons, because the Anabaptists argued that adult baptism was an authentic feature of the early Christian Church. The Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed churches stood by infant baptism, but they couldn't agree on how the sacrament should be administered or what it signified in the life of a Christian. From the early years of the Reformation, baptism was a controversial issue for both theological and political reasons.

As a ritual, baptism fits well into what anthropologist Arnold van Gennep has outlined as a classic rite of passage.⁸ The baptismal candidate was brought from one

⁶ *Gemeinde*, *Gemeinschaft*, and *Gesellschaft* are important terms in the historiography of German society and the Reformation. For an orientation to these categories, see Werner J. Cahnman, *Ferdinand Tönnies: A New Evaluation* (Leiden: Brill, 1973); Peter Blickle, *Communal Reformation: The Quest for Salvation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (London: Humanities Press, 1992); David Warren Sabean, *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

⁷ Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, vol. 1, trans. Olive Wyon (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1931, originally published 1911), p. 332.

⁸ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffé (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960, originally published 1908). See also Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 97; Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 21-22.

place (home) to another (church), and through ritual actions and the use of sacred materials was transformed from one state (original sinner) to another (recipient of grace). The ceremony involved rites of separation (exorcism) and rites of aggregation (incorporation into the Body of Christ), and ended a period of liminality (the transitional, ambiguous state of the unbaptized person). Through the ritual the baptismal candidate was transformed into a different being (a new creation), given a name (through the assistance of parents or godparents), and was formally welcomed into Christian society.⁹ The passage was not just symbolic, but involved physical contact with the body of the baptismal candidate, material objects such as the font, oils, and water, and the careful use of visual imagery and church architecture. In late medieval Europe, infants were often baptized just inside the church door, and only afterwards allowed full entrance into the sanctuary where the Christian community assembled. In other words, there was an actual movement from a 'profane' to a 'sacred' space.¹⁰

As a general model for understanding baptism as a transitional rite, van Gennep's ritual process is a useful starting point—early modern Christians did see baptism as a rite of passage that incorporated them into a new social group, whether they were Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, or Anabaptist. There is, however, much more to be learned from a study of early modern baptismal ritual. How did the different confessions celebrate baptism, and what liturgies and symbols did they use to administer the rite? What were

⁹ The un-baptized inhabitants of early modern Europe—Jews, Muslims, and unbaptized heretics—were excluded from the benefits of society precisely *because* they had refused this method of incorporation into the community.

¹⁰ For influential definitions of 'sacred' and 'profane' and their relation to religious ritual, see Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (London: The Free Press, 1915), pp. 52, 62; Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Talcott Parsons (Beacon Press, Boston, 1922), p. 9.

the theological controversies between Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, and Anabaptist groups that made baptism such an important marker of confessional identity? How did baptism contribute to other cultural or theological discourses in early modern Germany? Was baptismal ritual simply imposed on German communities by reforming pastors and city magistrates? Or did German communities find ways to articulate their own spiritual identity through baptism and its related social practices?

This work will provide an answer to these questions by using a wide variety of printed texts and archival materials. Baptism was not a ritual that could be defined narrowly by clerical or magisterial elites. Its real shape was dictated by powerful cultural forces that had considerable momentum before the Reformation began, and which continued to influence the way that baptism was celebrated after the Thirty Years' War. Accordingly, theology and liturgy are important to analyze for an appreciation of how the Protestant rites of baptism were constructed in the early modern period—the way in which theological ideas, texts, and symbols were juxtaposed to produce new 'orthodox' rituals—but the institution of baptism was larger and more dynamic than the ritual of baptism itself. To discover this larger cultural discourse, Christian initiation must be approached through a more comprehensive body of sources that demonstrate how different cultural groups used baptism to express social, political, and religious ideas in their communities. To accomplish this task, I will widen my historical aperture to include social and cultural topics related to baptism, such as the medieval and apostolic roots of the ritual, the political uses of baptism, the drama of early modern delivery rooms, the teaching about baptism in handbooks for pregnant women and midwives, the

use of exorcism at baptism, baptismal artwork, and the construction of baptismal fonts. I will analyze some of the sermons preached at baptisms, parish visitation records that discussed baptismal practices, territorial church orders that regulated baptism, letters between parents and godparents, and the character of baptismal parties. I will consider how the different classes baptized their children—from the poorer people (*Armen*), to the middle class (*Mittelmessigsten*) and rich people (*Riekisten*), to the high-born princes of Germany (*Fürstliche Personen*). Finally, I will relate baptism to social and political currents in Reformation Germany, and the systematic effort to reclaim lost souls during the Catholic Counter Reformation and the so-called “Second Reformation” of Calvinist reformers.

My analysis of baptismal ritual and culture will be contained in two parts and six chapters. In Part One, I will analyze the theology and liturgy of baptism in Reformation Germany, emphasizing the social and political contexts in which Lutheran baptismal reforms took their shape. Chapter 1 describes the cultural relevance of late-medieval baptism to German Christians on the eve of the Reformation, and argues that Martin Luther used the category of adiaphora to defend some of the liturgical symbols in medieval baptism after his 1521-1522 debates with Wittenberg reformer Andreas Karlstadt. Chapter 2 investigates how Luther constructed his first two baptismal liturgies using late-medieval texts, and compares Luther’s mature baptismal theology with the text of his final baptismal liturgy. Chapter 3 explores the development of competing baptismal rites, especially the Reformed (Calvinist) liturgical tradition, and analyzes in detail how baptism contributed to the process of reform in Lower Saxony, the geographic

focus of this dissertation. An important part of Chapter 3 will be a discussion of how baptism was used as an ecclesiastical tool to reform urban areas, and in particular how baptism contributed to the process of ‘confessionalization’, a late Reformation development in which religious, social, and political forces worked collectively to integrate and control German cities and territorial states between the Peace of Augsburg (1555) and the outbreak of the Thirty Years’ War (1618).

In Part Two, I will analyze the cultural meaning of baptism in Reformation Germany. Chapter 4 explores the close relationship between baptism and birthing practices in Lower Saxony, including a discussion of gender, power, and the service of lay baptism known as emergency baptism (*Nothtauffe*). Chapter 5 describes how Lutheran godparents functioned in German communities and how some political and religious authorities used baptismal regulations as a form of social discipline. In this chapter, I suggest how ‘successful’ I think that the Lutheran reformers were in systematically modifying the baptismal practices of 16th century Germans. Chapter 6 explains how Lutheran baptism functioned as a way to express power, orthodoxy, and patronage in the princely courts of northern Germany on the eve of the Thirty Years’ War. A central focus of this analysis will be the baptism of princess Anna Ursula in 1572, who was sponsored by the important Lutheran reformers Martin Chemnitz, Nicholas Selnecker, and Christopher Fisher. In this chapter, I will also discuss how several Protestant princes embellished their baptisms with fashionable neo-classical and Italianate styles, and used processions, banquets, and military tournaments to strengthen diplomatic alliances with Protestant neighbors.

The evidence presented in this work points to a wide range of religious experiences among the peoples of Reformation Germany. Not everyone valued or appreciated baptism. For example, in 1565 a Lutheran woman who had just given birth in Brandenburg announced that she was in no hurry to rush to the font because nothing seemed to happen there. “What difference does it make?”, she told parish inspectors. “It will be just the same child afterwards that it was before.”¹¹ Others were eager for a particular aspect of the baptismal ritual to be observed, such as a butcher in Dresden, who in 1590 walked into Dresden’s Lutheran *Hofkirche* with his daughter and a meat cleaver and announced that he would split the pastor’s head open if he omitted the exorcism rubric from his daughter’s baptismal service.¹² Germans were also not willing to limit the symbolism of baptism to the administration of the sacrament. In Eichstatt, for example, 15th century Catholics lowered a dove into the church through a hole in the roof on Whitsun, which dramatically symbolized the presence of the Holy Spirit at baptism. After the bird descended, the congregation was drenched with buckets of water as a reminder of their baptized status, and the person who was the most soaked was called the *Pfingstvogel* (Easter bird) or *Wasservogel* (water bird) for the coming year.¹³

¹¹ Brandenburg parish visitation quoted in C. Scott Dixon, *The Reformation and Rural Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 167.

¹² Thomas Klein, *Der Kampf um die Zweite Reformation in Kursachsen, 1586-1591* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1962), p. 166; Bodo Nischan, “The Exorcism Controversy and Baptism in the Late Reformation”, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. XVIII, no. 1 (Spring 1987), p. 39.

¹³ O. Rieder, “Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte des Hochstifts Eichstätt”, in *Kollektaneen-Blatt für die Geschichte Bayerns*, i (1886), p. 48.

Martin Luther expressed some of his core theological formulations using baptismal imagery. The sacrament of baptism, Luther argued, forgave sin, created a binding covenant with God, and equipped the Christian with life-long tools for fighting sin, death, and the devil. But these benefits only came when understanding and faith were brought to the sacrament:

Now, the first thing to be considered about baptism is the divine promise, which says: 'He who believes and is baptized will be saved.' [Mark 16:16]. This promise must be set far above all the glitter of works, vows, religious orders, and whatever else man has introduced, for on it all our salvation depends. But we must so consider it as to exercise our faith in it, and have no doubt whatever that, once we have been baptized, we are saved.¹⁴

Luther believed that the divine promise guaranteed the validity of baptism, but that the sacrament became useful and efficacious when Christians received it in faith.

Lutheran church orders (*Kirchenordnungen*) required evangelical communities to use Luther's 1526 *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* for their christenings, and later church orders specified in detail how soon after birth a child should be baptized, the number of godparents that could stand at the font, whether midwives could baptize infants, and the size and scope of the feasts that followed the baptism service. But Lutheran baptismal practices were never completely uniform; they reacted to specific political and cultural circumstances on the ground, and especially the competing rituals of Catholic, Reformed, and Anabaptist groups. In 1527, for example, Autor Sander,

¹⁴ *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vol. 36, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann (St. Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress Press, 1959), pp. 58-59; abbreviated hereafter as LW 36:58-59.

Heinrich Lampe, and Johan Oldendorp used baptismal rituals to introduce evangelical reforms in Braunschweig, despite the protests of the Braunschweig city council and Duke Henry of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel.¹⁵ In 1566, Thomas Guntherus, a Lutheran pastor in Glauchau, argued that infants who died in the womb could be considered baptized by the blood of Jesus if the delivering mother was godly and surrounded by a pious midwife and family.¹⁶ In both contexts, baptism was introduced as an important ritual and pastoral tool, but the way that it was administered depended on cultural, political, and medical conditions, not fixed theological rules.

Germans reacted in different ways to the promises of baptism—a few rejected the dominant form of baptism, and were pressed to the fringes of their communities; some saw baptism primarily as a social sacrament, which reaffirmed familial, political, and cultural connections; others sought to exploit the rich spiritual imagery of the ritual, using baptism as a metaphor for salvation, Christian *communitas*, and an enduring relationship with God through Jesus Christ. However these subjective responses to baptism may ultimately be assessed, it is clear that baptism was a ritual of major importance to Catholics and Protestants in Reformation Germany. The arguments about baptism—how the sacrament was to be administered and what it meant for individuals and communities—reflected the conflicts and tensions that many felt over the introduction of

¹⁵ Philip Julius Rhetmeyer, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Incytae Urbis Brunsvigae, Pars III / Oder: Der berühmten stadt Braunschweig Kirken-Historie / Dritter Theil / Darrin Die Reformations-Historie...* (Braunschweig, 1710), p. 30.

¹⁶ Thomas Guntherus, *Ein trostbüchlein für die Schwangeren und geberenden Weiber, wie sich dise fuer, inn und nach der Geburt, mit Betten, Dancken, und und andern, christlich verhalten sollen* (Frankfurt: Sigmund Feirabend & Simon Hueter, 1566), f. A2; HAB A: 1000.1 Theol. (2).

religious change in their society. The fact that baptism was so controversial means that the ritual and its related discourses should be considered among the core social and religious institutions of the early modern period.

Chapter 1

A Controversy Over Symbols: Late-Medieval Baptism and the Wittenberg Movement, 1521-1522

On May 4th, 1521, Martin Luther was taken into hiding for his own safety at Wartburg castle near the Rhine river in Electoral Saxony. Luther's famous refusal to recant his evangelical doctrines before Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms produced confusion and then resolve among Charles V and his councilors—the Wittenberg reformer was to be excommunicated and pronounced a heretic, his works burned and his theology outlawed; any who aided him after the expiration of his safe-conduct would also be guilty of treason. Luther's public protest against traditional religion had not yet reached its fourth year, and the coming months of seclusion would prove crucial for the Wittenberg Movement. Although the prolonged absence allowed Luther a valuable period of study and literary production (he was able to complete several theological treatises and a definitive translation of the German New Testament), the interruption also left Wittenberg without a clear leader at a crucial period in the development of evangelical theology and practice.¹

In Wittenberg, Philip Melancthon, Gabriel Zwilling, and Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt emerged as the influential voices of the Wittenberg Movement, fighting off

¹ The acute sense of isolation was felt on both sides—Luther's letters from the Wartburg often closed with the epitaph "from the wilderness" (using either the German *Wüstung* or the Latin *eremo*). The movement was temporarily without a leader.

attacks from conservative theologians and corresponding periodically with the distant Luther. By December, 1521, the situation grew tense; one group of reformers pressed for more rapid change, another urged caution. Into the void stepped Karlstadt, who supported a platform of accelerated reform and used his influence to begin a systematic attack on the traditional symbols and rites of Catholic worship. On Christmas, 1521, Karlstadt celebrated the first public, evangelical mass in Wittenberg (using German for the words of institution), and in January he published an influential treatise that attacked the use of images and vestments in worship.² Although Karlstadt did not publicly call for the iconoclastic riots that broke out in the coming weeks, his published attacks against idolatry were important contributing factors, and he worked to suppress the use of statues, vestments, and ceremonial objects in the early months of 1522 and throughout his career.³ Elector Frederick the Wise of Saxony reacted strongly against these new innovations, and especially against the riots that created destruction and disorder in Wittenberg. But Andreas Karlstadt's rebellion left many unanswered questions. Would Karlstadt emerge as the new, permanent leader of the Wittenberg Movement? Would evangelical worship distinguish itself from Catholic worship along the lines that Karlstadt had sketched in early 1522? How would Luther respond to this challenge to his authority, theology, and understanding of Christian ritual?

The emergence of radical, iconoclastic tendencies in early Lutheranism has long fascinated historians, because it highlights the first major split in the evangelical

² Andreas Karlstadt, *Von abtuhung der Bylder...* (Wittenberg, 1522). Reprinted by Hans Lietzmann, ed., *Andreas Karlstadt: Von Abtuhung der Bilder...*, *Kleine Texte für theologische und philologische Vorlesungen und Übungen*, no. 74 (Bonn: A. Marcus & E. Weber, 1911).

³ Ronald J. Sider, ed., *Karlstadt's Battle with Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 16, 149.

movement and identifies for the first time a clear debate among Protestants over the nature of symbols in evangelical worship.⁴ First with baptism, and later with holy communion, Protestants debated a question that had been also been carefully considered in the later Middle Ages: how and to what extent can material objects function as the bearers of divine grace in the sacraments?⁵ Karlstadt stated his opinion about the role of external symbols in worship through pamphlets such as *On Holy Water and Sacred Salt* (1520) and *On the Abolition of Images* (1522), but it was not until *On the Priesthood and Sacrifice of Christ* (1523) that he fully broke with Luther over the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. Luther anticipated some of these concerns with his influential treatise *The Babylonian Captivity of the Christian Church* (1520), but chose not to revise evangelical liturgies until the unraveling situation in Wittenberg forced him to do so.

Luther was a creative and original theologian, especially in his theology of the sacraments, but his role as a liturgical reformer has often escaped attention. In part, this oversight may be explained by an unstated preference among theologians and historians for the theology of Luther over his interest in ritual and pastoral care. (This conviction—the idea that theology was at the core of the split between Catholics and Protestants—is a

⁴ For materials related to Karlstadt and the Wittenberg Movement, see Ernst Freys and Hermann Barge, *Verzeichnis der gedruckten Schriften des Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt* (1903; reprint Nieuwkoop, 1965); Calvin Augustine Pater, *Karlstadt as the Father of the Baptist Movements* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984; reprint Lewiston, NY, 1993); James S. Preus, *Karlstadt's "Ordinaciones" and Luther's Liberty: A Study of the Wittenberg Movement, 1521-22* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974); Ronald J. Sider, *Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974); Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 54-73; George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd Edition (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 1992); Mark Edwards, *Luther and the False Brethren* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975).

⁵ For a late-medieval discussion of these issues as applied to the Eucharist, see Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 12-82.

view that goes back to the 16th century itself.) Lutheran preaching about the sacraments has also received more attention than the performance of Lutheran rites and the social practices surrounding them. Luther's role as a liturgist may have been neglected because he was neither radical nor particularly innovative in his approach to the sacraments; Luther generally chose a conservative route towards liturgical reform, rarely embedding more than a sample of his rich theology in the occasional rites and services he created. For example, Luther did not formulate new rites for baptism and communion at all, but recast traditional Catholic ritual with an editorial interest in paring down accumulations he saw as erroneous, not introducing novelty for its own sake.⁶ Luther's foreword to the 1523 *Order of Baptism* provides a clear example of this attitude toward reform: "For the time being I did not want to make any marked changes in the order of baptism. But I would not mind if it could be improved."⁷

A view of Luther as a conservative liturgist would be no more than a footnote in the development of Protestant worship, except that many of the rituals he formulated in the early years of the Reformation were carefully preserved and distributed as statements of orthodoxy and orthopraxy as the Reformation progressed. For example, Luther's *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* (1526), the subject of Chapter 2, moved quickly from Luther's pen to achieve canonical status in many of the Lutheran towns and territories in Germany and Northern Europe. Indeed, when Lutheran reformers entered new communities, they often introduced Luther's vernacular rite of baptism as a sign that a city was beginning its conversion to evangelical beliefs, a position that provoked

⁶ For an introduction to Luther's German Mass, see LW 53:17.

⁷ LW 53:103.

excitement but sometimes controversy and unrest too. The widespread circulation of Luther's *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* indicates that it functioned both as a vehicle of orthodoxy and as a useful tool in the institutionalization of Lutheran reforms. The rite was embedded in the majority of territorial church orders (*Kirchenordnungen*)⁸ and in manuals for pastoral care such as the *Small Catechism* (1529), which (following Luther's directive) included a copy of the baptismal service in the appendixes of many editions.⁹ This impressive circulation insured that as Lutheran ecclesiastical formulas spread throughout Europe, a standard baptismal service went with them, making the *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* not only the most visible occasional service of the Reformation, but also a fundamental teaching mechanism for the laity and the clergy about the meaning of Lutheran baptism. This reform of baptismal ritual constitutes an important topic for social and religious historians, because of its centrality to the spread of Lutheran practices throughout Germany and Northern Europe. Baptism is also an important touchstone for historians interested in the so-called "confessional" Reformation of the second half of the 16th century, the period when Lutheran, Catholic, and Reformed (Calvinist) princes worked with religious leaders to institutionalize doctrinal ideas about worship, orthodoxy, and social discipline in their communities.

Chapters 1 and 2 will contribute to this investigation by exploring Luther's vision of baptism in detail. They will proceed by asking several questions about Luther's understanding of Christian worship, and the controversy surrounding baptism and its

⁸ It was adopted by Osiander, the chief author of the Brandenburg-Nuremberg *Kirchenordnungen* of 1533, and by the church orders in Gottingen (1530), Northeim (1539), Halle (1541), Schleswig-Holstein (1542), Pomerania (1542), Schweinfurt (1543), Ritzebüttel (1544), Mecklenberg (1552), and Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (1569).

⁹ See LW 53:106.

attendant symbols in Wittenberg. To what extent did Luther accept or reject Catholic ideas about baptism, and how did aggressive reformers like Andreas Karlstadt influence Luther's use of symbols in the baptism ritual? What spiritual gifts did Luther think baptism provided? Should the sacrament be administered to infants or adults? Would evangelical worship be endangered if traditional symbols such as salt, chrism, christening gowns, and candles were used in the ceremony? What role should baptismal sponsors (godparents) play in the rite? Finally, what was the relationship between Luther's final rite of baptism and his mature theology of baptism? The answers to these questions are important not only for a clear understanding of the origins of Luther's baptismal liturgy, but they will also provide an important historical context for the chapters in Part 2 of this book, which investigate the cultural and institutional implications of Lutheran baptism in Germany during the Reformation period.

Although historiographical attention has focused on the Eucharistic controversies of the 1520s, it is important to appreciate that the contemporary struggles over baptism were equally dramatic. Baptism was the first Lutheran rite translated into the vernacular by Luther, and the prolonged controversy over adult baptism led to great division among Protestant groups and significant disputes among theologians. Baptism was a rite of sociological formation—it alone defined membership in the Christian community, a position that Jews, Turks, heretics, and other “non-conformists” were without as a matter of course. Luther's debate with Karlstadt about baptism and the liturgy was therefore just the first of many confessional conflicts in Reformation Germany.

Debating the Role of Symbols in Evangelical Worship

When Luther returned to Wittenberg in March 1522, he strongly criticized Karlstadt's iconoclastic excesses and worked to re-assert himself as the leader of the evangelical movement he had founded. Luther consulted with theologians at the University of Wittenberg (especially Melancthon) and the town magistrates. His private interaction with Karlstadt was apparently limited, however. Although Luther was a younger colleague of Karlstadt's at the University of Wittenberg and a valued collaborator, the two men were not close friends, and their quarrel unfolded in public. Luther chose to oppose Karlstadt directly from the pulpit. Over a period of eight days (March 9-16, 1522), Luther preached the 'Invocavit' sermons in Wittenberg, which argued against Karlstadt's liturgical innovations and outlined Luther's own understanding of Christian worship. Although he announced general agreement with Karlstadt on problems related to the Eucharist, confession, and the use of images in worship, he strongly disagreed with Karlstadt's overly aggressive techniques.¹⁰

Not only were Karlstadt's tactics abrupt, offensive to slower converts, and contemptuous of civil authority, Karlstadt's directives appeared to Luther as an orientation towards works that gave to the destruction of idols an importance in Christian religiosity that no external actions should have. Luther recalled these abuses in an open letter against Karlstadt to the evangelical community in Strasbourg: "I will not endure any one inciting and driving Christians to works of this kind [iconoclasm], as if one

¹⁰ Although Luther had not been present for Karlstadt's preaching in December and January, a copy of Karlstadt's December 25, 1521 sermon was apparently available in Wittenberg, as was Karlstadt's early 1522 pamphlet (*Von Abtuhung der Bilder*).

cannot be a Christian without their performance.”¹¹ As Carlos Eire has observed, Luther’s rejection of Karlstadt’s iconoclasm brought forth a new argument in what had become a long debate about the use of external symbols in worship.¹² Luther charged that by making the destruction of religious symbols a necessity (both in worship and in the liturgy), Karlstadt was recommending iconoclasm as a religious work that brought spiritual benefits. Luther thus lumped Karlstadt with his Catholic adversaries as proponents of works-righteousness, a theme he had spent considerable time attacking. This polemically effective move contributed significantly to Karlstadt’s vilification in Wittenberg, Strasbourg, and other centers of evangelism.

Luther’s attack also introduced the category of adiaphora into the controversy. Adiaphora were the indifferent matters (*Mitteldinge* or *indifferentia*) that medieval theologians suggested Christians could retain or discard without sin.¹³ Luther taught that the adiaphora of Catholic ceremonies and symbols could be retained as long as God did not specifically forbid them in scripture. For Luther, iconoclasm was not such an indifferent matter, because radicals were *requiring* the destruction of church property in their preaching. In short, iconoclasm became another obvious case of works righteousness. However, during the process of conversion Luther thought that traditional ceremonies and symbols could still be used to encourage the faith of so-called ‘weaker neighbors’ or ‘tender consciences’. Here Luther is using another code word—by weaker

¹¹ Martin Luther, *Letter to the Christians at Strassburg in Opposition to the Fanatic Spirit* (1524), trans. Conrad Bergendoff, in LW 40:69.

¹² Eire, *War Against the Idols*, p. 69.

¹³ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of adiaphora in the confessional controversies of the late Reformation period.

neighbors he meant Catholics, of course—Catholics in the community who were slow or unwilling to accept evangelical ideas or rituals. Such a term implied that Catholics remained faithful not because of strength or conviction, but due to weakness (*infirmus*), a character flaw that could be overcome with patient preaching and pastoral care.¹⁴ To emphasize the Christian obligation reformers had to these people, Luther used St. Paul:

And here, dear friends, one must not insist upon his rights, but must see what may be useful and helpful to his brother, as Paul says, *Omnia mihi licent, sed non omnia expediunt*, ‘All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful’ [I Cor. 6:12]. For we are not all equally strong in faith, some of you have a stronger faith than I. Therefore we must not look upon ourselves, or our strength, or our prestige, but upon our neighbor...¹⁵

Luther’s attack on Karlstadt’s theology had important liturgical implications. An analysis of Luther’s polemical writings from 1522 shows that metaphysical considerations about the relationship between the spiritual and the material were not at the core of his evangelical reforms. Although Luther had rejected transubstantiation in 1520,¹⁶ the reformer’s theology continued to acknowledge the spiritual value of material objects in worship, including the close relationship between matter and spirit in the sacraments. Luther’s ‘*Invocavit*’ sermons continued this theme by emphasizing the use of material objects in worship as a statement of Christian freedom. In opposition to

¹⁴ “*Que ubi liberate fuerint, possint tandem illis uti propter infirmos alios, qui adhuc sunt illis inuoluti, tum non uti, ubi firmi fuerint.*” (When [the consciences] have been freed, then of course people can use all these things for the sake of the weak who are still entangled in them; when the weak have become firm, then these things may be discontinued.) Luther’s letter to Nicholas Hausmann, March 15, 1522; WA Briefwechsel 2:474, LW 51:402.

¹⁵ First *Invocavit* sermon, March 9, 1522; LW 51:72.

¹⁶ In *The Babylonian Captivity of the Christian Church*, LW 36:28-35. Transubstantiation was the technical term developed by twelfth-century theologians in the western Church to explain the process by which simple bread and wine changed into the true body and blood of Christ during the Eucharistic ritual. The transformation was metaphysical and complete; while the *accidents* or material properties of the bread and wine remained, the *substance* or inner reality of the elements became the actual body and blood of Christ.

Luther, Karlstadt's Eucharistic reforms reflected a strong distaste for images, especially when associated with sacramental ritual. When Karlstadt celebrated the first public evangelical mass in Wittenberg, he worked to strip away the accumulated symbolism of the traditional Catholic mass.¹⁷ The moment Karlstadt had chosen for the revised ritual was Christmas Day, 1521, and advance notice of the historic service created a huge crowd.¹⁸ Karlstadt omitted the elevation of the bread and wine, removed all sacrificial references from the liturgy, and shouted in German the words of institution, rather than whispering the traditional *Hoc est corpus meum* ("This is my body") rubric in Latin. During the service, Karlstadt explained the meaning behind the changes in a special sermon and wore plain clothing instead of priestly garments. He also distributed communion in both types (bread and wine), giving it to all who came forward, even those who had not fasted or made a confession.¹⁹ One communicant was apparently so shocked to receive the host in his bare hands from Karlstadt (rather than having the bread placed directly in his mouth) that he dropped the specie and was too terror-stricken to pick it up (though Karlstadt did).²⁰

According to Calvin Pater, Karlstadt began to diverge from Luther in his understanding of the sacraments as early as the years 1517-1519, when Karlstadt defended Luther's early Reformation theology and began to systematize his own ideas

¹⁷ The Augustinian Gabriel Zwilling had also experimented with a vernacular, evangelical mass in the Autumn of 1521, but his services were held privately.

¹⁸ Sider, *Karlstadt's Battle with Luther*, p. 5.

¹⁹ Pater, *Karlstadt as the Father of the Baptist Movements*, p. 4.

²⁰ Sider, *Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt*, p. 160.

about matter and spirit.²¹ Karlstadt (like Luther) derived much of his theology of baptism from a close reading of St. Augustine, including the idea that infants should be baptized in order to be cleansed of original sin. Yet Karlstadt's treatise *13 Conclusions*, published against Johann Eck, suggested two ways that children might be saved by baptism. The first was traditional Christian baptism with water, which 'justified' the child and removed original sin. The second way (highlighted since early Christian martyrdoms, but rarely emphasized in the Middle Ages), was the so-called 'blood baptism', an internal justification accomplished directly by God that required no external symbol, liturgy, or priestly administration.²² The novelty of Karlstadt's treatise was not that he introduced blood baptism as a sacramental possibility—blood baptism was associated with martyrdom and had been posited since the time of the Church Fathers²³—but rather, Karlstadt's suggestion that water baptism might not be necessary for salvation at all, because internal regeneration was all that mattered. But if the external symbol of water was not necessary in baptism, what other external symbols might Christians profitably discard? What implications might a theology of internal, spiritual regeneration hold for the other sacraments and rituals of the Christian church?²⁴

Karlstadt's attacks on the traditional sacraments were clearly influenced by Luther's early writings and their collaboration against Catholic theologian Johann Eck.

²¹ See Chapter 4 in Pater, *Karlstadt as the Father of the Baptism Movement*, pp. 92-114. Pater sees Karlstadt's theology of baptism as the forerunner of modern Baptist thought.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 95.

²³ Thomas Aquinas spoke of this waterless regeneration occasionally as spirit-baptism, a term that Karlstadt also used.

²⁴ Karlstadt attacked penance as well in 1518, arguing that confession was the work God's splendor, not man's. The absolution of the priest was but a transient verbal sign, while the inner repentance wrought by God was everlasting.

Karlstadt's conversion in Wittenberg from scholasticism to the evangelical movement had begun with Luther's suggestion that he read Augustine closely and help in defending the *95 Theses*. Karlstadt was also influenced by Desiderius Erasmus, who emphasized spiritual regeneration and criticized those who esteemed a saint's relics more than their books.²⁵ But Karlstadt also developed his own independent theological views of which the most fundamental was the internal regeneration (*ding* or *res*) faith accomplished, and not the external manifestation or ritual sign (*zeichen* or *signum*).²⁶ This position was presented in Karlstadt's pamphlet *Of Holy Water and Salt* (1520), which proposed that material elements were completely unable to convey spiritual benefits, and stood merely as 'signs' that might lead a worshiper to a higher spiritual reality. The analogy that Karlstadt used was that the material or ritual gesture was like a hand painted on a road sign, which pointed the way to the traveler's destination.²⁷ Anticipating his later rejection of symbolic 'material' elements in the mass, Karlstadt asked that Christians stop using holy water and salt as "unreasoning beasts" and put their trust in God's Word, not the empty promises (and objects) of men.

Karlstadt's attack on holy water was not an outright attack on baptism, although he did emphasize it was faith that made baptism, not the right administration of the sacrament by an ordained clergyman (what medieval schoolmen called an *ex opere operato* understanding of the sacrament's efficacy). Making reference to Mark 16:16,

²⁵ Sider, *Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt*, p. 149.

²⁶ "Karlstadt's critique of the religious externalism of his day helped determine the precise form of his attack on religious praxis." Sider, *Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt*, p. 149.

²⁷ "Ausserlich wasser is nur zu eynem zeychen wie ein hand an eynem stock den weg zuweysen geben und angericht ist." (Outwardly water is only a sign like a hand on a walking cane that shows the correct way to go.) Andreas Carlstadt, *Von Gewychtem Wasser und Saltz* (Wittenberg, 1520).

Karlstadt concluded that only faith determined whether the water of baptism signified more than the water of a bath:

But if you don't believe what water means and shows, you don't obtain salvation: Mark 16:16. And such water is nothing else or more than bath water, for water without faith cannot affect the soul.²⁸

Karlstadt continued to support the idea of infant baptism for several years after the publication of *Of Holy Water and Salt* (he had not yet constructed a baptismal liturgy that specifically rejected physical signs), but after 1520 his writing always stressed the importance of faith in the sacrament. Technically, Karlstadt agreed with Luther that baptismal faith might be best conceived of as an alien faith (*fides aliena*) that was created either directly by God in the infant or through the intercessions of believing godparents at the font. As I will explain in Chapter 2, Luther also emphasized baptismal faith at baptism, but he refused to reject what he saw as God's chosen external signs. Karlstadt's unique theology of the sacraments led to a confrontation with Luther that had a major impact on the development of Lutheran ritual.

Luther's 'Invocavit' sermons restored traditional worship to Wittenberg in the spring of 1522 and solidified Luther's position as the leader of the evangelical movement in Germany. Karlstadt's influence went into steep decline, although he continued to preach in and around Wittenberg, advocating the removal of images from churches and the baptism of believing adults rather than infants. In 1523, Luther published a pamphlet entitled *Concerning the Order of Public Worship*, outlining his proposals for liturgical

²⁸ "Dan so du nit glaubst was durch wasser bedeut und angetzeyget ist, so wurstu nit selig. Marci ultimo. Und ist wasser nit anders oder meher dan wasser, und ist gar nicht besser dan des baders wasser, dan wasser sonder glauben magk die seel nit anruren.", Ibid., A3v.

reform.²⁹ Citing the need for moderation and a pastoral concern for ‘weaker neighbors’, Luther recommended a slower, gradualist reform of traditional liturgies and rituals. In 1523, he began this task personally with a rite of baptism translated from Latin to the vernacular German³⁰ and a revised Latin mass called *Formula Missae et Communionis pro Ecclesia Vuittembergensi*.³¹ From his new church in Orlamünde, Karlstadt responded to Luther’s cautious liturgical revisions by issuing a pamphlet entitled *Whether One Should Proceed Slowly* (1524). While Luther called for tactical delay in the reformation of ritual for the sake of Catholics who had not yet converted to evangelism, Karlstadt issued the radical demand that every local congregation should implement changes in worship immediately without regard to who might be offended. The scriptural justification for Christians to move quickly was, for Karlstadt, contained in the Old Testament command to the Israelites to burn pagan images and idols by fire:

A special clause [in Deuteronomy 7:25] follows which refers to the removal of offenses and it reads thus: “You shall burn images of their gods with fire...” It is not written that one should proceed slowly, as [Luther] has asserted above. Rather, you should ruin them immediately. It is written still more clearly earlier in the above-mentioned seventh chapter, namely, “You shall tear down their altars, destroy their pillars, chop down their leafy trees, and burn their idols.” When? Right away...³²

Karlstadt’s call to arms was rejected by ‘mainstream’ Lutherans, but his theology continued to influence more radical groups within German and Swiss Protestantism. Luther’s own ideas about worship were developed in opposition to those of Karlstadt, and

²⁹ LW 53:11-14.

³⁰ LW 53:95-103.

³¹ LW 53:19-40.

³² Andreas Karlstadt, “Whether One Should Proceed Slowly” (Basil, 1524), in Michael G. Baylor, ed., *The Radical Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 70.

he continued to write against him throughout the 1520s. On some of these occasions, Luther actively defended the importance of external symbols and the traditional shape of baptism. The danger he saw in Karlstadt's denigration of the external was summarized in *Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Matter of Images* (1525):

With all his [Karlstadt's] mouthing of the words, 'Spirit, Spirit, Spirit,' he tears down the bridge, the path, the way, the ladder, and all the means by which the Spirit might come to you. Instead of the outward order of God in the material sign of baptism and the oral proclamation of the Word of God he wants to teach you, not how the Spirit comes to you but how you come to the Spirit.³³

In this passage, Luther attacked Karlstadt's emphasis on the Spirit and in particular a mystical meditation that approached God without respecting God's chosen signs and promises. He identified these physical symbols as the bridge, path, way, or ladder that the Holy Spirit used to meet people in the sacraments. In particular, the physical sign of water at baptism was a symbol that, along with the Word of God, should never be neglected at baptism.

When weighing the relative importance of the sacraments in the split between Karlstadt and Luther, historians should be careful not to neglect the role that baptismal theology and ritual played in the formation of early evangelical ideas. As much as communion, baptism served to identify the different emphases of the Wittenberg theologians and became an important component in their overall theology. Karlstadt's original and enduring contribution to Reformation theology was a rejection of "concreteness" as a medium of divine expression; as a liturgist he would insist upon an infinite distance between the physical world of matter and the metaphysical world of the

³³ LW 40:147.

spirit. This led Karlstadt to a rejection of infant baptism and his eventual denial of Christ's 'real presence' in the Eucharist. The Wittenberg debates also focused Luther's attention on the importance of symbols and signs in the baptismal liturgy, and he soon revised medieval baptism so that the ritual reflected some of his important theological ideas. Before Luther's textual revisions to baptism are analyzed in Chapter 2, however, it is important to investigate the historical development of Catholic baptism in the Middle Ages. How significant were baptismal symbols in the lives of earlier Christian communities?

Baptism in the Middle Ages

Baptism was the fundamental rite of Christian initiation in Europe as elsewhere on the eve of the Protestant Reformation, and it reflected the complexity of a sacrament that was at the core of historic Christianity. John the Baptist introduced baptism as a sign of repentance in the New Testament gospels, and Jesus established the rite by his own baptism in the Jordan river³⁴ and by the commandment that Christians preach the Good News and baptize all nations.³⁵ The Book of Acts and several New Testament epistles record the disciples using baptism to initiate new Christians,³⁶ and baptism was a regular feature of Paul's theology in letters such as Romans, I Corinthians, Colossians, and Galatians. Yet although baptism was clearly an important initiation ceremony among the apostles and early Christians in the 1st and 2nd centuries, specific historical information

³⁴ Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:31-34.

³⁵ Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16.

³⁶ For example, Acts 2:41; Acts 8:12-13, 36-38; Acts 16:15, 33; 1Cor 1:13-17; Gal 3:27.

about the precise baptismal liturgy or liturgies used for initiation in these diverse communities is almost totally unavailable. This lack of liturgical models for baptism has created considerable debate among Christian groups throughout history, from the Pelagian controversies of the 5th century, to the debate about adult baptism during the Protestant Reformation, to modern concerns about conversion and the role of baptism in Christian life.

The earliest western baptismal liturgy that can be dated with some precision is established in *The Apostolic Tradition* (c. 200), a compendium of liturgical materials and instructions composed by the controversial Roman presbyter Hippolytus (170?-253).³⁷ Hippolytus circulated his treatise in the early decades of the third century to suppress recent ceremonial innovations, and the scholarly consensus is that the models and forms he describes have their basis in rites from the time of Roman bishop Victor I (189-198)—a generation after Justin.³⁸ In Hippolytus' baptismal liturgy, which provides instructions for the washing and anointing of both children and adults, Gregory Dix sees general liturgical agreement with the washing of first century Jewish proselytes (converts to Judaism), indicating a strong connection between early Christian baptism and Palestinian Judaism.³⁹ In particular, Jewish ritual purification by total immersion in water (*tevilah*) was in active use during the Second Temple period, and required flowing water or a

³⁷ For the text of the *Apostolic Tradition* and a general introduction, see Gregory Dix and Henry Chadwick, eds., *The Treatise of the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome* (London: Alban Press, 1991).

³⁸ Thomas M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), p. 43.

³⁹ Dix, *Apostolic Tradition*, p. xl. See also "Baptism" in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 583-594.

special ritual bath (*miqveh*) for ablution ceremonies, including those for new converts.⁴⁰ These conclusions reinforce the idea that early Christians saw baptism as a continuation of Jewish ceremonial practices, although from the earliest days they infused the rite with their own meanings. Most significantly, Christians reserved baptismal washing for conversion and initiation only; the rite was not repeated or used for other ceremonial cleansings.

In the early Church, the order of baptism was typically administered to adult Christian converts after a period of education and instruction, and the rites varied based on their geographical and institutional settings.⁴¹ Baptismal candidates were known as neophytes or catechumens, and they were prepared liturgically for baptism through a process of teaching (catechesis), anointing, prayer, blessing (including the laying on of hands), and a formal examination called the *scrutinio* that featured several rites of purification or exorcism. The baptism rubric of Hippolytus culminated in a water baptism “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” at the Paschal Vigil (Holy Saturday) during Holy Week, and indicated a preference for ‘flowing’ or ‘living’ water.⁴² The earliest Christian baptisms were generally administered in a stream, river, or the sea. Separate fonts or baptisteries for Christian baptism (typical architectural features in the medieval west) did not emerge until the third century.⁴³

⁴⁰ See “Ablution” and “Miqveh” in R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁴¹ In the time of Hippolytus, the period of catechesis could be as long as three years. For a discussion of the regional differences in Egypt, North Africa, Syria, and Italy, see Finn, *Early Christian Baptism*.

⁴² For the complete baptism ritual of Hippolytus, see Dix, *Apostolic Tradition*, pp. 33-38.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 33 fn.

Between the baptismal liturgy of Hippolytus and the seventh century liturgical compendium known as the *Gelasian Sacramentary*, there were textual modifications to the rite, as well as theological inquiries into the meaning of baptism. This is not the place to analyze all of these developments, but there is one point of controversy that created a potent legacy for the Protestant reformers: the debate about the nature of infant baptism. It has often been assumed by early modern historians that adult baptism was the norm in the early centuries of Christianity, and that the appeal of Anabaptists to restore adult baptism in the sixteenth century rested on an historic understanding of early Christianity.⁴⁴ Although baptismal candidates were typically adults in the early Christian centuries, and theologians did occasionally ask parents to delay the baptism of their children, many scholars now agree that infant baptism was a regular feature of pastoral care in the apostolic age and immediately thereafter.⁴⁵ In terms of liturgical development, then, children and infants were not ‘shoe-horned’ into earlier baptismal

⁴⁴ For a recent statement of this position, see Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 177-78: “No matter how consistent with scripture, the Anabaptist case presented a severe challenge to the mainstream ‘magisterial’ reformers, such as Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin.... Insisting that their goal was to bring about a reform of the entire church, the magisterial reformers fought adult baptism with a range of convoluted arguments that have little merit in either logic or scripture.”

⁴⁵ The New Testament is almost silent on the subject, although the account of Jesus Blessing the Children (Mark 10:13-16) is seen by some as evidence of the controversy and where Jesus stood on the issue. For an introduction to the literature about infant baptism in the early church, see Joachim Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*, trans. David Cairns (London: SCM, 1960); Kurt Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (London: SCM, 1963); Joachim Jeremias, *The Origins of Infant Baptism*, trans. Dorothea M. Barton (London: SCM, 1963); Robert M. Grant, “Development of the Christian Catechumenate”, in *Made, Not Born: New Perspectives on Christian Initiation and the Catechumenate*, edited by the Murphy Center for Liturgical Research (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976); Everett Ferguson, “Inscriptions and the Origin of Infant Baptism”, in *Conversion, Catechuminate, and Baptism in the Early Church*, Studies in Early Christianity, no. 11, edited by Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), pp. 391-400; Jim Heugel, “The Origins of Confirmation”, unpublished essay (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 2000).

rites that favored adult candidates; the earliest rites (such as that of Hippolytus) included children as valid candidates for baptism as well. As David F. Wright concluded in a recent study investigating the legacy of infant baptism in the early Church, the question for churchmen was not ‘whether’ infants should be baptized, but ‘why’?⁴⁶

As early as Tertullian (c. 200), some theologians had expressed apprehension about the age of baptism, citing concerns about the risks of post-baptismal sin.⁴⁷ Without a well-developed sacrament of penance, patristic theologians worried that grave post-baptismal sin might seriously jeopardize the standing of a Christian before God.⁴⁸ This led in the 4th century to a preference among many Christians for baptism later in life, an inclination famously demonstrated by Emperor Constantine (d. 337), who delayed baptism until shortly before his death.⁴⁹ Yet an effort to stress the orthodoxy of “one Christian baptism for the remission of sins” (a statement officially promulgated in the Nicene Creed) worked against the creation of separate baptismal rites for adults and infants, and insured that the church would continue its practice of baptizing infants and adults in nearly identical ceremonies. By the early fifth century, Augustine’s use of

⁴⁶ David F. Wright, “How controversial was the development of infant baptism in the early Church?”, in *Church Word and Spirit*, edited by James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴⁸ No clearer statement of this wide-spread idea could be given than that of Chrysostom: “The sins committed before baptism are all cancelled by the grace and kindness of the strength of Christ crucified. The sins committed after baptism require great earnestness, that they may again be cancelled. Since there is no second baptism, there is need of our tears, repentance, confession, almsgiving, prayer, and every other kind of devotion.” Chrysostom, *De s. Pentecoste homily* 1:6, in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, series Graeca*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1857) vol. 50, p. 463.

⁴⁹ Augustine’s friend Verecundus provides another example of this tendency. He avoided baptism because he was a married man (though to a Christian woman), and was only baptized on his death bed. St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin Books, 1961), Book 9, Part 3, pp. 183–4. See also Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 106.

infant baptism to defend the doctrine of original sin gave strong support to the ancient practice of infant baptism.⁵⁰ Augustine was especially influenced by Cyprian (d. 258), the Latin Bishop of Carthage, who was convinced that infant baptism was of apostolic origin and should be given immediately to newborn infants (even before the eighth day) because they had contracted the ancient contagion of Adam.⁵¹ The legacy of baptism as a rite that accommodated both infants and adults was, therefore, not a medieval innovation, but a product of liturgical practice in the earliest centuries of Christianity. In other words, infant baptism did not surface in the western church when Christian missionaries ran out of adults to convert—it operated along side, and in support of, adult baptism. Although the baptismal liturgy has been criticized as a text that anachronistically initiated infants by using adult language,⁵² this dual characteristic was appreciated by early medieval theologians⁵³ and invites an understanding of baptismal ritual that is more complex than theologians and historians generally acknowledge.

The baptismal liturgy used in Germany was part of the *Gelasian Sacramentary*, a liturgical book erroneously attributed to Pope Gelasius (492-496) that was in fact compiled in Rome during the papacy of Gregory the Great (590-604) and remained in use

⁵⁰ “What necessity could there be for an infant to be conformed to the death of Christ by baptism, if he were not altogether poisoned by the bite of the serpent?” Augustine, *The Merits and Remission of Sins and the Baptism of Infants* (411-412), 1:32:61, quoted in David Wright, “Infant Baptism in the Early Church”, p. 59.

⁵¹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine 1: The Emergence of Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 291-92.

⁵² See “Historians and the Reformation of Ritual” below.

⁵³ John the Deacon, the editor of an important Roman baptismal rubric c. 500, wrote in a letter about baptism to Senarius: “Lest I seem to have passed over something, I must clearly and quickly say that these things are done even to infants, who by reason of their age understand nothing.” Finn, *Early Christian Baptism*, p. 88.

through the pontificate of Gregory II (715-731). The *Gelasian Sacramentary* contains earlier material that can be dated to fifth century Rome, including the baptism liturgy. This rite of Christian initiation still bears a strong resemblance to the baptismal instructions in the *Apostolic Tradition*, but the *Gelasian* material is longer and more stylistic in its language. The earliest extant manuscript of the *Gelasian Sacramentary* is a Frankish (Gallic) version, which shows that the rite was used both by infants and adult catechumens who were enrolled in the kingdom of the Franks.⁵⁴ One important difference in the ritual is that the period of enrollment for catechumens had been limited to the season of Lent; there are also separate rubrics for male and female candidates.

Great variation was probably the norm for baptism in this period. As the Frankish church worked the mission fields in Germany, baptisms occasionally took on the characteristics of military oaths—when a leader fell under Christian domination, he and his men took baptismal vows as part of the peace-making process. As Wallace-Hadrill has observed, the rite probably had to be simplified to accommodate these and other mass-conversions that took place in Germany well into the ninth century.⁵⁵ Even in more ordinary domestic situations, most Germans continued to delay the baptism of their children until Easter, Pentecost, or other important events. For German princes, the delay could be even longer: Otto I was baptized at the age of six months (c. 912), Henry IV was baptized on Easter (1051) at the age of five months, and Henry the Lion was

⁵⁴ For the text of the *Gelasian Sacramentary*, see Dom Mohlberg, ed., *Sacramentarium Gelasianum; Liber sacramentorum Romanae Aeclesiae ordinis anni circuli*, *Rerum Ecclesiasticarum Documenta* 4 (Rome: Herder, 1960), pp. 42-74.

⁵⁵ J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 319. See also J. D. C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West* (London: S. P. C. K., 1965); especially Chapter 3, “Christian Initiation in Gaul and Germany from the Seventh to Twelfth Century”, pp. 47-77.

baptized on Pentecost (1135) at the age of five years.⁵⁶ This changed gradually after Thomas Aquinas and others recommended that parents move their children quickly to the font for baptism, lest their charges die unbaptized and be excluded from paradise. Aquinas even recommended that midwives sprinkle baptismal water on the protruding limbs of children that were not thought strong enough to survive childbirth, so that they might die baptized Christians.⁵⁷ In a dramatic representation of this new urgency, Dante Alighieri depicted unbaptized children languishing in Limbo in *The Inferno* (c. 1300) because they had not received baptism:

The good master [Virgil] said to me, ‘Do you not ask what spirits are these that you see?’ Now, before you go farther, I will have you know that they did not sin; but if they have merit, that does not suffice, for they did not have baptism, which is the portal of the faith you hold.⁵⁸

By 1400, then, baptism was routinely administered within the first week of life.⁵⁹ In cases when the child's life was at risk, baptism was often performed immediately in the birth room by midwives or other helping women. Guidelines to facilitate the process of emergency baptism were carefully distributed and taught in many dioceses.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ See Wilhelm Rauls, “Die Taufe in der Geschichte der Evangelisch-lutherischen Landeskirche in Braunschweig,” in *JGNK*, vol. 73 (1975). For the role of Palm Sunday and Easter celebrations in Ottonian sacral kingship, see Karl J. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), pp. 90-91.

⁵⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Tertia pars, q. 68, art. 11 (vol. 57, pp. 114-17).

⁵⁸ “Lo buon maestro a me: ‘Tu non dimandi che spiriti son questi che tu vedi?’ Or vo’ che sappi, innanzi che più andi, ch’ei non peccaro; e s’elli hanno mercedi, non basta, perché non ebber batesmo, ch’è porta de la fede che tu credi.” Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Vol. 1, trans. Charles S. Singleton (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), Canto IV, verses 31-36, pp. 36-37.

⁵⁹ Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Medieval West*, pp. 109-19; Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 46.

⁶⁰ The regulations and rituals associated with emergency baptism are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

In the churches, baptismal fonts varied considerably in style and cost during the Middle Ages, and some of the larger cities developed separate religious buildings called *baptisteries* specifically for Christian initiation. (The theological idea behind this development was that unbaptized people should not be allowed into the inner sanctuary of the church; this space was “holy ground” reserved only for Christians.) In Florence, the residents of the city built an elaborate octagonal baptistery dedicated to St. John the Baptist for their baptisms, which still stands directly to the west of the Florentine Duomo. The baptistery was erected in the early 6th century and was reconstructed in the mid-11th century. Inside, the inner dome features a large 13th century mosaic of the Risen Christ, who summons the dead from their tombs at the Last Judgment. Directly below the Last Judgment scene in the center of the baptistery is an octagonal font decorated with relief panels. The juxtaposition of these two architectural details would have been a powerful theological and artistic statement (see Figure 1-1).

During the Renaissance, the Florentine baptistery was further decorated with bronze doors by Andrea Pisano (1290-1348), who depicted the life of John the Baptist, and the famous “Gates of Paradise” by Lorenzo Ghiberti (1381?-1455), which narrated crucial events in the lives of the Old Testament patriarchs, such as the Sacrifice of Isaac. Although Florence had more than 50 parish churches during the Renaissance, all Florentine children were brought to this baptistery for what was in effect a double baptism—the christening of children as Christians and as Florentines.⁶¹ In other words, the medieval baptistery became one of the important locations to establish community

⁶¹ A. Richard Turner, *Renaissance Florence: The Invention of a New Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997), pp. 28-29.

identity, declare allegiance to God, highlight the value of baptism in popular piety, and acknowledge the power of artistic patronage and political authority.

Most European cities and towns did not have elaborate baptisteries, but made use of simpler stone fonts or portable baptismal basins for their baptisms. Stone fonts were typically positioned inside the west entrance of the church (and not inside the sanctuary proper), to accentuate the fact the person about to be baptized was not yet a Christian and would enter the church through baptism.⁶² Figure 1-2 shows a simple stone font (*Taufstein*) from the German town of Rothenburg ob der Tauber, which was used for baptisms in the town's St. Jacobus church and is thought to date to the 13th century. Stone fonts had the benefit of durability and could also be fitted with covers that would protect the consecrated baptismal water. During the Reformation period, the Rothenburg font was removed from St. Jacobus (possibly during a period of iconoclasm), and it eventually found use as a bird bath in the castle garden, where it stood for centuries.⁶³ Although this particular font bears little surviving embellishment, some medieval fonts contained elaborate relief panels with biblical images or words from the baptismal liturgy.⁶⁴

Portable baptismal basins were also commonly used in late-medieval parish churches, and were typically made of copper or brass. Figure 1-3 shows a brass baptismal basin (*Taufschüssel*) that was used during the second half of the 15th century in

⁶² David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 147. As Cressy notes, during the English Reformation the location of the font in churches became very controversial.

⁶³ A Rothenburg historian recognized the font in the 1960s, restored it, and found a new home for it in the Rothenburg St. Francis church. I thank the curator of the Rothenburg Franziskanerkirche for this interesting historical insight.

⁶⁴ See Chapter 2.

a cloister near Stereburg in the principality of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. At the bottom of the basin is a detailed Annunciation scene from the New Testament, in which the angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she is about to bear the Christ child. (The Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, hovers over Mary.) The Annunciation theme was commonly associated with the Eucharist in the later Middle Ages, because it identified the crucial moment when Christ took physical form on earth through conception (it was also, therefore, a metaphor for transubstantiation).⁶⁵ In a similar way, this Annunciation scene would have emphasized to the baptismal party the presence of the Holy Spirit at baptism. Portable baptismal basins like this were useful when congregations or cloisters could not afford a permanent font (or had little use for one), or when priests were called into homes for emergency baptisms.

The late-medieval church prohibited priests from requesting payment for baptism,⁶⁶ but this was an accepted practice that was not easily abolished. The pious deeds of a German saint from Cologne demonstrate this tension clearly. The *Acta Sanctorum* describe a holy man from Cologne who became an archbishop; this man baptized the son of a poor man who had been unable to find a priest who would administer the baptism for free. According to the hagiography, the Cologne archbishop even provided the white robe in which it was customary to wrap the infant for the

⁶⁵ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 81.

⁶⁶ Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 47.

ceremony.⁶⁷ Since baptism had become a requirement for every Christian, it was considered highly unethical for priests to charge onerous amounts for administering the sacrament. Important saints would certainly not commit such a sin.

The baptismal ritual that spread throughout western Europe including Germany was of Roman origin, yet it featured much of the metaphor, symbolism, and drama of the early Christian church. This ritual was adapted to local circumstances and conditions, a process that continued in Germany throughout the Middle Ages. By the end of the 15th century, each diocese in Germany had a local edition of the Roman liturgy (*Rituale Romanum*), printed according to the needs of individual churchmen and their communities.⁶⁸ Although the text of the baptism liturgy continued to evolve, the rite preserved much of the Latin text of the original *Gelasian Sacramentary*. In Saxony, Luther's home territory, this ritual was recorded in a compendium known as the *Magdeburg Agenda* (*Agenda Magdeburgensis*, 1497). It was this liturgical book that Luther used to administer baptisms in Wittenberg and upon which he based his own evangelical versions of the baptismal service. In Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen), the neighboring territory that will appear prominently in future chapters, similar liturgical

⁶⁷ J. Bollandus and G. Henschenius, *Acta Sanctorum... editio novissima*, edited by J. Carnandet et al (Paris: Palmé, etc., 1863-), March 2, pp. 466, 479. See also Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 47.

⁶⁸ For a comprehensive study of German baptismal rites associated with the Catholic *Rituale Romanum*, see Hermann Josef Spital, *Der Taufritus in den Deutschen Ritualien von den Ersten Drucken bis zur Einführung des Rituale Romanum* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1968). This book analyzes three 'groups' of printed baptismal liturgies in circulation and the parts of Germany they came from. The years of coverage are roughly 1480 to 1700, and there is information about the *Magdeburg Agenda* (which I discuss below).

books were also in use.⁶⁹ These rites contained a rich symbolic presentation of baptism that must now be examined.

Symbol and Meaning in the *Magdeburg Agenda*

The rite of baptism contained in the *Magdeburg Agenda* brought together many theological ideas and social practices in liturgical form.⁷⁰ In theological terms, the rite stressed spiritual regeneration as a leading gift of baptism, with the understanding that the baptismal candidate was fallen flesh (a product of sinful humanity) deeply in need of God's grace. Baptism stood as a time of transition from the sinful Adam to the cleansed child of God, and the waters of baptism signified both a physical cleansing and a spiritual transference into the Christian community. Unlike the *Gelasian Sacramentary* and the earliest Christian initiation rites, the *Magdeburg Agenda* condensed several of the preparatory rites for catechizing catechumens into one liturgical service. This abridgment shows a late-medieval interest in shortening the time of preparation for baptism, and continues to acknowledge that infants were the major recipients of the rite. All the catechetical acts associated with baptism were collected into one liturgy, including the rites of exorcism, prayer, anointing, laying on of hands, and the final water baptism. Although the Magdeburg rite began with an instruction that mentioned the order of

⁶⁹ For example, *Agenda sive Benedictionale commune agendorum cuiuslibet postorib ecclesiae necessarium* (1512) and *Lotthersche Agende* (1501). See Sehling 7/2, pp. 1148-9, footnotes 5 and 6.

⁷⁰ For the original text of the Magdeburg Agenda, see C. E. Luthardt, *Zeitschrift für kirchliche Wissenschaft und kirkliches leben*, vol. 10 (Leipzig, 1889), p. 421. For an English translation, see J. D. C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: The Reformation Period* (London: S. P. C. K., 1970), pp. 9-16. For bibliographic information, see Spital, *Der Taufritus in Den Deutschen Ritualien*, pp. 247-48.

catechumens and allowed for many candidates, it was generally assumed that one child would be baptized:

Here begins the order for catechizing a catechumen.
And first in front of the church are set the males on the right and the females on the left; and the presbyter breathes on the face of the infant three times, saying: Come out of him, unclean spirit, and give place to the Holy Spirit.⁷¹

This preface to the liturgy should be seen as one medieval adaptation of the rite—the verb ‘catechizing’ (*catechesis*) no longer maintains its original Greek meaning (‘to instruct’) but it denotes instead a cleansing function associated with exorcism.⁷² The first sentence in the rite was understood, therefore, as meaning “Here begins the ritual purification or *exorcism* of the baptismal candidate.” This is an example of a shift in the meaning of the ritual, in which an existing symbol or word was given new definition by those who used the rite and made it their own. Rather than drop a ‘sacred’ term with valued connections to the apostolic age, medieval Christians adjusted ecclesiastical language to fit ‘catechizing’ into their concept of infant baptism. In a similar way, the opening instructions for baptism allowed the possibility of many baptismal candidates (separate groups of men and women), but the text of the ritual quickly acknowledged the reality that a single infant was probably being baptized. By welcoming a larger catechetical group to baptism, the *Magdeburg Agenda* showed its flexibility, and would have evoked past memories of festival baptisms at Easter and Pentecost, mass conversions, and other moments of group initiation in the history of the church.

⁷¹ Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Reformation*, p. 9.

⁷² For the evolution of the word *catechesis* in medieval ritual, see Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Medieval West*, p. 7.

Exorcism had been an important part of baptism since at least the second century, and the Magdeburg rite also began with this tacit acknowledgment that Satan bedeviled the hearts and minds of late-medieval Germans.⁷³ Late-medieval baptism fought Satan with prayers, creeds, the sign of the cross, and the ancient medicinal symbols of salt, spittle, and breath—the same ecclesiastical tools used in the earliest Christian baptisms. Some of the exorcisms administered by the priest were passive, requiring no response from the baptismal candidate, and others were active, requiring the baptismal sponsors to personally renounce Satan. Medieval theologians believed that God was the source of baptismal exorcism’s power—the ordained priest only requested the divine medicine, and channeled it through the physical elements.

The liturgical agents of exorcism include breath (blown by the priest into the child's nostrils), the sign of the cross (placed on the infant's forehead), salt (placed in the infant's mouth), and saliva or spittle (placed in the infant's ears). The breath or *exsufflatio* symbolized abhorrence for Satan, and was related to an ancient Jewish custom of blowing or hissing to exorcise demons, although the *exsufflatio* had also received attention from Carolingian liturgists.⁷⁴ The sign of the cross or *consignatio* recalled the practice of signing started by the church fathers as a means of protection against demons and was in

⁷³ For a discussion of exorcism in the New Testament, see “Demons” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 140-42. For the significance of exorcism symbolism in early-medieval baptism, see G. M. Lukken, *Original Sin in the Roman Liturgy* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1973), pp. 200-265.

⁷⁴ “Exsufflatur etiam, ut fugato diabolo Christo Deo nostro paretur introitus. Exorcizatur, id est coniuratur malignus spiritus, ut exeat et recedat dans locum Deo vero.” Alcuin, MGH Epp. IV, 202.

widespread use throughout Germany.⁷⁵ The exorcism salt symbolized divine wisdom and also a 'perfect' medicine (*perfecta medicina*) used to heal the sick and exorcise demons.

In Renaissance Florence, there was also a related baptismal practice that involved salt—in foundling homes it was customary to tie a bag of salt around the neck of an abandoned infant as a sign that the child had not yet been baptized. The salt served both as a warning that the child was in need of the life-giving sacrament of baptism (if the child's status was unknown, it would be baptized conditionally), and it served as a physical talisman to ward off evil spirits until the salt of baptismal exorcism could be used to cleanse the child.⁷⁶

There was a blessing associated with salt in the *Magdeburg Agenda* (in which the candidate was called a “creature of salt”) and also a moment in which the priest put actual salt in the mouth of the candidate. In addition to describing the salt as a medicine, the blessing also found numerous ways to express the glory and power of the Trinity:

I exorcize thee, creature of salt, in the name of God the Father almighty, and in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. I exorcize thee by the living God, by the true God, by the holy God, who created thee for a protector of the human race, and ordered thee to be consecrated by his servants for the people that come to faith: so that in the name of the holy Trinity thou mayest be made a saving sacrament for putting the enemy to flight. Therefore we ask thee, O Lord, our God, that this creature of salt thou, Lord, wouldest sanctify and bless, that it may be to all who receive it a perfect medicine remaining in their bowels, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is to come to judge the quick and the dead and the world by fire. Amen.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Sehling, 7/2, p. 1149, 7fn.

⁷⁶ See Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 48, and Richard Trexler, “Infanticide in Florence: New Sources and First Results”, *History of Childhood Quarterly* 1/1 (1973), pp. 98-116.

⁷⁷ Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Reformation Period*, p. 10 (trans. Fisher). For the original Latin and commentary, see Spital, *Der Taufritus in den Deutschen Ritualien*, p. 65: “Exorcizo te, creatura salis, in nomine dei patris omnipotentis et in caritate domini nostri Iesu Christi et in

The placing of spittle (*aperitio aurium*) is reminiscent of Christ's actions when healing a deaf-mute by placing saliva in his ears and touching his tongue.⁷⁸ This exorcism had its origins in the eastern church and was also associated with repelling epilepsy, considered in the Middle Ages to be a disease brought on specifically by demonic possession. Regarding the textual composition, there was a prayer and an associated symbol that accompanied each act of exorcism in the ritual. When the exorcism came, it was dramatic and powerful:

I exorcise you, unclean spirit, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, that you go and depart from these servants of God. For the very one who walked on the sea with his feet and stretched out his right hand to Peter as he sank, commands you, cursed and damned one.⁷⁹

At the time of the *Magdeburg Agenda*, the priest often administered the rites of baptismal exorcism at the church door or in a special baptistery, and it was not permitted to bring a non-baptized child into the inner church until it had been properly exorcised and made ready for baptism. Exorcism thus had a proper place, as well as time, in the service. There was also an underlying theological development in the western church related to exorcism—as theologians refined their understanding of penance, the exorcism rubrics in baptism served to highlight the presence of original sin in all humans, a destructive force that could be attacked but not completely destroyed in baptism. Even

uirtute spiritus sancti. Exorcizo te per deum uiuum et per deum uerum, quae te ad tutelam humani generis procreauit, et populo ueniente ad credulitatem per seruos suos consecrare praecepit. Proinde rogamus te, domine Deus noster, ut haec creatura salis in nomine trinitatis efficiatur salutare sacramentum ad effugandum inimicum. Quem tu, domine, sanctificando sanctifices, benedicendo benedicas, ut fiat omnibus accipientibus perfecta medicina permanens in uisceribus eorum: in nomine domini nostri Iesu Christi, qui uenturus est iudicare uiuos et mortuos et saeculum per ignem.”

⁷⁸ Mark 7:32.

⁷⁹ Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Reformation Period*, p. 94.

after washing in the font, theologians taught that post-baptismal concupiscence remained in all Christians, and each new sin had to be thoughtfully eradicated through the sacrament of penance.⁸⁰ Exorcism thus continued a powerful theological tradition from the earlier church that had continued relevance in Germany—it fought both the historic sins of Adam and the Devil’s physical presence. There was also a close textual relationship between baptismal exorcism and the stand-alone occasional rite of exorcism in the later Middle Ages. For example, a 12th century liturgical handbook in Munich’s Bayerische Staatsbibliothek provides exorcism liturgies for infants and adults suffering from demonic possession (including a rite for adults who had previously been baptized), and these rites “are little more than baptismal exorcisms divorced from the remainder of the baptismal rite, along with biblical readings and a prayer or two”.⁸¹ The baptism liturgy did not just reflect the textual traditions of the ancient church, therefore, but it was an ongoing source of textual materials for stand-alone exorcism rituals.

After the first baptismal exorcisms, the priest continued the ritual by using rich biblical imagery to remind those assembled about the nature of God’s grace: “God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, God who appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai and led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt....”⁸² The standard scripture reading at baptism came from Mark 10:13-16, and appeared before the last exorcism. Instead of a narrative depicting the baptism of Jesus or Jesus’ commandment to baptize all nations,

⁸⁰ Augustine believed that post-baptismal concupiscence was sin, a position that Luther later endorsed. See *Contra Iulianum* 2.9.32 and WA 56:271, 15f.

⁸¹ Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Sanctity and Possession in the Later Middle Ages*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Michigan, 1994), p. 271; Munich Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, ms. Clm. 3909, folios 250-53.

⁸² Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Reformation Period*, p. 12.

the gospel chosen recalled Jesus' invitation to bring the little children to him.⁸³ By emphasizing that "the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" the liturgy highlighted the fact that the church presently baptized infants, a practice it wanted to support.

Slightly different prayers were said over boys and girls, a distinction that recognized their social differences and suggested biblical role models. For example, near the beginning of the ritual, the priest said the following words over boys while administering the sign of the cross:

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, God who didst appear to Moses thy servant in mount Sinai, and didst lead the children of Israel out of Egypt...send thy holy angel that he may also surely guard thy servant, N., and bring him to the grace of thy baptism.⁸⁴

If the candidate were a girl, however, the following prayer would be said at the same moment in the ritual:

God of heaven, God of earth, God of angels, God of archangels, God of prophets, God of all who live good lives, God whom every tongue confesses of things in heaven and things on earth...I invoke thee upon this thine handmaid, N., that thou vouchsafe to guard her and lead her to the grace of thy baptism.⁸⁵

The difference between these two prayers is not drastic, but there are variations in mood and imagery. In the boy's prayer, God is addressed as the God of the patriarchs and great deeds, and God's holy angel is specifically requested to guard his male servants. In the girl's prayer, God is addressed in wider and more tangible terms, for example, "the God of all who live good lives," but a holy angel is not requested for protection. Lyndal Roper sees in this gender-based language a division that reflects late-

⁸³ A few German baptismal liturgies substituted Math 19:13-15 for the Mark gospel, a parallel version of the story. See Spital, *Der Taufritus in Den Deutschen Ritualien*, p. 90.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

medieval biases about culture and gender: the ritual invoked a sense of continuity of heritage for boys, while girls were cut off from the benefits of lineage and community.⁸⁶ If this is so, it might provide additional evidence that late-medieval communities were able to pour their own ideas about gender into baptismal rubrics that had existed for centuries in the west. Although separate prayers for boys and girls was a textual legacy from at least the *Gelasian Sacramentary*, they would have been discarded if late-medieval Germans did not find them a useful variation in the ritual. This notion of elasticity in the baptismal ritual was just as visible in the Reformation. When Luther eliminated the gender-based differences in the baptismal liturgy, a few evangelical communities found it important to stress social differences between males and females in new ways, including easing the requirement that girls be baptized at church (while insisting on it for boys).⁸⁷

Godparents, not the infant's physical parents, performed the responsive acts in the baptismal liturgy, speaking for the infant and promising to rear the child in the ways of the Church. The godparents renounced Satan, his works, and his ways, and then voiced their agreement with the Apostle's Creed, which was read by the priest in three parts. In late-medieval Germany, most local rubrics provided a German text for the godparents to read at this part of the service, although the majority of the service still remained in Latin, the church's sacred language. For example, the Köln baptismal liturgy (1485) allowed

⁸⁶ Lyndal Roper analyses the Catholic and Protestant baptismal rites used in sixteenth-century Augsburg. See Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 266-267.

⁸⁷ So, for example, the Nuremberg city ordinance regulating baptism in 1612 suggested that boys should be baptized at the church in the presence of the father and godfather, and that girls could be baptized at church or simply at home, with or without godparents present. *Kindtauff Ordnung / Welchermassen es inn der Statt Nürnberg ...* (Nürnberg, 1612), p. A4. HAB A: 61.5 Pol. (12).

sponsors to say “Ich geloue” (“I believe”) when asked to state their agreement with the Creed. The same vernacular option was available in Augsburg (1487), Passau (1490), and other dioceses.⁸⁸ These local adaptations should be seen as attempts to more fully involve Catholic godparents in the baptism of their spiritual charges. At a more symbolic level, godparents collectively performed a double function in the ritual—they spoke both with a “priest function” (in an administrator role) and with a “recipient function” (in role of the person receiving the sacrament), a tradition that had been recognized at least as far back as Hugh of St. Victor.⁸⁹ Luther would retain these two functions and write about them in his baptismal treatises.⁹⁰

Godparents were an essential feature of late-medieval baptism—they participated in the service, brought gifts and other commodities, and sometimes planned the baptismal feast that followed the rite, where friends and relatives exchanged tokens of baptismal friendship and enjoyed food, drink, and entertainment.⁹¹ Godparents were generally

⁸⁸ For the use of the vernacular in German (Catholic) baptisms, see Spital, *Der Taufritus in Den Deutschen Ritualien*, p. 18.

⁸⁹ See Sehling 7/2, p. 1150, 15f: “Die Paten erscheinen in einer doppelten Funktion: einerseits haben sie teil an den priesterlichen Aufgaben, andererseits stehen sie auf der Siete des Kindes. Dies entspricht der Tradition; vgl. Hugo von St. Victor, *De sacramentis*; MSL 176, 458: ‘Patrini vocantur qui parvulos ad baptismum offerunt, et pro ipsis spondendo quasi fideiussores ad Deum fiunt. Hi propterea patrini vocantur, quia regenerandos ad vitam novam offerunt et quodammodo auctores fiunt ipsius regenerationis novae.’”

⁹⁰ For example, WA 19:538: “Sondern da sihe auf, das du ym rechten glauben da stehist, Gottis wort hörst und ernstlich mitbettist. Denn wo der priester spricht ‘Lasst uns beten’, da vermanet er dich je, das du mit yhm beten sollt. Auch sollen seyns gepetts wort mit yhm zu Gott ym herzen sprechen alle paten und die umbherstehen...” (But this should be done, that you stay in right belief, hear God’s word and earnestly pray. Because when the priest says “Let us pray” he is urging you to pray with him. Also all the sponsors and those assembled should pray to God in their hearts with the priest.)

⁹¹ For an extended discussion of godparents, feasts, and gift-giving in Germany, see Chapter 5. The standard work on godparentage in medieval Europe is Joseph H. Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986). For the

chosen from local kin groups or family alliances that could insure spiritual and material well-being for the baptismal candidate and his or her family. In addition to future educational obligations, there were also significant marriage prohibitions among godparent, baptismal candidate, and their families in the later Middle Ages. Not only was the 'spiritual parent' prohibited from marrying his or her godchild, but often their family members were not allowed to exchange nuptials for fear of breaking ecclesiastical incest taboos.

When all the preparatory parts of the service were finished, the baptism of water was finally administered by sprinkling or dipping face-downwards in the consecrated font three times. During the baptism, the priest would speak the Latin words of institution:

Ego baptizo te in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti.

I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Over the years, this Latin rubric would have been repeated so many times that few in the congregation would have confused its meaning—the formula announced that a new child had entered the Christian community and that the ancient ritual had once again created a new Christian. Baptism in the name of the Trinity was the high point of the rite, a parallel to the moment of elevation in the Mass.

After the infant was raised from the water, the child was placed in the hands of his or her baptismal sponsors and anointed with a mixture of consecrated water and oil called

early modern period, see John Bossy, "Blood and Baptism: Kinship, Community, and Christianity in Western Europe from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries", in *Sanctity and Secularity: The Church and the World, Studies in Church History*, edited by Derek Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973).

chrism.⁹² The priest then marked the sign of the cross on the child's forehead while praying the following words:

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has regenerated thee by water and the Holy Spirit, and who has given thee remission of all thy sins, himself anoint thee with the chrism of salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord unto eternal life. Amen.⁹³

A white christening gown, symbolic of the white robes worn by catechumens of the early Church, was often wrapped around the child at this time. Optionally, a white strip of cloth called the chrism (*mitra*) was placed around the infant's forehead over the oil and water mixture. Where in use, the chrism strip was traditionally kept on the child for up to one month, and for this reason a child who died before reaching his or her first month was often called a chrism child. In this way, the power of the ritual extended well into the cultural life of late-medieval communities.

Historians and the Reformation of Ritual: Was the *Magdeburg Agenda* Still Relevant in Germany?

This careful analysis of the baptismal rubrics in the *Magdeburg Agenda* has aimed to demonstrate that the Catholic order of baptism was still meaningful and relevant to ordinary Germans on the eve of the Protestant Reformation. In addition to offering a theology of baptism that was satisfying and fairly non-controversial, the Catholic Church administered a potent and dramatic ritual to mark the initiation of new Christians. Even Luther initially found Catholic baptism in good condition. In *Babylonian Captivity of the Christian Church*, he introduced baptism with the following statement:

⁹² Spital, *Der Taufritus in Den Deutschen Ritualien*, p. 117.

⁹³ Fisher, *Christian Initiation: The Reformation*, p. 16.

Blessed be the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to the riches of his mercy has preserved in his church this sacrament at least, untouched and untainted by the ordinances of men, and has made it free to all nations and classes of mankind, and has not permitted it to be oppressed by filthy and godless monsters of greed and superstition.⁹⁴

Although the words and symbols used in the ritual were sometimes centuries old, they expressed Christian beliefs that still had relevance to many late-medieval Germans. Indeed, thanks to contemporary preaching about the Devil and related broadsheet publications,⁹⁵ Germans on the eve of the Reformation may have been especially receptive to the administration of exorcism at baptism, which provided powerful metaphors for God, Satan, and current teachings like the pervasiveness of original sin.

Hermann Spital's recent study of late-medieval baptismal texts demonstrates that the liturgy was undergoing constant adaptation in the 15th century, while maintaining a core of ancient rubrics that had not changed for centuries. There were regional variations in the ritual (the prayers, scripture readings, and vernacular responses), but there were also symbolic markers in the rite that were rarely modified at all (the water of baptism and the salt, breath, and oil of exorcism). The Apostle's Creed and the triune baptismal formula were also texts and symbols that for Germans were 'sacred' in an anthropological sense—they expressed orthodoxy and continuity with the ritual of the early Christian church, and were filled with religious meaning despite (and perhaps

⁹⁴ LW 36:57.

⁹⁵ See Hans J. Hillerbrand, "The Antichrist in the Early German Reformation: Reflections on Theology and Propaganda", in *Germania Illustrata*, edited by A. Fix and S. Karant-Nunn (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992), pp. 3-18. Also Robert W. Scribner, "Elements of Popular Belief", in *Handbook of European History 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation*, Vol. 1, edited by Thomas A. Brady, Jr., Heiko A. Oberman, and James D. Tracy (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1994), pp. 236-38.

because of) their longevity. Beside these sacred ‘untouchables’ in the liturgy were parts of the service that had been modified to address local needs; for example, the development of vernacular responses to the Creed, which had appeared throughout Germany in the 15th century as the German language worked its way into a variety of secular and ecclesiastical texts. This collective activity around the ritual, an appreciation for both the timelessness of the rite and a willingness to adapt the text to local circumstances, demonstrates that late-medieval baptism was meaningful to many Germans on the eve of the Reformation. The rite encouraged religious devotion, fostered connections to ancient and orthodox traditions, and allowed for local expressions of piety.

Before moving on to assess the development of baptismal ritual in the Reformation period, it is important to note that this rather positive assessment of late-medieval baptism has not been the traditional view of early modern historians. Several investigations into the roots of Lutheran baptism have characterized late-medieval baptism as a sacrament sliding gradually into obscurity and offering little of social or theological relevance to the early modern Christian. For example, Mark Tranvik recently criticized late-medieval baptism as a low-point for the sacrament, and saw in Luther’s evangelical theology a vitality that baptism had lacked since the early days of Christianity.⁹⁶ In addition, Susan Karant-Nunn has described late-medieval baptismal ritual as languishing under a ritual “archaism” that made baptism seem irrelevant to late-medieval communities and institutions:

⁹⁶ “Halting the sacrament’s gradual slide into obscurity in the middle ages, Luther injected a vitality into baptism missing since the early days of the church.” Mark D. Tranvik, “Luther on Baptism”, in *Lutheran Quarterly* (Volume XIII, 1999), p. 75.

Late medieval Catholic baptism provides an excellent example of the phenomenon I have called ritual archaism—that is, aspects of ongoing rituals that have not kept up with, and thus do not reflect social reality.⁹⁷

Karant-Nunn's characterization of late-medieval baptism appears in a thoughtful analysis of early modern Germany that employs cultural anthropology to examine several important rites of passage. She is convinced that baptism began as a Christian rite primarily for adults, and that the church didn't keep pace with the gradual evolution of the rite to infant baptism. In her opinion, this created the problem of 'ritual disjuncture':

The inappropriateness of major parts of the baptismal rite constituted ritual disjuncture. Because sacred proceedings were largely in Latin, perhaps people did not notice. But in part, too, the Church used the institution of godparenthood to mask unsuitability.⁹⁸

In my opinion, this criticism of 'unsuitability' appeals somewhat too easily to a Protestant understanding of ritual that gives preference to vernacular clarity and symbolic economy. It tends to make a value judgment about late-medieval and early modern ritual that anticipates Luther and his 'rescue' of the sacrament during the Protestant Reformation. Yet Latin *was* the language of the western medieval church—all rites were administered with this sacred language and in many respects Roman liturgies and symbols were chosen precisely *because* of their antiquity. Godparents do not appear to be a recent invention designed to mask the unsuitability of the ritual; the evidence suggests that they were integral agents of the rite dating back at least a thousand years in Europe. It is useful to assess the value of baptismal ritual in late-medieval communities, but this evidence seems to suggest that there were numerous local adaptations to the rite that demonstrate

⁹⁷ Karant-Nunn, *Reformation of Ritual*, p. 43.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

its vitality, and that Luther and many of the Protestant reformers deemed baptism to be in good condition, at least initially. Although the *Magdeburg Agenda* did somewhat awkwardly welcome both children and adults, it appears that late-medieval Christians valued this feature, which found support in the Nicene Creed tenet that there be “one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.” Radical innovations, and especially the construction of separate rites for infants and adults, would rightly be seen as dangerous threats to this principle.

Modern critiques of late-medieval ritual also imply another important criticism: the very antiquity of medieval rituals is seen as evidence that they no longer transmit much value to religious communities. In other words, age and significant continuity are warning signs that a ritual has burned out or “lost its meaning”, becoming largely irrelevant to the groups that perform it. In addition, this problem suggests an equally unattractive corollary: A ritual that has lost its meaning can only be a tool of the existing hierarchy—it no longer produces its ‘meaning’ in a collaborative sense, but operates as a vehicle for the exercise of power and control by the political or religious elites. For these reasons, it has become fashionable to begin an analysis of Reformation-era ritual with a criticism of late-medieval ritual. If a ritual, such as baptism, was a valuable component of late-medieval spirituality, why would a reformer such as Luther change it?⁹⁹

The propensity to see late-medieval ritual in a perpetual state of decline is perhaps a polemical legacy of the Reformation, but it is also an historiographic tradition dating to

⁹⁹ Few Reformation historians make this mistake in their analysis of Protestant intellectual traditions after the magisterial work of Heiko Oberman, especially Heiko Oberman, *Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).

Johann Huizinga (d. 1945) and his influential work *The Waning of the Middle Ages*.¹⁰⁰

Huizinga shared with the Wittenberg iconoclasts of the 1520s the idea that late-medieval ritual was a garden overgrown with irrelevant and decaying symbolism that needed cleansing. In a discussion of the process by which religious ideas became represented by symbols, he concluded: “By this tendency to embodiment in visible forms, all holy concepts are constantly exposed to the danger of hardening into mere externalism.”¹⁰¹

Raising externalism as a danger to authentic religiosity, he went on to describe the particular problem of exhausted symbols and allegories:

The time was not distant when people were bound to awake to the dangers of symbolism; when arbitrary and futile allegories would become distasteful and be rejected as trammels of thought. Luther branded them in an invective which is aimed at the greatest lights of scholastic theology: Bonaventura, Guillaume Durand, Gerson and Denis the Carthusian.¹⁰²

In early modern Europe, according to Huizinga, Luther first saw the danger of allegorical thinking, and he attacked it with passion. Huizinga was also critical of the over-flowered garden of medieval ritual, and his work has been highly influential for 20th century historians—most who have investigated medieval and early modern ritual have either implicitly embraced or explicitly rejected his criticisms.¹⁰³ Yet a central idea of this

¹⁰⁰ J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1924, reprint 1985). An expanded translation based on the second Dutch printing of 1922 is also available as Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 213. Compare Huizinga, *Autumn of the Middle Ages*, p. 248.

¹⁰³ Not surprisingly, the value of medieval ritual has been assessed along confessional and disciplinary lines. For examples of medieval historians who have found richness and value in late-medieval ritual, see Eamon Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), and Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984). For a different

study is that when religious ritual is being studied, a balanced assessment can only be achieved when communities and ideologies on both sides of the ritual divide are equally understood and appreciated. The idea that Protestant ritual is ‘better’ than Catholic ritual because it is newer or more ‘understandable’ must be discarded, but so must the idea that ritual change is inherently damaging to traditional, organic communities or indicative of repressive, institutional forces. Instead, the most useful studies of early modern ritual will evaluate not only the theology and liturgical impulses of the editors and reformers who construct them, but also the complex meanings that ritual symbols allow local communities to express, and the way in which local communities use new symbols and rituals to express their own ideas about life, death, family, work, God, and the web of personal and political relationships in which communities operate.

The Catholic liturgy of baptism did not fall into ‘mere externalism’ simply because it used ancient symbols whose immediate cultural context had changed over time. If this were the case, Hippolytus’ baptism liturgy (c. 200) would have been equally invalid, because it used symbols and texts from the ritual washing of Jewish proselytes devised centuries before in a place hundreds of miles distant. Early modern Catholics could articulate what baptism ‘meant’ to them well into the Reformation era, including carefully detailed discussions of the position of exorcism, salt, spittle, oil, and the roles played by parents and godparents in the rite.¹⁰⁴ Catholic baptism was not a damaged

assessment by a historian of the Reformation, see Stephen Ozment, *Age of Reform* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 204-222.

¹⁰⁴ For an example of this defense, see Andreas Proles, a German Catholic who carefully articulated what each symbol and participant in Catholic baptism meant to him in a debate with Lutheran opponents; Andreas Proles, *Ein Christliche Instruction und Underweysung, wess sich*

vessel in need of reform; it was ripe with allegorical and cultural meanings for all in the community. The Christian priesthood used baptism as a sacred rite to communicate their power and authority over the laity, and the laity understood baptism as a critical, life-defining rite of passage that anticipated fulfillment in the remaining sacraments of the church.¹⁰⁵ Those outside the bounds of this Christian community (Jews, Muslims, heretics, and the excommunicated) also understood this rite as a powerful sociological force and felt its excluding power. Accordingly, not all baptisms were identical, and it was not necessary for every person to take away the same meaning from the ritual when it was performed or discussed.¹⁰⁶ However, when the historian allows baptism a more important position in late-medieval religion, the 1521-1522 controversies over the nature of symbols in Wittenberg immediately come into sharper focus. The next chapter will describe how this controversy led to a new Lutheran order of baptism that had important connections to late-medieval ritual, as well as to evangelical theology.

Vatter unnd Mutter, Prieser und Gevatter, bey der heyligen Tauff (Straubing, 1585), HAB A: 117.3 Theol.(1).

¹⁰⁵ “It was no hindrance, but rather a stimulus, to the religious imagination that a child should be led through the forms of an adult experience. The child along with the water, palm-branches, salt and oil, was himself a symbol—perhaps the principal symbol—in which the action of the sacrament took place.” Peter Cramer, *Baptism and Change in the Early Middle Ages, c. 200-1150* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 178.

¹⁰⁶ James Fernandez, in particular, has argued that different participants will see different things when experiencing ritual. See James W. Fernandez, “Symbolic Consensus in a Fang Reformativ Cult”, *American Anthropologist* 67 (1965), pp. 902-29. For a skillful application of this principle by a medievalist, see Geoffrey Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), Chapter 9.

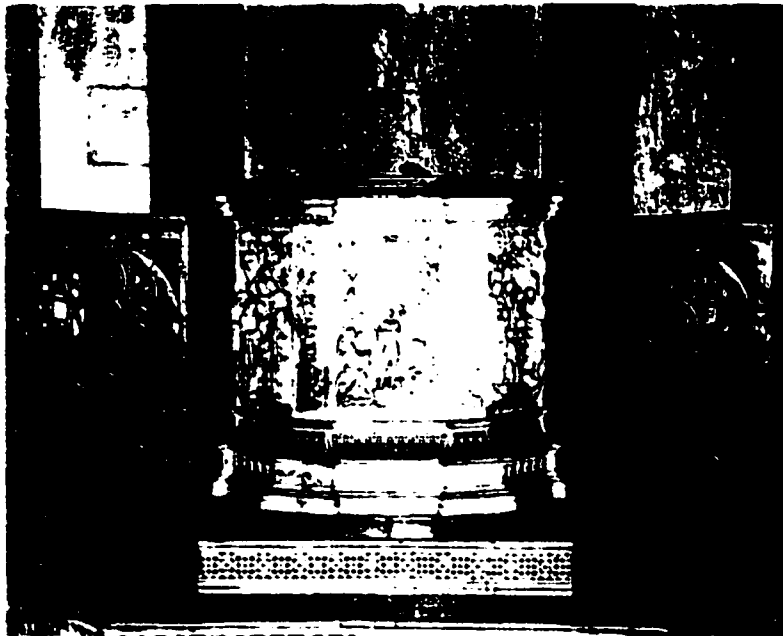


Figure 1-1: This 12th century Florentine baptistery dramatically integrates Christian, Roman, and Byzantine styles. The baptismal font is octagonal, just like the outer walls of the baptistery, and it is decorated with relief panels similar in style to the ancient Roman sarcophagi in the baptistery. Directly above the font is a large mosaic of the Rise Christ, who summons the living and the dead to the Last Judgment. Photo credit: M. Halvorson.



Figure 1-2: Stone Baptismal Font, c. 1300 (Church of St. Francis, Rothenburg ob der Tauber). Photo credit: M. Halvorson.

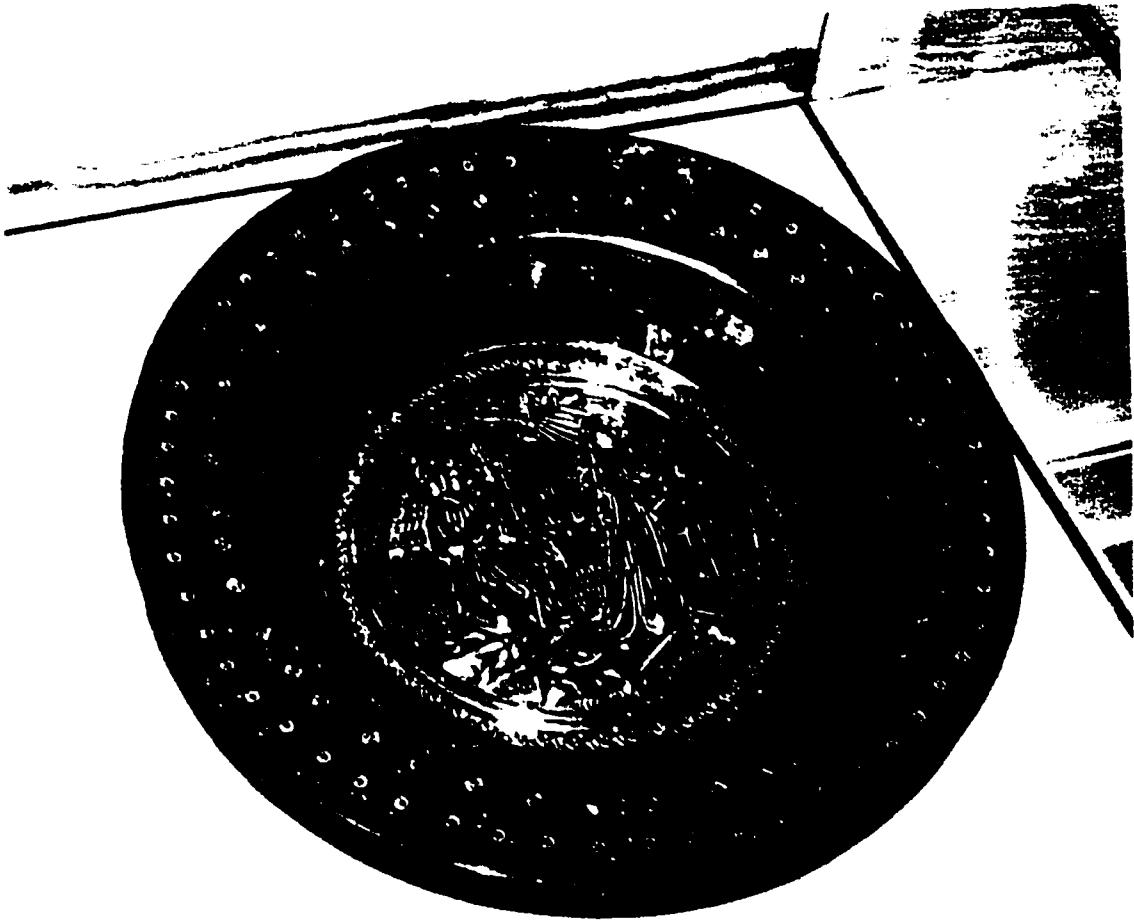


Figure 1-3: Brass Baptismal Basin, 15th century (Stereburg, Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel). Photo credit: M. Halvorson.

Chapter 2

“It is no joke to take sides against the devil”: Martin Luther and the Reform of Lutheran Baptism, 1523-1526

Martin Luther’s ‘Invocavit’ sermons of 1522 signaled the reformer’s interest in revising evangelical worship in Wittenberg as ‘weaker consciences’ allowed. In 1523, Luther began the process by recasting the baptismal service in the *Magdeburg Agenda*, a late-medieval handbook featuring the traditional rite of baptism and other liturgical materials. Luther published the new ritual as an occasional service and named it the *Das tauff buchlin verdeuscht*.¹ As its title suggests, the most dramatic difference between Luther’s new order and the traditional rite was the language of institution. For theological reasons, Luther made the sacrament of baptism the first all-German service used in the Wittenberg Movement. His *sola fide* principle, as well as his recent translation of the New Testament into the German language, made the need for vernacular worship materials especially pressing; according to Luther, the sponsors and the entire Christian community needed to intercede on behalf of the child with their faith in the baptismal promises. Like the editors of the *Magdeburg Agenda*, Luther included a short afterword with the new baptismal service. However, unlike his predecessors, Luther

¹ The original text of Luther’s *Order of Baptism* can be found in WA 12:42-48. For the English translation used in this chapter, see LW 53:95-103. Among the original witnesses in the HAB, see Mart. Luther, *Das tauff buchlin verdeuscht* (Wyttemberg, 1523), HAB A: 1173.22 Theol. (1).

used his postscript to emphasize the need for understanding, respect, and devotion on the part of both pastor and sponsors during the rite. Luther believed that prayerful support and future catechism could only come from a congregation that understood exactly what the service said from beginning to end:

As I daily see and hear the carelessness and disrespect—not to say frivolity—with which the high, holy, and comforting sacrament of baptism is being administered to little children (which I feel is partly because those present cannot understand a word of what is said and done), I have come to the conclusion that it would not only be profitable, but also is necessary to administer this sacrament in the German language. And I have, therefore, begun to do in German what was heretofore done in Latin, namely, to baptize in German, in order that the sponsors and others present may be stirred to greater faith and more earnest devotion, and that the priests who administer the baptism should show greater concern for the good of the hearers.²

Luther's criticism that "those present cannot understand a word of what is said" was an overstatement designed to awaken parents and sponsors to their responsibilities at baptism. As Chapter 1 explained, the baptismal sponsor's responses to the Apostle's Creed and other vows were by this time commonly recited in German, and most late-medieval Christians would have understood precisely the meaning of the triune baptismal formula and other standard passages of the ritual. Yet the simple fact that the *entire* baptismal service was now in German would have been very significant for the congregation—it signaled to the community that the ritual was unmistakably evangelical in character. Indeed, this vernacular emphasis became *the* marker of Lutheran orthodoxy in many communities as Lutheran reforms spread from town to town in the early years of the Reformation. The thesis that vernacular comprehensibility temporarily overrode all theological considerations will be explored more fully in the next chapter; at this point it

² LW 53:101.

perhaps suffices to mention that when the Lutheran reformer Autor Sander introduced evangelical doctrines in Braunschweig in Advent, 1527, he did it by visibly performing a baptism in the German vernacular—a point enthusiastic Lutheran chroniclers carefully emphasized.³

Luther's new *Order of Baptism* was otherwise quite similar to the *Magdeburg Agenda*—it contained the same basic organization as the late-medieval rite and introduced no innovations in terms of exorcism, godparents, or the crucial sociological point that infants were still being baptized. However, the German rite did feature some important textual modifications to the *Magdeburg Agenda* that merit closer attention. The Apostle's Creed, the Church's definitive statement of orthodox belief, was moved from its traditional place in the introductory prayers to the interrogative questions posed to the baptismal sponsors. The Latin collect *Deus patrum nostorum* (God of Our Fathers)⁴ was replaced by Luther's new *Sintflutgebet* or “flood prayer,” which creatively recalled God's saving actions through water in the Old Testament. In addition, the Hail Mary and Litany (for the intercession of the saints) were removed. Luther retained the traditional Catholic exorcisms, but reorganized them slightly and omitted or combined language he considered redundant. The *Magdeburg Agenda* contained six separate exorcisms; the Lutheran *Order of Baptism* contained three.

³ For the most comprehensive chronicle account of the Reformation in Braunschweig (and this baptismal episode in particular), see Philip Julius Rhetmeyer, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Incytae Urbis Brunsvigae, Pars III / Oder: Der berühmten stadt Braunschweig Kirken-Historie / Dritter Theil / Darrin Die Reformations-Historie...* (Braunschweig, 1710), pp. 1-54.

⁴ A collect is a short prayer that specifically pleads Christ's name or ascribes glory to God. Collects are one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Roman liturgy.

Luther's first exorcism opened the service and coincided with the pastor blowing three times under the infant's eyes and saying "Depart thou unclean spirit and give room for the Holy Spirit."⁵ This command gave notice to Satan that the Holy Spirit would soon descend and fill the baptized infant as it did Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan river. Luther's use of exorcism continued the medieval practice of acknowledging the presence of original sin in the baptismal candidate—a position Lutherans strongly defended in later confessional disputes.⁶ The second exorcism followed the opening prayers and the placing of salt in the infant's mouth. Luther kept salt as an important symbol associated with earlier healing traditions, although it had been firmly rejected by Karlstadt in his treatise *On Holy Water and Sacred Salt* (1520).⁷ Here is the first clear indication that Luther sought a place for external symbols in his conception of ritual, even this controversial one. Karlstadt's rejection of salt in the early 1520s probably moved Luther to retain it, at least for the time being. The actual exorcism rubric went on to follow the Gelasian and Magdeburg procedures closely:

I adjure thee, thou unclean spirit, by the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost that thou come out of and depart from this servant of God, *Name*, for he commands thee, thou miserable one, who walked upon the sea and stretched forth his hand to sinking Peter.⁸

⁵ LW 53:96.

⁶ See Chapter 3.

⁷ Karlstadt argued that material elements such as salt were completely unable to convey spiritual benefits, and stood merely as 'signs' that may or may not lead a worshiper to a higher spiritual reality. See Chapter 1.

⁸ LW 53:98.

Before the responsive creed and actual baptism, Luther included the words of Jesus from Mark 7:34 as a final exorcism to remove Satan physically from the infant. Notes to the pastor indicated how spittle (a dab of the pastor's saliva) was used to mark the child:

Then he shall take spittle with his finger, touch the right ear therewith and say:

Ephphatha, that is, Be thou opened.

Then the nose and the left ear:

But thou, devil, flee; for God's judgment cometh speedily.⁹

This stress on the physical presence of Satan is characteristic of Luther, who strongly believed in Satan's earthly presence, especially at the service of baptism. Indeed, Luther believed that if the reality of the powers inimical to God were not completely grasped, the incarnation of Christ, as well as the justification and temptation of the sinner were reduced to ideas of the mind rather than experiences of faith. Heiko Oberman summarized this theological tension in a now-classic description of Luther in his biography *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*:

Luther's world of thought is wholly distorted and apologetically misconstrued if his conception of the Devil is dismissed as a medieval phenomenon and only his faith in Christ retained as relevant or as the only decisive factor. Christ and the Devil were equally real to him: one was the perpetual intercessor for Christianity, the other a menace to mankind til the end.¹⁰

The practical solution for Luther was baptism and faith—making light of the Devil would only distort man's faith and view of reality. In Luther's postscript to the baptismal service, he underlined the seriousness of man's life-long battle against the Devil, and admonished the congregation to take him seriously:

⁹ LW 53:99.

¹⁰ Heiko Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 104.

Remember, therefore, that it is no joke to take sides against the devil and not only to drive him away from the little child, but to burden the child with such a mighty and lifelong enemy. Remember, too, that it is very necessary to aid the poor child with all your heart and strong faith, earnestly to intercede for him that God, in accordance with this prayer, would not only free him from the power of the devil, but also strengthen him, so that he may nobly resist the devil in life and death. And I suspect that people turn out so badly after baptism because our concern for them has been so cold and careless; we, at their baptism, interceded for them without zeal.¹¹

Exorcism also underscored the importance of ‘external’ signs (*Zeichen*) in Luther’s baptismal liturgy. Luther defended the traditional markers of exorcism from Karlstadt’s attacks and retained the textual emphasis on exorcism in the rite. But was he entirely traditional in his approach to exorcism? Did Luther, for example, continue to attribute supernatural efficacy to these symbols in the rite? Or were they simply metaphorical representations intended to emphasize the liminal character of the baptismal candidate? In philosophical terms, did Luther’s understanding of *matter* and *form* in baptism differ from a late-medieval scholastic theology of the sacraments?

In his first baptismal treatise *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism* (1519), Luther clearly identified God’s Word and not created materials as the medium of God’s grace at baptism. Symbols did not contain the grace themselves, as Hugh of St.-Victor and other scholastic theologians taught, but they were signs or tokens of God’s grace distributed by means of the Word. Luther therefore retained the popular, physical symbols of Catholic baptism—the breath, salt, spittle, chrisom, and candles—but he also gave them new theological meanings in Lutheran ritual. The external symbols were to be classified as *adiaphora* (*Mitteldinge* or *indifferentia*)—man-made elements that could be

¹¹ LW 53:102.

retained or discarded without sin and which made no fundamental difference in the efficacy of the rite. After the 1521-1522 debate in Wittenberg, Luther taught that the adiaphora of traditional ceremonies and symbols could be retained as long as they were not specifically forbidden by God and when they could be used profitably to encourage the faith of so-called 'weaker neighbors'. Luther's colleague Melancthon would go on to promote the Lutheran use of adiaphora in his *Visitation Articles* (1527) and in the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* (1531), although the concept would later prove controversial even within Lutheran circles.¹²

Luther used the adiaphora argument to support certain aspects of traditional worship, and this was a powerful polemical tool in his debate with Karlstadt and the so-called 'spiritualists' who rejected an emphasis on material things in worship. However, Luther also diverged from traditional Catholic practice in his understanding of the symbols being used at baptism. His specific comments in the instructions for his 1523 baptismal liturgy highlight his concern about the potential misuse or over-reliance on the physical objects of Christian initiation, and his continuing emphasis on the devil:

Now remember, too, that in baptism the external things are the least important, such as blowing under the eyes, signing with the cross, putting salt into the mouth, putting spittle and clay into the ears and nose, anointing the breast and shoulders with oil, signing the crown of the head with chrism, putting on the christening robe, placing a burning candle in the hand, and whatever else has been added by man to embellish baptism. For most assuredly baptism can be performed without all these, and they are not the sort of devices and practices from which the devil shrinks or flees. He sneers at greater things than these! Here is the place for real earnestness.¹³

¹² For the debate about adiaphora between Gnesio Lutherans and Philippist Lutherans, and its relationship to the administration of baptism, see Chapter 3.

¹³ LW 53:102.

In his use of liturgical tokens, Luther walked a cautious middle path in liturgical reform—he rejected those who would over-value the spiritual at the expense of the material in worship, yet he also rejected an over-reliance on the physical markers of baptism—items such as water, oil, or salt which could emerge in popular practice as ‘superstitious’ holdovers which diminished an appreciation for God’s Word of promise at baptism.

Baptismal Water vs. Holy Water: Luther’s Middle Path and the Popular Use of Liturgical Symbols

Luther was apparently concerned with the ‘superstitious’ veneration of baptismal water (*Taufwasser*) as early as 1523, because his *Order of Baptism* omits the standard provision for consecrating the baptismal water, a regular feature of Catholic baptism since the *Gelasian Sacramentary*. The most recent rite of consecration recorded in the *Magdeburg Agenda* indicated that the consecration was to be performed in front of the baptismal sponsors and involved the mixing of chrism, wax, and water in the font, and the casting of water from the font in all four directions. During the consecration, the priest also recited the Litanies (petitions to the saints), prayers of blessing, an exorcism, and a sanctification of the water empowering it with the Holy Spirit. The *Magdeburg Agenda* used these words to bless the water, which had the ritual effect of filling the wet, material substance with the actual Spirit of God (understood metaphorically as light, sanctification, and rebirth):

May the same Holy Spirit make fruitful this water prepared for the regeneration of men by the secret admixture of his light, so that sanctification having been conceived in it from the immaculate womb of

the divine font a heavenly offspring may come forth reborn unto a new creature... At thy command, therefore, O Lord, let every unclean spirit depart far from hence: let all wickedness of the devil's deceit be removed away.¹⁴

By removing the consecration of baptismal water from the baptismal liturgy, Luther diverged from Catholic practice in more than the language of administration. He also rejected the scholastic principle that consecrated sacramental objects, including baptismal water and especially the Eucharist, continued to maintain spiritual efficacy beyond their intended use in worship. An example of this teaching can be demonstrated by Hugh of St.-Victor (d. 1142) who wrote in *De Sacramentis* that the goal of consecration was “to put grace in the font like water in a vessel”,¹⁵ but a more widespread parallel is the widespread and entirely orthodox devotion to the consecrated Eucharist in the later Middle Ages. The feast of Corpus Christi symbolized in western Christendom what scholastic theologians had officially taught since the Fourth Lateran Council (c. 1215)—Christ’s body could be brought materially into the bread and wine of the Eucharist, and after this consecration his presence remained until the specie was digested in a human body or destroyed by an authorized or unauthorized agent.¹⁶

¹⁴ J. D. C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West* (London: S. P. C. K., 1965), p. 170.

¹⁵ Quoted in Edmund Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1969), p. 98.

¹⁶ After consecration, an accidentally damaged or spilled communion element could be destroyed by a priest to show the proper reverence for Christ’s body. Concerns about the willful destruction of the host by Jews were also raised frequently beginning in the late thirteenth century, but these episodes probably tell historians more about the importance of the mass and the psychological need among Christians to find ‘independent witnesses’ to the miracle of transubstantiation than any actual abuses committed by Jews. The logic for these accusations (which resulted in both trials and executions) goes like this: If Jews believed that Christ visited the earth physically through the elements of the mass, and if Jews believed this so certainly that they chose the occasion to steal Christ’s body and torture it again, then shouldn’t Christians be all

It is important to draw a distinction between consecrated baptismal water in the later Middle Ages, and simple holy water, a 'sacramental' element that received a priest's blessing but was not as closely regulated. Consecrated baptismal water operated *ex opere operato* (by the power of the rite itself); it contained the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit and transmitted the gifts of baptism to a new Christian. Holy water operated *ex opere operantis ecclesiae*, that is, through the conditional (and less certain) intercession of the priest, the saints, and the Church. As a result, consecrated baptismal water was carefully protected under lock and key after its use at baptism.¹⁷ The Catholic Church was concerned about the unauthorized use of baptismal water, just as it was concerned about the theft of communion specie and holy relics.¹⁸ In contrast, holy water was more widely available to medieval Christians and could even be taken home by parishioners for their own use on occasion.¹⁹ Ruined holy water was not considered an important problem, but dealing with stale baptismal water was an important pastoral task.²⁰ Like ruined specie at communion, consecrated baptismal water was to be disposed of in an orthodox manner if it became polluted. In theology and ritual, the special consecrated elements (bread, wine, and water) performed largely parallel functions in the late-

the more fervent in their belief that the priest could bring Christ's physical body to earth via transubstantiation? See Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Kenneth Stow, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994 reprint), p. 237; Adolf Franz, *Die Messe im deutschen Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, 1963), pp. 73-114.

¹⁷ Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Baptism in the Medieval West*, p. 174.

¹⁸ See Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978).

¹⁹ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 30.

²⁰ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 140-42.

medieval liturgy. Even after their authorized use in baptism and communion, the remaining elements were valued as unique containers of grace in many communities.

Holy water was in widespread use in 15th century Germany as an authorized healing agent. It was commonly mixed with salt and blessed for general use in the parish on Sundays, but there were also special forms of this blessed water associated with certain saints' days.²¹ For example, the feast of St. Blasius (February 3) was associated with blessing and distributing holy water since the 13th century in South Germany; the water was well known for its healing qualities and was given to humans for throat infections and offered to cattle, geese, and poultry to protect them from illness and theft.²² The holy water blessed on St. Stephen's Day (December 26) was also given to cattle to protect them from sickness and danger, and in particular the hazards of theft, poisoning, spells, and the 'evil eye'.²³ St. Anne's cult was associated with holy water, and in particular protecting women against problems during pregnancy. St. Anthony, Peter Martyr, and Ignatius Loyola were also closely associated with holy water.²⁴ In general, the laity believed that the holy water associated with particular saints and their feast days would be efficacious due to the saint's intermediacy. Such uses often met with the cautious approval of the Church hierarchy, as when St. Annes-water was permitted for use by the ecclesiastical authorities in the diocese of Halle.²⁵

²¹ Robert Scribner, "Ritual and Popular Religion in Catholic Germany at the Time of the Reformation", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984), p. 63.

²² Adolf Franz, *Die kirchlichen Benediktionen im Mittelalter* (Freiburg, 1909), pp. 202-5.

²³ R. Hindringer, *Weiheross und Rossweihe* (Munich, 1932), pp. 97-98.

²⁴ Scribner, "Ritual and Popular Religion", p. 64.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Baptismal water was not authorized for ecclesiastical healing outside of baptism, but the substance occasionally made its way out of protected fonts into the hands of the laity for use in healing and blessing activities. For example, in 1227 a Trier synod acknowledged that baptismal water was being taken from local fonts and used for 'magical' practices.²⁶ The unauthorized use was subsequently prohibited, but was difficult to stop completely. Although the Lutheran reformers eliminated the use of holy water after the Reformation, the illicit use of baptismal water remained a concern for Protestant leaders well into the 16th century. In Brandenburg, a pastor reported during a parish visitation that three women from Weidelbach had taken water from the church font and added it to their food and drink in order to induce a pregnancy.²⁷ In the same area, baptismal water was sometimes taken and mixed with horse feed to cure six animals or protect them from future harm.²⁸ In Saxony, village healers were caught mixing baptismal water with other potions as a cure for bed-wetting.²⁹ Many Lutheran congregations continued to follow the late-medieval custom of naming and baptizing their church bells after the introduction of the Reformation. These bells were rung in times of crisis to ward off danger; as a result of the baptismal consecration, it was widely believed that the bells had apotropaic powers (the ability to renounce evil).³⁰ In 1580, the

²⁶ See Dieter Harmening, *Superstitio: Überlieferungs- und theoriegeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur kirchlich-theologischen Aberglaubensliteratur des Mittelalters* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1979), p. 223.

²⁷ C. Scott Dixon, *The Reformation and Rural Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 168.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 304.

³⁰ Dixon, *Reformation and Rural Society*, p. 171.

reformers in Saxony discovered that some sextons (the helpers of the pastors) were selling the baptismal water that remained after baptisms for superstitious use in the parish. Duke August of Saxony issued a harshly worded edict that these minor members of the clergy were to stop selling the leftover baptismal water or be severely punished:

According to the number of places where papist magic still remains, where the sextons sell the leftover baptismal water, and also trade the leftover consecrated bread, which is used subsequently for sorcery [zauberei], the pastor should therefore earnestly reprimand the sextons that they stop it, and if it should happen subsequently, they should be severely punished.³¹

This incident acknowledges the close link between consecrated baptismal water and the consecrated host in the minds of the authorities and the laity—apparently both elements were being sold for use outside authorized ecclesiastical channels. In 1594, a similar ordinance prohibiting the sale of baptismal water and communion specie was published in Brandenburg, suggesting that the problem had not disappeared.³²

What is to be made of this continuing interest in baptismal water during the Protestant Reformation? Did baptismal water somehow act as a substitute for the holy water that was no longer available in Lutheran communities? Although historians have sometimes explained the unauthorized use of baptismal water and communion specie as an indication of the limited spread of Reformation doctrines and as evidence for the survival of papal ‘superstitions’,³³ it is perhaps more useful to approach the discourses surrounding baptismal water from the perspective of those who used baptismal water as a

³¹ Sehling 1, p. 530.

³² Sehling 2/1, p. 391; Sibylla Flügge, *Hebammen und Heilkundige Frauen: Recht und Rechtswirklichkeit im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Basel: Stroemfeld, 1998), p. 348.

³³ Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning*, pp. 300-8; Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, trans. Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), p. 296. For a discussion of the success or failure of Lutheran reforms in Reformation Germany, see Chapters 4 and 5.

sacred symbol to express individual aspirations about health, healing, and salvation in diverse German communities. From this viewpoint, it is clear that late-medieval baptism imbued baptismal water with a sacred quality that the laity valued well after the baptismal liturgy was complete. Even after three generations of Lutheran reforms, some Lutheran sextons perceived consecrated water as so valuable that they sold it covertly to their friends and neighbors. Luther's use of the adiaphora principle justified the continued use of traditional religious symbols until the time came when most people (the so-called 'weaker consciences') were ready to leave them behind. He never rejected the scriptural symbol of water, despite Karlstadt's warning that it, too, might lead to idolatry. Luther's early reform of baptismal ritual was thus a 'middle course' because it retained the controversial symbols while making a point of rejecting their efficacy outside of baptism. Although Luther refused to remove the physical tokens of exorcism and water baptism that Karlstadt and the 'spiritualists' had rejected, he also warned pastors and the laity about potential misuse³⁴ and he stressed the inseparable combination of Word and sign at baptism; as Luther would write in many theological treatises, without the physical sign (water) and God's Word of promise (scripture), the sacrament was not valid.

Luther's 1523 *Order of Baptism* shows that Luther had considerable respect for the liturgy and the symbols associated with traditional Catholic baptism. The rite still had relevance to late-medieval Germans; they valued it and found it meaningful as an expression of contemporary Christianity. His 1523 revision of the baptismal rite should not be seen as hasty, unfinished work by a reformer who didn't really have the time to

³⁴ For example, Luther called consecrated baptismal water "a human trifle" in his later debate with the Anabaptists; see LW 40:258.

reform baptism as it should be.³⁵ Rather, it was the act of an essentially conservative liturgical reformer who used the ritual to 1) express an appreciation for the medieval Christian tradition, 2) to reject what he saw as dangerous innovations on the part of Karlstadt and the others in Wittenberg who wanted a sharper break with the past, and 3) to bring about religious reform through vernacular scripture and his insights into baptismal theology. The next time that Luther revised the *Order of Baptism* he would have new rivals to confront and the need to do more than translate and edit the medieval rite.

Luther's 1526 *Order of Baptism Newly Revised*

The last paragraph of Luther's epilogue to the 1523 *Order of Baptism* hinted at his interest in making changes to the rite in the future:

For the time being I did not want to make any marked changes in the order of baptism. But I would not mind if it could be improved. Its framers were careless men who did not sufficiently appreciate the glory of baptism. However, in order to spare the weak consciences, I am leaving it unchanged, lest they complain that I want to institute a new baptism and criticize those baptized in the past as though they had not been properly baptized. For as I said, the human additions do not matter very much, as long as baptism is itself administered with God's Word, true faith, and serious prayer.³⁶

³⁵ Hughes Oliphant Old has suggested this in his thorough study of Reformed baptismal traditions: "What conclusions can we draw about Luther's first baptismal rite? The Reformer ended his text with a short commentary on his translation, and from that we can be led in our evaluation. In the first place Luther has intended merely to make a translation which would serve as a provisional form. He is not interested in reforming the rite." Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite in the Sixteenth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), p. 39.

³⁶ LW 53:103.

Luther's criticism of the authors of the traditional rite—"careless men who did not sufficiently appreciate the glory of baptism"—was aimed less at the historic editors of the *Gelasian Sacramentary* or earlier rites than at more recent Catholics who would require man-made contributions to the sacrament of baptism. It is another appeal to the concept of *adiaphora*, but this time from a different direction—the Church should not eliminate religious ritual for the sake of weaker consciences, but at the same time the Church should not require the man-made accumulations that developed over the centuries. Only the Word, true faith, and serious prayer mattered, and Luther's shift to the vernacular in 1523 was designed to support this core of baptism.

In 1526, Luther followed his impulse for further revision by publishing a leaner rite of baptism called *The Order of Baptism Newly Revised*.³⁷ Pastor Nicholas Hausmann from Zwickau, a friend and colleague of Luther's who had assisted in the development of other evangelical worship materials, provided the immediate encouragement for this new edition.³⁸ Hausmann had corresponded often with Luther about the nature of Lutheran worship, and especially about how the new German mass was to be administered in Lutheran communities; it was Hausmann who suggested that the time was right to provide a clearer break with Catholic baptismal traditions, and he asked Luther to

³⁷ For the original German, see *Das Tauffbuchlin verdeuscht, auff's new zu gericht*, WA 19:537-41. For the standard English translation, see LW 53:106-109. For the earliest witness in the HAB, see Marti. Luther, *Das Tauffbuchlin verdeuscht, auff's new zu gericht* (Zwickaw: Gabriel Kantz, 1529), HAB: J 212 Helmst. 4°.

³⁸ LW 53:106.

construct a new rite.³⁹ Although Karlstadt's immediate influence had been removed from Wittenberg and Zwickau, baptism was still a major point of contention in both areas.

This time the controversy was not the use of symbols in worship, but the traditional practice of baptizing infants, which Luther had strongly endorsed in his 1523 *Order of Baptism*. A group known as the 'Zwickau prophets' had rejected the idea of infant baptism as early as December 1521, when they arrived in Wittenberg and argued that true evangelical baptism should be reserved for believing, confessing adults alone.⁴⁰

Karlstadt also developed ideas associated with the baptism of believing adults, and these ideas circulated in German towns after both Karlstadt and the prophets left Wittenberg in 1522. Luther learned about the objections to infant baptism when he was in Wartburg castle, and wrote his first letter to Phillip Melancthon in support of pedobaptism on January 13, 1522.⁴¹ By the mid-1520s, however, the interest in adult baptism had increased in many other German and Swiss evangelicals, and by 1525 some of the more radical 'fringe' groups were being called Anabaptists by the mainstream Protestant evangelicals (Lutherans and the followers of Zwingli). The term Anabaptist is a pejorative one, characterizing the movement in mainstream Protestant terms as the practice of rebaptizing already baptized Christians, a heretical act in traditional Christianity. In fact, most Anabaptist sects still believed in one baptism, albeit the

³⁹ Luther's close relationship with Hausmann, and their mutual interest in reforming the liturgy, is visible in much of Luther's surviving correspondence. See LW 48:399-402, LW 49:55-56, and LW 49:87-91.

⁴⁰ The 'Zwickau prophets' were Nicholas Storch, Thomas Drechsel, and Mark Stübner (also known as Marcus Thomae), who claimed to be prophets of God and carried with them revelations that they had received directly from God. See Harold S. Bender, "The Zwickau Prophets, Thomas Müntzer and the Anabaptists", *Menmonite Quarterly Review* 27 (1953), pp. 3-16.

⁴¹ LW 48:364-372.

delayed baptism of a select group of confessing adults. But Anabaptists also insisted that none of the baptisms of Catholics or mainstream Protestants were valid and that all of these “Christians” were actually destined for damnation, a heavily charged polemic that brought significant political consequences.

Although it is dangerous to generalize too much about this diverse body of radical Protestants, early Anabaptist groups (c. 1525-1535) had a number of features in common: they were small clusters of mature believers who rejected the hierarchical Church (both the Catholic church and the groups led by Luther, Zwingli, and, later, Calvin); they sought to restore what they saw as authentic New Testament and Old Testament practices, including the baptism of adult believers who could articulate their faith clearly in public; they emphasized bible reading in the vernacular, the literal interpretation of scripture, and, in some cases, direct inspiration by the Holy Spirit; and they voiced strong aversions to clerical, scholarly, mercantile, and governmental elites. In a sociological sense, Anabaptist groups rejected mainstream organizations and gathered in small communities (sects) of the elect that sought when possible to live apart from society. They rejected baptism as a token of membership in a larger, universal church, and in particular they refused to participate in local political life and military service. This twin rejection of church and state especially horrified religious and governmental leaders, and brought their swift condemnation.⁴²

⁴² Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, p. 178. See also Michael G. Baylor, ed., *The Radical Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. xi-xxvi. For the best overall presentation of Anabaptist and related movements, see George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962; Third Edition 1992).

The timing of Luther's second revision to the baptism liturgy was meant to forestall the further development of Anabaptist groups. By clarifying the rite, Luther and Hausmann hoped to give baptism a more authentically evangelical character, and part of this transformation meant removing some of the liturgical symbols that Luther had already acknowledged were unnecessary. Luther's theological writings about baptism in the mid-1520s—including his letters to Phillip Melanchthon and others during the Wittenberg crisis (1521-1522) and his full-length attack on Anabaptist teaching *Concerning Rebaptism* (December, 1527 - January, 1528)—show he was working carefully to preserve infant baptism from antipedobaptist attacks. In these documents, Luther supported infant baptism by stressing four main points. First, the historic church had long administered baptism to infants,⁴³ and this continuity was the factor that kept the church holy, despite its many faults. Baptism was the church's treasure, and gold remained gold even in the hands of evil men. Second, the sacrament of baptism worked independently of faith, although faith was required for individuals to grow and receive the intended benefits of baptism.⁴⁴ In other words, when baptism was administered with water and God's Word of promise, it was always valid (because God's Word is greater and more consistent than faith) though the benefits of baptism (salvation and renewal) might come later.⁴⁵ The sacrament worked because God said it would, not due to the scraps of faith that man brought to God.

⁴³ LW 40:255-256.

⁴⁴ "If I believe, this baptism is of value to me. If I do not believe, it is not of value. But baptism in itself is not therefore wrong or uncertain, is not a matter of venture, but is as sure as are the Word and command of God." LW 40:253.

⁴⁵ LW 40:260-61.

Third, faith was important for the sacrament to be beneficial or efficacious (as opposed to merely valid), but there might be many ways in which faith could be brought to the sacrament. The assembled congregation and especially the godparents might bring their faith to the sacrament—the concept of *fides aliena* (alien, or external, faith) which had received periodic support since the early Middle Ages⁴⁶—or infants might produce this faith on their own accord (*fides infantum*) as John the Baptist did when he leapt in his mother’s womb at the appearance of Mary (who was pregnant with Jesus).⁴⁷ Christians might also come, through the help of the Holy Spirit, to a greater appreciation of their baptism later in life. In any case, it was important to think of faith as a creation of God at baptism—Luther accused the Anabaptists of ‘works righteousness’ when they presumed to stand on their own before Christ and claim baptism as a meritorious work which they had earned.

Finally, Luther supported infant baptism by appealing to Old Testament parallels to God’s covenant with Israel and the sign of circumcision that was administered on the eighth day to male Jews.⁴⁸ God asked that all males in the community receive this older sign as a statement of their trust in God, and Luther (like Paul) saw baptism as a sign of the new covenant with Christians.⁴⁹ This covenant included those who, like in earlier

⁴⁶ St. Anselm and Bernard of Clairvaux supported the idea that others could ‘believe’ for infants at baptism, a principle that they used to support the use of godparents. See A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 92. For Luther’s early support of this idea in a 1522 letter to Phillip Melancthon, see LW 48:368-372.

⁴⁷ LW 40:242.

⁴⁸ LW 40:257-258.

⁴⁹ “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3:26-29 NIV.

epochs, could not articulate their faith at first but grew over time to understand their relationship with God more deeply.

Luther emphasized the presence of infants in the 1526 *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* by emphasizing St. Mark's gospel lesson, which welcomed the little children to Jesus.⁵⁰ The position of this scriptural text in the ceremony strongly encouraged those present to think about receiving the kingdom as a child would, and rebukes those who would remove the children from Christ's presence:

And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.⁵¹

Immediately after this scriptural lesson, Luther instructed the pastor to lay his hands on the head of the children receiving baptism and pray the Lord's Prayer together with the godparents who were kneeling. After this venerable Christian prayer, the child was to be taken to the font for baptism by his or her sponsors. In 1547 (one year after Luther's death), Lucas Cranach the Elder represented this dramatic moment in a panel painting at Stadtkirche St. Marien (the city church of St. Mary's) in Wittenberg, the site of so many sermons by Luther and his Wittenberg colleagues (see Figure 2-1). In the painting, Phillip Melanchthon baptizes an infant in a large font with Lucas Cranach (left of Melanchthon) acting as a godparent with two other adults. The presence of Melanchthon as administrator stressed the Lutheran character of the rite and his high

⁵⁰ Mark 10:13-16.

⁵¹ LW 53:108.

standing, but was also slightly unorthodox, because Melanchthon had not been ordained as a pastor. The surfaces of the font have been artistically rendered, but the font's proportions are in line with the larger brass fonts built by Lutheran congregations in Germany in the middle of the 16th century (see Figure 2-2). The presence of several interested witnesses underscores Luther's request that baptisms be administered in large, public services where the faith of the congregation would support the infant and his or her family. By dramatically symbolizing the baptism of infants with attendant sponsors, who expressed their personal faith, the Lutheran reformers underlined their strong rejection of Anabaptist innovations.

The importance of external symbols in the rite had receded somewhat for Luther, and he used the adiaphora principle this time to pare away liturgical markers he felt were no longer necessary. From the 1523 ritual, he omitted the exsufflation, the giving of salt, the anointing with chrisom before and after baptism, the Ephphatha, the placing of a lighted candle in the child's hands, and three prayers. He retained two of the exorcisms, the signing of the cross, the use of the white christening robe, the standard baptismal immersion (which could be substituted with sprinkling), and the balance of the prayers and creedal questions from the 1523 rite. The text of the first ritual's epilogue remained, but was reset as a prologue. The last paragraph, which had suggested the need for future reforms, was deleted.

The acts of exorcism, signing the cross, sprinkling with water, and putting on a baptismal robe were retained to help Germans understand God's Word of promise at baptism, and Luther found them to be valuable even if they had no direct scriptural

antecedent. Baptismal signing would make the Lutheran ritual visibly different from the baptisms in Zwinglian, Calvinist, and Puritan churches, where it was vigorously rejected as a symbol of 'papist magic'.⁵² The baptismal gown also gave Lutheran baptism a distinctive character and a ritual similarity to Catholicism. In the *Kirchenordnung* that introduced Lutheran reforms into the territory of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel in 1569, this white christening robe (*Westerhembde* or *Tauff Tüchern*) was still used by the godparents to dress the child after he or she had been baptized, a tradition that Luther strongly supported.⁵³ Some later reformers who regulated baptismal practices in moral and sumptuary ordinances were concerned to limit the splendor of these gowns, however, as a baptismal ordinance of 1612 from Nuremberg shows.⁵⁴ The continued use of christening gowns among Lutherans shows that they were highly visible, and occasionally divisive symbols, not relics of a forgotten medieval past.

⁵² In his discussion of liturgical disagreements about baptism during the English Reformation, David Cressy has observed that the issue of signing (crossing) was particularly contentious: "The ceremony of baptism was supposed to be performed with goodwill and dignity, but occasionally, because of disagreements over crossing, it degenerated into contentious disorder." Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 124.

⁵³ "Denn sollen die paten das kindlein halten in der taufe und der priester spreche, weil er ihm das westerhembde anzeucht..." (Then the sponsors should hold the child at the font and the priest should speak, as he clothes him in the christening gown...) Sehling, 6/1, p. 160. See also Mechthild Wiswe, *Geburt und Taufe im Volksleben der Vergangenheit* (Braunschweig: Veröffentlichungen des Braunschweigischen Landesmuseums, 1982), p. 15.

⁵⁴ In 1612, Nuremberg officials prohibited silk, gold, and pearls on the gowns, indicating that the outfits were in active use and may have contributed to the sumptuary contests among citizens. "Es soll auch niemandt kein Kindt zur Kirchen tragen lassen / in einem seiden Taufftuch / noch in einem Tuch / das mit Goldt oder Perlein gestickt oder genehet were. So auch gleich das Kindt daheimen im Hauß getaufft würde / so soll man sich gleicher weiß berührter köstlicher Taufftücher / enthalten." (No one should be allowed to take a child to the church in a silk christening gown; the gown may also not be stitched or worn with gold or pearls. If the child is baptized at home, costly christening gowns should be avoided altogether.) *Kindtauff Ordnung / Welchermassen es inn der Statt Nürnberg ...* (Nürnberg, 1612), p. A4. HAB A: 61.5 Pol. (12).

The first part of the baptismal ritual was often administered outside the main sanctuary near the west entrance of the church in accordance with Catholic tradition.⁵⁵ Such a setting graphically symbolized the separation of the unbaptized infant from the Christian community and the purification required for admittance. According to the 1526 baptismal rubric, the two exorcisms, the reading of the Gospel of St. Mark, and the Lord's prayer were to be administered near the church door with the sponsors, and then the child was invited farther into the church for the creedal test and baptism. Hence the instructions following the exorcisms in Luther's revised rite:

*Then they shall lead the little child to the font, and the priest shall say:
The Lord preserve thy going in and thy coming out from henceforth and
for evermore.*⁵⁶

Although the Lutheran Church did not use baptisteries, traditional baptismal fonts (near the entrance to the church) were used in most Lutheran baptisms until the end of the sixteenth century. After that time, in response to a growing desire to find a single liturgical center for the Lutheran Church, most baptismal fonts were moved nearer to the altar and positioned across from the pulpit.⁵⁷ It is useful to investigate the character of Lutheran baptismal fonts briefly as an additional reflection of the adiaphora principle at work in Lutheran communities. Unlike other Protestant groups, Lutherans continued to support the use of artwork, embellishment, and symbolism in churches, and they viewed baptismal fonts as an important mechanism for teaching the laity about baptismal theology and ritual.

⁵⁵ J. G. Davies, *The Architectural Setting of Baptism* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1962), p. 104.

⁵⁶ LW 53:108.

⁵⁷ See Davies, *The Architectural Setting of Baptism*, p. 104.

In larger German congregations, baptismal fonts (*Taufbecken* or *Taufstein*) were made of bronze or stone and contained a basin that was easily large enough to immerse a child during baptisms if the pastor or family desired to do so during the service.⁵⁸ Some fonts were constructed of wood or built with wooden covers, but wood rotted after repeated contact with water, so congregations that owned wooden fonts would need to maintain or replace them as they deteriorated. Stone fonts, the most popular fonts in the later Middle Ages, were also in use and commissioned well into the 17th century.⁵⁹ The construction of a new baptismal font was often an important expression of local piety and would typically be accomplished through the donations of wealthier community members or the patronage of a local duke or lord.

Figure 2-2 shows a bronze font that was constructed for the cathedral church (*Hauptkirche*) Beatae Mariae Virginis in Wolfenbüttel, shortly after Lutheran reforms were introduced into the duchy of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. The font was completed by the caster Cord Mente the Elder in 1571 under a commission by Duke Julius, who resided in the Wolfenbüttel castle and ordered evangelical reform throughout the duchy in 1569.⁶⁰ The font contains several relief panels, figures, and ornaments that recalled biblical scenes and the baptismal theology of Luther, including the preaching of St. Peter

⁵⁸ Luther preferred immersion (*immersio*), writing in *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism* (1519) that the word *Taufe* came undoubtedly from the word *Tief* (deep) and meant that what is baptized is sunk deeply into the water. But Luther was content to regard the matter of applying the water as adiaphora and something that local congregations could decide for themselves. See LW 35:29, LW 53:100fn.

⁵⁹ See Chapter 1 (Figure 1-2) for an example of a German stone font from the 13th century. For several early modern examples that survive in Lower Saxony, see Ulrike Mathies, *Die Protestantischen Taufbecken Niedersachsens von der Reformation bis zur Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Regensburg: Verlag Schnell & Steiner, 1998).

⁶⁰ Mathies, *Die Protestantischen Taufbecken Niedersachsens*, pp. 68-9, 261. For general events in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, see Chapter 3.

for baptism and renewal at Pentecost,⁶¹ Jesus commissioning the disciples to baptize,⁶² Jesus talking with Nicodemus about entering the kingdom through water and the spirit,⁶³ Jesus speaking to the Samaritan woman about receiving living water,⁶⁴ the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the Jordan river,⁶⁵ and the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch by Philip.⁶⁶

Figure 2-3 shows a detail from a bronze relief panel on the font depicting the baptism of Jesus, who kneels in the Jordan river with folded arms and a lowered head. To the left of Jesus, God the Father sits in a cloud and words stream from his mouth that also bear a dove as a sign of the Holy Spirit. The panel scenes in this font are based entirely on New Testament stories, although many Lutheran fonts still featured Old Testament scenes with watery images such as Noah and the Great Flood,⁶⁷ and the escape of the Israelites through the Red Sea.⁶⁸ Some baptismal fonts were simpler in construction, and only emphasized a few texts or images, such as the carved stone font of St. Gertrud's church in Gleidingen, Lower Saxony (Figure 2-4), which bore the large letters from Mark 10 in German: "Christus sprack latet de kinderken tho mi kamen und wehret en nicht wente solcker is dat rike Gades." ("Christ said let the children come to

⁶¹ Acts 2:38-39.

⁶² Mathew 28:18-20.

⁶³ John 3:1-8.

⁶⁴ John 4:1-14.

⁶⁵ Mark 1:9-11.

⁶⁶ Acts 8:36-39.

⁶⁷ Genesis 6-8.

⁶⁸ Exodus 14.

me and hinder them not for such is the kingdom of God.”)⁶⁹ Lutheran baptismal fonts thus bore verbal and non-verbal messages for parishioners, and should be considered among the important orthodox mechanisms for teaching the meaning of Lutheran baptismal theology to congregations. In an era when the majority of parishioners could not read well, the symbols and words on fonts served to augment the ritual and excite Christian devotion, as Ulrike Mathies has shown in a comprehensive study of baptismal font iconography.⁷⁰

A collection of letters in the Niedersächsisches Landeshauptarchiv Wolfenbüttel demonstrates that the upkeep of baptismal fonts could also be a major financial expense for Lutheran communities and an opportunity to demonstrate community piety and seek the patronage of local dukes and lords. Between 1623 and 1720, the pastors and congregation of Beatae Virginis Mariae in Wolfenbüttel corresponded with the dukes of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel to negotiate for repairs and costly additions to their font, which had originally been commissioned by Duke Julius in 1571. These requests included amounts for alabaster, gilding, rails, and other embellishments that the Wolfenbüttel congregation itemized neatly in columns with allotments for material costs and labor. The negotiations were particularly intense during a period of the Thirty Years’ War when much of the fighting in the war had shifted to the principality of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (1622-1630).⁷¹ The give-and-take between the dukes and the congregation is evidenced by detailed hair-splitting over numerous work items on the

⁶⁹ Mark 10:14; Mathies, *Die Protestantischen Taufbecken Niedersachsens*, p. 219.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-43.

⁷¹ See Chapter 5.

font.⁷² During these requests for patronage, the pastors wrote that the font was worthy of the duke's support because baptism was among the most treasured expressions of piety in the community and their font was much loved and heralded.⁷³ As a physical object, the baptismal font often became an important confessional statement for congregations in the face of war or other confessional conflicts.

Lutheran Exorcism

Luther does not explain why he retained two pared-down rites of exorcism in his baptismal liturgy of 1526, but it is clear from his afterword to the 1523 rite (repeated almost word for word in 1526) that he believed the Devil to be strongly present at the sacrament of baptism, hoping for indifferent sponsors and drunken priests to neglect the rite. Exorcism, for Luther, was designed to reject the physically present Satan who sought to undo what God provided in the sacrament. To approach Luther's concept of exorcism, the historian must acknowledge again the importance of Satan to Luther's overall theology:

For this reason [the presence of Satan] it is right and proper not to permit drunken and boorish priests to baptize or such people to serve as sponsors. But decent, moral, earnest, and pious priests and sponsors ought to be chosen who can be expected to treat the matter with seriousness and true faith, lest the holy sacrament be made a mockery for the devil and an insult to God, who through it showers us with the abundant and infinite riches of his grace. He himself calls it a new birth by which we are being freed from all the devil's tyranny, loosed from sin, death, and hell, and

⁷² For example, the dukes reduced the amount requested in 1623 for gilding and alabaster from 68 Reichsthaler to 58 Reichsthaler. NSLHAW, 100 N, Nr. 352.

⁷³ NSLHAW, 100 N, Nr. 352.

become children of life, heirs of all the gifts of God, God's own children, and brethren of Christ.⁷⁴

Exorcism was Luther's method for highlighting the grip of Satan's tyranny and Christ's redemptive work that freed each Christian from sin, death, and hell. Exorcism was not a replacement for baptism, but a symbolic prelude to it. Although Luther was content to drop some of the physical markers of exorcism such as the salt, breath, and spittle used by the priest, he found it profitable to recast the ancient rubrics as verbal commands from the pastor, ordering Satan from the body of the helpless infant:

Depart thou unclean spirit and make room for the holy spirit.⁷⁵

The pastor administered the second exorcism after the sign of the cross was placed on the child's forehead and the opening prayers were read:

I adjure thee, thou unclean spirit, by the name of the Father † and of the Son † and of the Holy Ghost † that thou come out of and depart from this servant of Jesus Christ, *Name*. Amen.⁷⁶

Both of Luther's exorcisms had their roots in the ancient Gelasian rite of baptism, but Luther separated them from their symbolic representations in the ritual—no salt, spittle, or oil were used to accompany the verbal commands. The general effect was a recasting of baptismal exorcism as prayer, and indeed Luther's second exorcism made this clear by ending with "Amen." Since baptism was the definitive sacrament in Luther's theology—the enduring work of God, not man—Luther believed that each prayer renouncing Satan would be answered *every time* baptism was administered in a faithful Christian community. Therefore there was no need for post-baptismal exorcism in Luther's

⁷⁴ LW 53:102-103.

⁷⁵ LW 53:107.

⁷⁶ LW 53:108.

theology—this was a one time purging of Satan that never required repetition. Although Satan would certainly mount future attacks, Christians had a mighty weapon at their disposal in the recollection of their own baptismal promises and the lasting grace they had received at the font. This insult could be hurled directly at Satan when he menaced: “The only way to drive away the Devil is through faith in Christ”, Luther wrote, “and by saying this: ‘I have been baptized, I am a Christian.’”⁷⁷

Exorcism had a different efficacy in Catholic theology—it operated as a ‘sacramental’ tool like holy water or religious relics, drawing on the overall power of the Church to intercede for mankind on a daily basis. When exorcism was used as an occasional rite, therefore, it did not have the same *ex opere operato* efficacy as the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, confession, communion, marriage, ordination, and last rites. In other words, exorcism was not ‘guaranteed’ to impart God’s healing grace every time it was performed. Rather, traditional exorcism operated by divine entreaty alone, and not through the mere working of the work or the power of the exorcist. It is simply one of the orthodox forms of ecclesiastical medicine at the priest’s disposal for combating the effects of *maleficia* or demonic possession.⁷⁸ Luther’s understanding of exorcism was quite different. Although he retained and even emphasized part of the exorcism tradition from the Catholic church, he recommended it only as a metaphorical way to highlight the presence of Satan in human affairs, and only as a part of baptism.

As a rule of thumb, when Protestants combated the wiles of Satan in the early modern

⁷⁷ D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Tischreden, vol. 6 (Weimar, 1921), no. 6830, p. 217, 26f.

⁷⁸ For examples of Catholic exorcists at work in early modern Germany, see Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 174-80.

period, they relied on prayer, the sacraments, and a trust in divine providence to resist spiritual adversity. Catholic divines actively mediated with supernatural forces for human benefit, and these actions “remained basic to the sacramental and ceremonial core of Catholicism” even after the Council of Trent.⁷⁹

How did Luther instruct pastors to use his new rite of baptism? Luther’s *Instructions for the Visitation of Parish Pastors* (1528) gives us a few additional details that were not mentioned in his introductions to the baptismal orders. In a special section about administering the sacrament of baptism, Luther first highlighted what he saw in 1528 as the most important aspect of the sacrament: that it be used to baptize infants and not adults:

Baptism shall be retained as hitherto, and children are to be baptized. For baptism has the same import as circumcision, and as children were circumcised so also children shall be baptized.⁸⁰

In the late 1520s, Anabaptism had replaced Karlstadt and the ‘spiritualists’ as Luther’s biggest opponents for a correct understanding of baptism. By suggesting that baptism “be retained as hitherto”, Luther underscored his opinion that he essentially retained traditional baptism, albeit now fully in the language of the people. He went on to summarize:

It is well that we use the German language in baptism so that they who witness the act may understand the prayer and the word in baptism. Occasionally also it should be explained to the people in preaching on the sacrament that baptism does not only mean that God wills to receive children when they are small, but throughout life. Therefore, baptism is a

⁷⁹ Mary R. O’Neil, “Sacerdote ovvero strione: Ecclesiastical and Superstitious Remedies in 16th Century Italy”, in *Understanding Popular Culture*, edited by Steven L. Kaplan (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1984), p. 53.

⁸⁰ LW 40:288.

sign not only to children, but also to the older people it is an incitement and exhortation to repentance. For the water in baptism signifies penitence, contrition, and sorrow.... This kind of faith is a complete baptism.⁸¹

With this directive, Luther underscored several of the themes of the present chapter: that Lutheran baptism was fundamentally a vernacular baptism, and that the use of German in the ritual (along with steady preaching and catechesis) was the best way to communicate baptism's great and previously neglected promises. Luther went on to stress the theme that would become an important one for him later, that baptism was a life-long act, and a powerful incitement for penitence, contrition, and sorrow. When baptism functioned this way in the mind of believers, it became a complete sacrament.

Finally, Luther asked pastors to address concerns in their congregations about the use of chrism, the anointing oil that Luther had retained in the *Order of Baptism* (1523) but removed from the *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* (1526).⁸² His words give us an indication that evangelical communities were very aware of changes to the ritual, and that some of them complained mightily:

One need not quarrel over the use of chrism. The true chrism with which all Christians are anointed by God himself is the Holy Spirit. So we read in Isa. 61 and in Eph. 1.⁸³

When Luther's *Instructions for the Visitation of Parish Pastors* were reissued in 1538 and 1539, they included an additional statement here: "chrism is an unnecessary, free

⁸¹ LW 40:288.

⁸² In Catholic tradition, chrism was made by mixing olive oil and balsam (to induce fragrance), and represented the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Thomas Aquinas taught that its liturgical use went back to Christ Himself, although chrism is not specifically mentioned in the New Testament. In the Western Church, chrism was traditionally used for the post-baptismal anointing performed by the bishop. See "Chrism" in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Third Edition, edited by F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁸³ LW 40:288.

matter”, in other words, adiaphora, which Luther argued could be used or removed without issue, as long as it did not offend the ‘weaker consciences’. In this case, Luther may have moved too fast for a few ‘weaker consciences’—chrism was perhaps a more widely appreciated symbol in the traditional ritual than salt, spittle, or breath (which had also been removed from the ritual, but at less issue). In any case, Luther’s note of the controversy makes it clear that as late-medieval baptismal rituals were reformed, the changes would be carried out under the close scrutiny of local pastors and laity. Luther was generally in close touch with local German communities as the ritual reformation unfolded.

Does Luther’s Liturgy Match His Theology?

Chapters 1 and 2 have charted the development of Luther’s baptismal liturgy by following the 1521-1522 controversies over symbols in Wittenberg and the process that Luther followed to revise a popular initiation rite at the beginning of the Reformation. In this analysis, a number of important symbols and texts have come into focus: the use of exorcism and its liturgical signs (salt, spittle, and breath), Luther’s liturgical defense of infant baptism, the duties and obligations of godparents, the consecration and use of baptismal water, and the reclassification of certain symbols and liturgical acts as adiaphora. I have introduced Luther’s general theology of baptism occasionally, but only to the extent that it pertained to specific revisions or clarifications made in the baptismal rites. Such an approach has been necessary to understand the development and form of Luther’s baptismal liturgy in its historical context. Yet one important question remains

about the construction of Lutheran baptism: To what extent did Luther's overall theology of baptism support or 'match' his revisions to the baptismal liturgy?

Most historians of theology approach this question from the opposite angle, investigating Luther's theology of baptism as it developed through his sermons, treatises, catechisms, and biblical commentaries, and then presenting the baptismal liturgy (if it is addressed at all) as a direct beneficiary of that theology.⁸⁴ However, the question is of more than passing importance—if Luther's baptismal liturgy emerged from the intense struggles within German evangelism, and if traditional ideas about baptism influenced Luther as much as his own evangelical theology, in what ways did Luther's theology of baptism ultimately influence the development of the *Order of Baptism Newly Revised*? In addition, if the new baptismal liturgy went on to exercise a crucial role in the construction of Lutheran identity in German communities, and if this institutional process began before Luther developed his mature baptismal theology, did Lutheran theology and ritual ultimately stress different ideas about the character of evangelical baptism? Future chapters will continue the investigation into precisely what *was* important about Lutheran baptism in Reformation Germany—was it the theology, the baptismal ritual, or the related 'social practices' (such as godparent obligations and christening parties) that held the greatest cultural significance for Germans? Or were these three factors somehow connected via a more comprehensive cultural discourse that combined popular ideas about baptism with other topics? This section will begin that discussion by exploring the

⁸⁴ For example, Jonathan D. Trigg, *Baptism in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1994), p. 77.

chronological development of Luther's baptismal theology and the extent to which it found representation in the liturgy.

First, it is important to note that Luther never wrote a systematic theology of baptism that comprehensively organized his baptismal teaching.⁸⁵ Luther responded to numerous debates and crises that touched on baptism throughout his career, but he didn't compile these ideas into a thorough treatment that presented his thoughts in a systematic way.⁸⁶ For this reason, it is often difficult to determine Luther's precise position on a number of points related to baptism—he faced multiple opponents and found it useful to change his emphasis to match each new situation. As Jonathan Trigg has noted in an important comprehensive study of Luther's baptismal theology:

Luther spoke and wrote in a vigorous manner, seeking to drive home each point with as much force as possible. The nature of his argument and the direction of his polemical thrust at any given point are often largely determined by the opponents in view. We do not expect, by and large, to find him duly qualifying every statement, or taking care to present an argument which is complete on all sides.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Luther's major theological writings about baptism include the following treatises: *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of Baptism* (1519, LW 35:29-43), *The Babylonian Captivity of the Christian Church* (1520, LW 36:11-126), *The Large Catechism* (1529, BC 436-446), *The Small Catechism* (1529, BC 348), *Concerning Rebaptism* (1528, LW 40:229-262), *Sermon at the Baptism of Bernhard of Anhalt* (1540, LW 51:315-329). For numerous baptismal references and statements, see also *The Lectures on Genesis* (1535-1545, LW, vols. 1-8).

⁸⁶ An example of a Protestant theologian who did give baptism such systematic treatment was John Calvin. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Part 2, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, edited by John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), Chapters 15-16, pp. 1303-59.

⁸⁷ Trigg, *Baptism in the Theology of Martin Luther*, p. 77. Other useful studies include Lorenz Grönvik, *Der Taufe in der Theologie Martin Luthers*, Acta Academiae Aboensis, Series A (Abo: Abo Akademi, 1968); Edmund Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, trans. Herbert Bouman (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972); Mark D. Tranvik, "Luther on Baptism", *Lutheran Quarterly* (Volume XIII, 1999), pp. 75-89; Robert Kolb, "God Kills to Make Alive: Romans 6 and Luther's Understanding of Justification (1535)", *Lutheran Quarterly* (Volume XII, 1998), pp. 33-56.

At the outset, therefore, significant care is required. Luther presented his own baptismal theology in different ways for different groups, and this trend continued well into the Reformation period. Occasionally, this multiplicity has led even theologians to question the overall consistency of Luther's baptismal theology. At first glance, it contains riddles and apparent inconsistencies.⁸⁸

For the present question, it will be useful to accept Trigg's chronological assessment of Luther's theology. Luther published his writings about baptism in three active phases: an early period before the Reformation 'breakthrough' (before 1518); a middle period featuring the treatise *Babylonian Captivity of the Christian Church* and the early Wittenberg controversies (1519-1526); and a mature period (after 1527), which featured the *Large Catechism* (1529) and the *Lectures on Genesis* (1535-1545).⁸⁹ At the outset, it should be noted that only the first two periods contributed significantly to Luther's career as a baptismal liturgist. Completed in 1526, the *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* was already on its way to being the standard baptismal rite in Lutheran communities when he published the treatises, catechisms, and commentaries featuring his mature baptismal thought. But were there important elements of Luther's mature thought that weren't included in his final baptismal liturgy?

⁸⁸ For example, Karl Barth in his *Church Dogmatics* IV.4 wrote: "he managed with relative credibility, though not without some flaws, to integrate his doctrine of baptism (in the *Greater Catechism*, 1529) in an excursus on the receiving of the sacrament. Nevertheless, the main themes of his theology—Law and Gospel, justification by faith alone, the freedom of a Christian man, etc.—hardly prepare us for the statement that a small child becomes a Christian in baptism." Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV.4, trans. Geoffery Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969), p. 169.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-66, 111-112.

Luther's pre-Reformation writings about baptism were largely limited to the *Dictata super Psalterium* (1513-1515), a collection of lectures from Wittenberg that has been analyzed recently by Trigg and other scholars.⁹⁰ As Trigg has noted, this early period of theological development was characterized by a general lack of references to baptism; even when an analogy to the sacrament was offered by the text, Luther made little mention of it.⁹¹ Baptism was a Catholic sacrament and therefore one of the seven divinely appointed 'signs and places' through which God chose to reveal himself. In the *Dictata*, however, Luther considered baptism more as a 'given' than a point of emphasis in his sacramental theology.⁹² Like other theologians, Luther spent more time considering the sacrament of penance in the life of Christians, and this distinction was certainly true of Luther as he entered the first period of acute spiritual crisis in his life. The Reformation 'breakthrough' can be seen as a symptom of this process. Penance no longer worked for Luther as the mechanism for restoring a right relationship with God; salvation came not through the works of penitent or priest but through the initial grace of baptism, which provided the entry-point into the Christian community and the first opportunity for meaningful faith. The early period of Luther's baptismal theology, therefore, stressed the sacramental role of penance over baptism—roles that would be reversed after 1518.

The middle period of Luther's baptismal theology (c. 1519-1527) began with the publication of his first major treatises on baptism: *The Holy and Blessed Sacrament of*

⁹⁰ For example, Werner Jetter, *Die Taufe beim jungen Luther: Eine Untersuchung über das Werden der reformatorischen Sakraments- und Taufanschauung* (Tübingen, 1954).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 121.

Baptism (1519) and *The Babylonian Captivity of the Christian Church* (1520). In these works, Luther acknowledged that the essential theological statement of baptism—through baptism Christ forgives the sin of the baptized and prepares him or her for Christian life and future salvation—had been handed down essentially intact from the early apostles to the late-medieval Church. However, Luther criticized the traditional opinion that baptism operated simply through the administration of the sacrament (*ex opere operato*), arguing instead that its efficacy relied on the faith of the believer. It was not the sacrament itself that justified, but a faith in God’s Word of promise:

But our signs or sacraments, as well as those of the fathers, have attached to them a word of promise which requires faith, and they cannot be fulfilled by any other work. Hence they are signs or sacraments of justification, for they are sacraments of justifying faith and not of works. Their whole efficacy, therefore, consists in faith itself, not in the doing of a work. Whoever believes them, fulfills them, even if he should not do a single work.⁹³

In *Babylonian Captivity*, Luther pared the traditional sacramental system from seven to two (retaining baptism and communion), and stressing that the rites should be distinguished by faithful reception, not an *ex opere operato* understanding of grace. At this time, Luther’s opponents were fellow Catholics, so his *sola fide* principle was perhaps more visible than it would be in later polemics. Luther went on to stress the inseparability of three items at baptism: God’s Word of promise, a visible sign (water), and the faith of the believer. The Word announced God’s covenant with the person receiving the sacrament and created a binding pledge on God’s part to forgive his or her sin. In *Blessed Sacrament of Baptism*, Luther introduced this covenant by suggesting

⁹³ *Babylonian Captivity of the Christian Church*, LW 36:65-66.

how people could participate in the promise by fighting sin: "God has here made a covenant with him to forgive all his sins if only he will fight against them even until death."⁹⁴ In *Babylonian Captivity*, he went on to describe the Word of promise more carefully:

Now, the first thing to be considered about baptism is the divine promise, which says: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." [Mark 16:16]. This promise must be set far above all the glitter of works, vows, religious orders, and whatever else man has introduced, for on it all our salvation depends. But we must so consider it as to exercise our faith in it, and have no doubt whatever that, once we have been baptized, we are saved. For unless faith is present or is conferred in baptism, baptism will profit us nothing...⁹⁵

Baptism distributed grace and created new Christians. Nonetheless, all humans were essentially limited by their own sinful humanity and trapped in a paradoxical condition. Throughout earthly life, according to Luther, baptized Christians were at one and the same time righteous in Christ and sinful in their own flesh—*simul justus et peccator*—living by faith and looking forward to the day when Christians would be ultimately released from the contradictory state. Baptism provided rich consolation on the journey, however, and Luther rejected the idea that a Christian's only recourse when dealing with post-baptismal sin was the use of penance. Instead, Christians should return to their baptismal promises again and again. In *Babylonian Captivity*, Luther described this transformation of the sacrament by making reference to St. Jerome's famous description of penance as "the second plank after shipwreck."⁹⁶ In Jerome's words (used by many medieval theologians), Christians had recourse to baptism as the first plank after

⁹⁴ LW 35:33.

⁹⁵ LW 36:58-59.

⁹⁶ *Secunda tabula post naufragium*; see Jerome, *Epist.* 130, 9.

shipwreck, and this sacrament provided an important infusion of grace and removed original sin. However, the first plank was quickly exhausted for Jerome, and Christians could only survive the ‘storm’ by making use of the sacrament of penance. Luther turned this argument around and suggested that the baptismal vessel had never foundered—it was always available for Christians to return to throughout life. He removed the sacrament of penance and recommended instead a return to baptism:

You will likewise see how perilous, indeed, how false it is to suppose that penance is “the second plank after shipwreck,” and how pernicious an error it is to believe that the power of baptism is broken, and the ship dashed to pieces, because of sin. The ship remains one, solid, and invincible; it will never be broken up into separate “planks.” In it are carried all those who are brought to the harbor of salvation, for it is the truth of God giving us its promise in the sacraments. Of course, it often happens that many rashly leap overboard into the sea and perish; these are those who abandon faith in the promise and plunge into sin. But the ship itself remains intact and holds its course unimpaired.⁹⁷

Luther revised the *Order of Baptism* (1523) in this middle period; he translated the Catholic rite into the vernacular but removed few of the existing symbols and prayers from traditional baptism. Because his emphasis was on faith, he focused his energy on revising the rubrics in clear, understandable German: “I have, therefore, begun to do in German what was heretofore done in Latin...in order that the sponsors and others present may be stirred to greater faith and more earnest devotion.”⁹⁸ But while Luther attacked an *ex opere operato* understanding of baptism that minimized faith, he also defended traditional baptism from the attacks of Karlstadt and the ‘spiritualists’, who sought to minimize or remove external symbols from baptism. We might expect from *Babylonian*

⁹⁷ LW 36:61.

⁹⁸ LW 53:101.

Captivity a baptismal liturgy that de-emphasized traditional texts and symbols, but Luther chose to retain these items, explaining his reluctance to proceed faster by reference to the adiaphora principle. In 1523, then, it appears that Luther's baptismal liturgy was less a product of *Sacrament of Baptism* and *Babylonian Captivity* than a middle course taken in response to events on the ground in the Wittenberg crisis of 1521-1522.

In 1526, a date near the end of the middle period, Luther had new opponents in mind. The *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* further reduced the symbols used in baptism, dropping salt, spittle, and breath as the external markers of exorcism. Luther also reinforced passages in the rite that identified baptism as a service for infants. His new opponents were early Anabaptists and others who favored adult baptism—those who took Luther's credo of *sola fide* as a signal to admit only confessing adults as candidates for baptism. In *Babylonian Captivity*, Luther had provisionally defended infant baptism by stressing that faith could be an external faith (*fides aliena*) provided either by the Church as a whole or by believing godparents or members of the congregation. But he had only begun his polemical attack on Anabaptists.⁹⁹ The *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* should also, therefore, be considered a document from Luther's middle period of theological development. Although Luther had modified traditional baptism and reacted to the attacks of 'spiritualists' and early Anabaptists, he had not yet developed his mature baptismal thought.

Were there important new developments in Luther's theology of baptism after 1527 and did these 'mature' positions differ from the Luther of the baptismal liturgy?

⁹⁹ Luther's rejection of adult baptism began as early as 1521 (see above), but his most important rejection of Anabaptist teaching (*Concerning Rebaptism*) was not published until January 1528.

The most important baptismal works from the later period were *Concerning Rebaptism* (1528), *Small Catechism* (1529), *Large Catechism* (1529), and *Lectures on Genesis* (1535-1545). Jonathan Trigg argues that when the baptismal teaching in these books is closely analyzed, the major themes of Luther's earlier theology are still apparent. The mature Luther, however, was much more willing to make references to baptism in his sermons and commentaries than the younger Luther.¹⁰⁰ In Trigg's opinion, this provides evidence that baptism was very close to the core of Luther's overall theology, and was intimately linked to his understanding of justification and salvation.¹⁰¹ Yet the older Luther did go on to develop new themes that had received less emphasis in the earlier periods. A presentation of three of these ideas follows; they include a defense of the validity of baptism in the absence of faith, a renewed emphasis on the material objects (or divinely appointed signs) working in baptism, and new theological insights into the 'present tense' of the sacrament of baptism.

In *Babylonian Captivity*, Luther began his polemic by placing supreme emphasis on faith as the component that gave sacraments their efficacy. As I mentioned above, Luther found this necessary to counter what he saw as a mechanical (*ex opere operato*) administration of the sacrament, which placed less emphasis on the relationship between individual consciences and the promises of Christ. Luther perceived Catholic baptism as a rich and deeply symbolic rite, but he criticized the influence of scholastic theology on

¹⁰⁰ For example, Trigg compared Luther's *Lectures on Deuteronomy* (1525) and found the *Lectures on Genesis* to feature much more in the way of baptismal imagery. See Trigg, *Baptism in the Theology of Martin Luther*, pp. 64-65.

¹⁰¹ For a supporting view that sees the roots of Luther's doctrine of justification in Paul's baptismal theology, see Robert Kolb, "God Kills to Make Alive: Romans 6 and Luther's Understanding of Justification (1535)", pp. 33-56.

the sacrament, which permitted magical ideas about material objects to drift into popular practices, while the basic texts of the liturgy remained unchanged. In *Concerning Rebaptism*, however, Luther took a different tack—in the face of those who demanded faith *at the moment of baptism*, Luther emphasized the limited abilities of mankind and the warning that baptism should not become a new work which justified man before God based on a person's own merit. From this position, the older Luther introduced the idea that baptism was valid even if faith was not present in the believer at the time of administration. Such faith might grow or shrink over time, as in the case of a girl who married a man without affection but later came to love him.¹⁰² In any case, Christians should not rush for rebaptism when they found their own faith to be at a high point, but they should instead be thankful to God. As Luther went on to emphasize in the *Large Catechism*, “My faith does not constitute baptism but receives it.”¹⁰³

Compared to *Babylonian Captivity*, the older Luther also placed more emphasis on the external sign (*Zeichen*) of baptism, a process that began with the Wittenberg controversies of 1521-1522 and found fuller development in the *Large Catechism* and *Lectures on Genesis*. Luther accused radical Protestants of separating the Word from the water at baptism, and pulling apart what God had joined together. If God's chosen sign was despised as mere (*bloß*) water, it meant that what God had joined to the water was also being forgotten.¹⁰⁴ As Trigg has noted, the mature Luther joined the water and word together so closely that there was, as it were, an exchange of attributes or *communicatio*

¹⁰² “Would then a second engagement be required, a second wedding be celebrated, as if she had not previously been a wife, so that the earlier betrothal and wedding were in vain?” LW 40:246.

¹⁰³ BC 438.

¹⁰⁴ BC 438.

idiomatum between them.¹⁰⁵ The earlier Luther was reluctant to assign to the external sign that which depended on the word of promise to which it was attached, but this changed as the attacks of the Anabaptists increased. Luther's comments in the afterword to the 1523 baptismal liturgy (repeated in 1526) seem to reflect this earlier position,¹⁰⁶ but it should be noted that he did not criticize the water as one of the optional external signs, only the salt, spittle, breath, signing, clay, oil, candle, and christening robe.

Finally, the idea of baptism as a perpetual sacrament (*perpetuum sacramentum*) received significant treatment by the older Luther as a source of consolation during life's troubles, and especially as a substitute for penance. The end result of baptism is salvation, for Luther, and to be saved was nothing less than being released from sin, death, and the devil into the Kingdom of Christ.¹⁰⁷ One important aspect of this 'present tense' of baptism was related to faith, and the idea that the effects of baptism (salvation, rebirth, incorporation in Christ, etc.) were not strongly linked in the later Luther to the moment of baptismal administration.¹⁰⁸ The regeneration that baptism effects is not back in the past, but it is active in the present as well, demanding a daily response from each believer. The most dramatic example of this in Luther's teaching was perhaps his commentary on Genesis 42:29-34, in which Luther used the parable of the Good Samaritan¹⁰⁹ as an illustration of the position of the baptized Christian. Beaten and left for dead, the traveler in Jesus' parable was saved by the Samaritan and placed half dead

¹⁰⁵ Trigg, *Baptism in the Theology of Luther*, pp. 147-148.

¹⁰⁶ "Now remember, too, that in baptism the external things are the least important..."; LW 53:102.

¹⁰⁷ BC 438.

¹⁰⁸ Trigg, *Baptism in the Theology of Luther*, pp. 78-79.

¹⁰⁹ Luke 10:29-37.

on a donkey. This wounded, transitory figure was the ultimate illustration of the baptized Christian for Luther.¹¹⁰ Although oil and wine have been poured on his wounds, and the gift of the Holy Spirit has begun, the baptismal healing of man's nature remains a daily, lifelong process.¹¹¹

A chronological survey of Luther's baptismal theology demonstrates significant continuities in his teaching. Yet it must be admitted that when Luther changed the emphasis of his teaching on baptism, the result was often an entirely new deposit of baptismal analogies with their own character and scriptural citations. Such was the case, for example, when Luther switched his attack from the Catholic sacramental system (in *Babylonian Captivity*) to an attack on Anabaptist teaching (in *Concerning Rebaptism*). When this change took place, Luther put less emphasis on the role of faith in the sacrament, and placed more emphasis on the vital combination of word and sign in baptism. But *both* faith and the word were important for Luther—like his other controversies, the reformer sought to combat each new rival without giving ground to the previous ones. When possible, he sought to group them together in his polemics.¹¹²

Was the final Lutheran baptismal liturgy an accurate or full reflection of Luther's baptismal theology? It seems clear from the preceding analysis that Luther's theology of

¹¹⁰ For an earlier example of the 'wounded man' from Luther's *Table Talk*, see "Original Sin is Like a Wound" (1531), LW 54:20.

¹¹¹ LW 7:28; see also Trigg, *Baptism and the Theology of Luther*, p. 79.

¹¹² Trigg also found this distinction important: "Luther identifies the errors of his various opponents as attempts to separate what God has joined. The papists separate the word from the sacrament by failing to pay attention to the word; they make the sacrament an *opus operatum*. The Sacramentarians separate word from sacrament by making the uselessness of externals for salvation into a cardinal principle of their theology—they forget that some of these externals have been commanded by the joining of God's word to them." Trigg, *Baptism in the Theology of Luther*, p. 73.

baptism was intimately connected with the construction of his liturgy, but that his mature theology also developed in some ways that the 1526 *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* did not fully anticipate. This is most obvious when one looks for the ‘present tense’ of baptism in the final liturgy. At no place in Luther’s comments about the rite, in his instructions to parish pastors, or in the liturgy itself is there an allusion to the rich imagery of baptism as a perpetual sacrament that would develop in later years. The 1526 rite mentioned “regeneration” twice in the liturgy—once at the beginning of the service and once at the end. The first instance is a prayer that existed almost word for word in the 1523 *Order of Baptism*, the *Magdeburg Agenda*, and the *Gelasian Sacramentary* (italics mine):

Almighty eternal God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I cry to thee for this N., thy servant, who prays for the gift of thy baptism and desires thine eternal grace through *spiritual regeneration*: Receive him, Lord, and as thou hast said, “Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you,” so *give now* the good to him that asketh and open the door to him that knocketh...¹¹³

This ancient prayer asks that the gift of spiritual regeneration be *given now*, not at a time in the future. Had Luther wished, this might have been an opportunity to describe the ‘present tense’ of the sacrament. Likewise, a second use of “regeneration” appeared in the rite as the closing prayer, at the time when the infant was put in the christening robe:

The almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *hath regenerated thee* through water and the Holy Ghost and hath forgiven thee all thy sin, strengthen thee with his grace to life everlasting. Amen.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ LW 53:107. For the *Magdeburg Agenda* and earlier rites, see J. D. C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: The Reformation Period* (London: S. P. C. K., 1970), pp. 10, 16.

¹¹⁴ LW 53:109.

Now that the administration of the rite was over, the spiritual regeneration given is described in the past tense. God is asked to preserve the new Christian who he has regenerated with the baptismal formula, but there is no hint that the sacrament might be remembered daily to continue the process.

It was not always the goal of Protestant liturgy to represent theology; as Luther himself acknowledged, that was what good preaching and teaching about baptism might provide later.¹¹⁵ Luther had no obligation to update his liturgy periodically to keep track of the nuances of his baptismal theology. For him, baptism did its duty if it was “administered with God’s Word, true faith, and serious prayer.”¹¹⁶ Still, Luther probably stopped short in his revision of the liturgy and did not draw out the full implication of his baptismal understandings. For example, he did not insert his poignant scriptural illustration of the wounded Christian man in the liturgy, who had received his anointing and treatment from the Good Samaritan but was not yet well. He also did not modify the liturgy or the prayers to clarify his insights into the ‘present tense’ of baptism, which he valued so much in his later theology. As a result, the ‘present tense’ of baptism was not a central part of Luther’s legacy to the next generation of Lutheran reformers. As Mark Tranvik has noted in his dissertation on baptism in the later Lutheran Reformation (c. 1530-1580),¹¹⁷ most of the major Lutheran theologians after Luther reduced the position of baptism in their overall theology, and when they did speak of baptism, the crucial

¹¹⁵ See Luther’s notes regarding baptism in *Instructions for the Visitation of Parish Pastors*, LW 40:288.

¹¹⁶ LW 53:103.

¹¹⁷ Mark David Tranvik, *The Other Sacrament: The Doctrine of Baptism in the Late Lutheran Reformation*, Ph.D. dissertation (St. Paul, MN: Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, 1992).

‘present tense’ of sacrament was often neglected. It may be that this legacy also had artistic implications; although the parable of the Good Samaritan was valued as a metaphor for baptism by Luther, the story was never depicted on Lutheran baptismal fonts in Lower Saxony during the Reformation period, although numerous Bible stories were.¹¹⁸

Philip Melanchthon wrote a systematic theology of baptism in his influential *Loci Communes*, which appeared in several editions between 1521 and 1559. In the first edition of this work he spoke of baptism as a sacrament that encompassed the entire life of the believer, teaching that it would provide the most effective consolation for those about to die.¹¹⁹ In this context, Lutheran baptism became a substitute for the Catholic sacrament of penance.¹²⁰ Yet, in the 1559 edition of *Loci Communes*, Melanchthon removed baptism from a discussion of repentance and treated it on its own in a section describing the sacraments.¹²¹ According to Mark Tranvik, this reorientation served to highlight Melanchthon’s defense of infant baptism, but may have made repentance appear “as an abstract act of self-will, unconnected with the sinner’s own death in the death of Christ”.¹²² Luther had typically sought to link baptism and repentance, as Melanchthon had done in the 1521 edition of *Loci Communes*. Nicholas Selnecker, an

¹¹⁸ Ulrike Mathies compared the biblical iconography used in over 100 surviving baptismal fonts in Lower Saxony. See Mathies, *Die Protestantischen Taufbecken Niedersachsens*, pp. 264-67.

¹¹⁹ Tranvik, *The Other Sacrament: The Doctrine of Baptism*, p. 47.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 48. For the implications of this reform for the penitential cycle of late medieval Catholicism, see Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 79-93, 156-67.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 50.

¹²² Ibid., p. 63. For the complete text, see Philip Melanchthon, *Loci Communes Theologici*, in *Library of Christian Classics*, vol. XIX, trans. Wilhelm Pauck (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969).

important Lutheran reformer in northern Germany and a contributor to the *Book of Concord*, gave the remembrance of baptism only passing mention (one paragraph out of forty pages) in his important work of systematic theology entitled *Institutio religionis Christianae* (1573).¹²³ Martin Chemnitz (1526-1586), the reformer of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel and co-author of the *Book of Concord*, discussed baptism using three fundamental lenses: infant baptism, the doctrine of original sin, and the exorcism controversy (a topic that will be explored fully in the next chapter).¹²⁴ Like the others, Chemnitz chose not to emphasize the ‘present tense’ of baptism—a theme that the older Luther developed so strongly in his catechisms and later biblical commentaries.

By leaving the continuing power of baptism out of his baptismal liturgy, a circumstance related more to the Wittenberg controversies than to the particular needs of his theology, Luther unintentionally signaled to future generations that baptism’s ‘present tense’ was not a crucial feature of evangelical baptism. Such a conclusion would find support in the general liturgical principle attributed to Gregory the Great (r. 590-604), who argued when defending standardized worship as a pedagogical tool: *Lex orandi, lex credendi*—liturgy performed is liturgy believed. It may also suggest that on the ground, liturgical theology (the theology passed on through ritual, artwork, and gesture) is sometimes more influential than the teaching contained in sermons, confessional treatises, and catechisms.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-57.



Figure 2-1: Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Melancthon Baptizes an Infant*, 1547
(Stadtkirche St. Marien, Lutherstadt Wittenberg).



Figure 2-2: Cord Mente the Elder (1500-1577), Bronze Baptismal Font, 1571 (Beatae Mariae Virginis, Wolfenbüttel). Photo credit: U. Mathies.

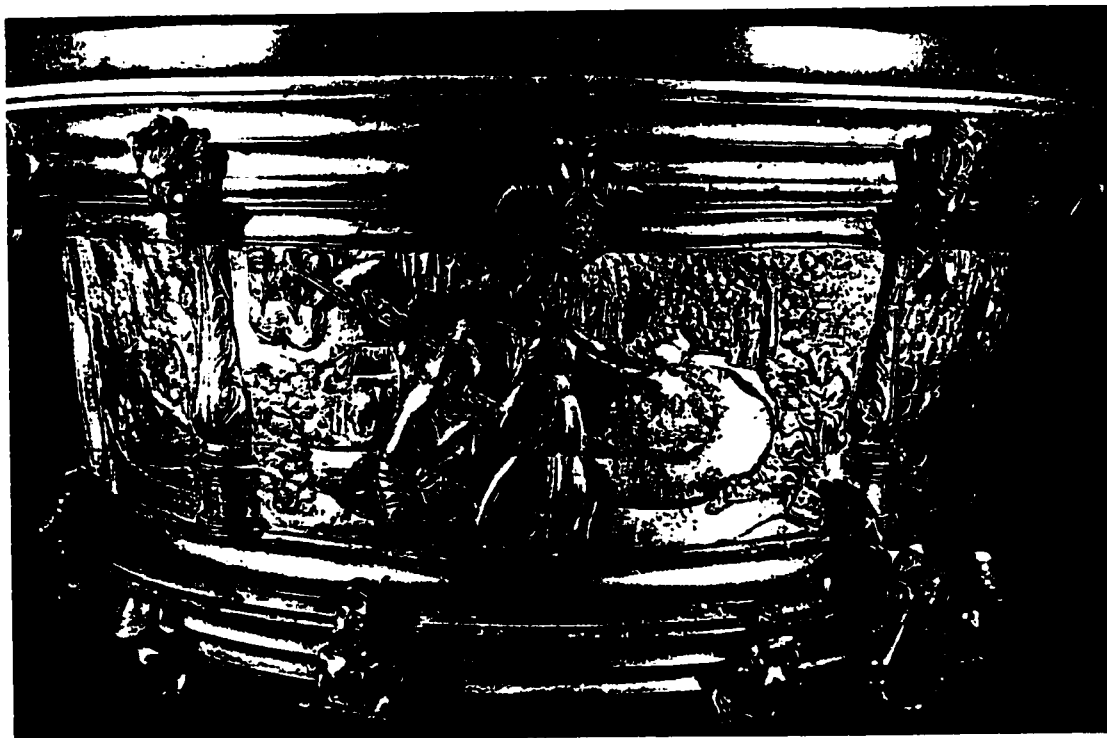


Figure 2-3: Detail of bronze relief panel, *Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River*, 1571 (Beatae Mariae Virginis, Wolfenbüttel). Photo credit: U. Mathies.



Figure 2-4: Stone Baptismal Font, 1594 (St. Gertrud, Gleidingen). The German inscription in the center of the font is from Mark Chapter 10: “Christ said let the children come to me and hinder them not for such is the kingdom of God.” Photo credit: U. Mathies.

Chapter 3

Baptism in a Confessional Context: Competing Rites of Initiation and the Reform of Lower Saxony

In 1590, a local butcher walked into Dresden's Lutheran *Hofkirche* with his daughter and a meat cleaver. He positioned himself next to the baptismal font and presented his daughter to receive the sacrament of holy baptism, a ritual of Christian initiation constructed by Martin Luther in 1526 and administered routinely in Lutheran circles since the early years of the Reformation.¹ On the surface, the butcher's demands were not that unusual—he simply asked the pastor to baptize his daughter in the traditional Lutheran manner by using a ten-minute occasional service that Lutheran divines routinely used for the baptism of infants and (when necessary) adults. When the Dresden butcher requested baptism for his infant daughter, he joined generations of theologians and laymen who understood the sacrament to be essential to Christian initiation and future salvation. The rite had important social implications too, including

¹ For the original description of this episode in German, see Thomas Klein, *Der Kampf um die Zweite Reformation in Kursachsen, 1586-1591* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1962), esp. p. 166: "Häufig zitiert ist die Geschichte eines Dresdener Schlächtermeisters, der, das Beil in der Hand, den Geistlichen zur Anwendung des Exorzismus bei der Taufe seines Kindes zwang." For important presentations in English, see Bodo Nischan, "The Exorcism Controversy and Baptism in the Late Reformation", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. XVIII, no. 1 (Spring 1987), p. 39, and Bodo Nischan, "Ritual and Protestant Identity in Late Reformation Germany", in *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, vol. 2, edited by Bruce Gordon (Hants, England: Scholar Press, 1996), p. 152.

uniting the baptismal candidate with an extended kin group and moving the child on the path to Christian education and confirmation, but the Dresden *Schlächtermeister* did not seem too interested in the social benefits of baptism on this day. Before the ceremony began, the butcher threatened to split the pastor's head open if he dared to omit a paragraph administering exorcism from his daughter's service. The paragraph was a standard part of the Lutheran baptismal liturgy, and had existed in the Catholic rite since the early Middle Ages. But why should it cause the butcher to menace with his meat cleaver? And what could make his pastor omit the crucial words of exorcism?

This chapter will explore the important confessional controversies, including baptismal exorcism, which swirled around the sacrament of baptism after Protestant reformers and secular leaders collectively established evangelical reforms in northern Germany. The thematic focus of my analysis will be the systematic process of reform that Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling have termed "confessionalization", in which religious, social, and political forces worked collectively to integrate and control German cities and territorial states between the Peace of Augsburg (1555) and the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War (1618).² Confessionalization is closely associated with state building

² For a historiographic discussion of the terms "confessional formation" (*Konfessionsbildung*) and "confessionalization", see E. W. Zeeden, *Die Entstehung der Konfessionen, Grundlagen und Formen der Konfessionsbildung* (München/Wien, 1965); E. W. Zeeden, *Konfessionsbildung* (Stuttgart, 1985); W. Reinhard, "Gegenreformation als Modernisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalters", in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 68 (1977), pp. 226-252; W. Reinhard, "Konfession und Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland", in W. Reinhard, ed., *Bekenntnis und Geschichte, Schriften der Philosophischen Fakultäten der universität Augsburg 20* (1981), pp. 165-189; W. Reinhard, "Zwang zur Konfessionalisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalters", *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 10 (1983), pp. 257-77; Heinz Schilling, *Konfessionskonflikt und Staatsbildung: Eine Fallstudie über das Verhältnis von religiösem und sozialem Wandel in der Frühneuzeit am Beispiel der Grafschaft Lippe* (Gütersloh, 1981); Heinz Schilling, "Konfessionalisierung als gesellschaftlicher Umbruch,

in Germany and the establishment of Lutheranism as a state religion, a process that has also been investigated in connection with the systematic control of moral, social, and political life in late Reformation communities known as social discipline.³ The geographic focus of my analysis will be Lower Saxony (*Niedersachsen*), a loose confederation of territories, bishoprics, and independent cities that collectively experienced the forces of reform and counter-reform in the middle decades of the 16th century. In particular, I will analyze the processes of confessionalization in the former Welf (*Guelf*) territories of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, Braunschweig-Lüneburg, and Calenberg-Göttingen, and several semi-autonomous cities in the region.

Confessionalization took place between the two poles of state-building and confessional conflict, both within German territories, and between German territories and the Holy Roman Empire.⁴ To assist in the process of confessional consolidation, Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic leaders used church orders (*Kirchenordnungen*) to coordinate liturgical, social, and legal reforms in their territories. These sources provide the historian with rich and largely untapped repositories for information about baptismal practices and regulations in Lower Saxony and elsewhere. This chapter will approach baptism through these documents, providing a detailed view of Protestant piety and identity in the midst of the Reformation and Counter Reformation processes. In addition,

Inhaltliche Perspektiven und massenmediale Darstellung”, in S. Quandt, ed., *Luther, die Reformation und die Deutschen—Wie erzählen wir unsere Geschichte?* (Paderborn, 1982), pp. 35-51; Heinz Schilling, “Town, Territorial State and the Reich in Early Modern Germany”, in *Society and Religion in Reformation Germany*, edited by R. Po-chia Hsia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Heinz Schilling, *Religion, Political Culture, and the Emergence of Early Modern Society* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1992), esp. Part II, pp. 205-301.

³ See R. Po-chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe 1550-1750* (London: Routledge, 1989), esp. pp. 122-42.

⁴ Schilling, *Religion, Political Culture, and the Emergence of Early Modern Society*, p. 209.

the narratives in this chapter will serve as an introduction to the case studies presented in Chapters 4-6, which offer a detailed analysis of baptismal reforms in Lower Saxony organized around the discourses of gender, family, community, and authority.

Chapter 3 begins with an orientation to the geography and political composition of Lower Saxony, and continues with an analysis of the regional patterns of reform beginning in the 1520s. In this discussion, the activities of the Lutheran reformers is at first more apparent than the competing confessions—Lutheran pastors and theologians found early success in many Lower Saxon cities, and reinforced their contacts with carefully chosen representatives from Wittenberg and Luther's immediate circle of reformers. However, Lower Saxony had significant Catholic strongholds throughout the 16th century (most significantly the duchy of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel), and so the institutional process of reform includes numerous stories of resistance to evangelism and the new forms of piety it encouraged. These confessional confrontations are perhaps most powerfully demonstrated by the Calvinist reform of Emden in East Friesland, in which Lutheran, Reformed, and Anabaptist loyalists fought for control in territorial courts and parish churches.

A central question in this presentation is the extent to which baptism played a role in the religious life of Protestants and Catholics as the waves of reform worked their way through the communities of Lower Saxony. The Reformation found its earliest supporters in the cities, and I will suggest that the urban nature of Lutheran and Calvinist reforming efforts made baptism an appropriate ritual to express dissatisfaction with traditional practices and to communicate new loyalties. This language or 'discourse' of

denominational identity became a dramatic marker of institutional affiliation as the second phase of reform—confessionalization—spread through Lower Saxony in the second half of the 16th century. Here baptism, and especially the words and symbols used in baptism, became confessional markers and pedagogical tools in the indoctrination process, which both reinforced teaching and preaching, and dramatically highlighted the ‘heresy’ of competing churches. For this reason, I spend considerable time in this chapter investigating the competing rites of Christian initiation administered in Germany, including the baptismal ritual of Leo Jud, Martin Bucer, Huldrych Zwingli, and John Calvin—‘Reformed’ liturgies which collectively influenced the rites of baptism administered in Emden and other Lower Saxon cities. It is through this disagreement about symbols, and especially the words of baptismal exorcism, that we may finally approach the episode of the Dresden butcher, who argued the case of many in northern Germany when he insisted with his meat cleaver that the words and symbols used in baptism mattered, and that he would resort to violence if they were altered without his consent.

How the Reformation Worked: The Protestant Reform of Lower Saxony

The Protestant Reformation in Lower Saxony was first and foremost an urban Reformation; as in other parts of Germany and Switzerland, the evangelical message first took root in the cities and then spread gradually, if at all, to the surrounding countryside.⁵

⁵ For an introduction to the literature considering the urban Reformation, see Bernd Moeller, *Imperial Cities and the Reformation*, trans. H. C. Erik Midelfort and Mark U. Edwards, Jr. (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1982), originally published as *Reichsstadt und Reformation* (Gütersloh, 1962); Gerald Strauss, “Protestant Dogma and City Government: The Case of

Beyond this basic pattern of reform, there was considerable variation in the towns and territorial units of Lower Saxony. Importantly, the 'evangelical' message itself took on different forms, from the 'orthodox' varieties of Lutheranism, Zwinglianism, and Calvinism, to several distinct strains of Anabaptism, and the more radical 'fringe' platforms of individualistic preachers who presented idiosyncratic ideas about reform that have left few reliable traces in the historic record.⁶ The Reformation also permeated Lower Saxony at different times and in different ways. While many of the larger, independent cities in the Hanseatic trading league converted to Protestant creeds in the 1520s and 1530s, several of the regional principalities (such as the duchy of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel) did not fully convert to Lutheranism until the 1560s or later; indeed, some never fully embraced Protestant doctrine. The history of the Reformation in Lower Saxony is thus a complex one, involving many political entities, evangelical confessions, and a host of unique preachers, magistrates, burgers, artisans, and peasants. The following sections discuss how many of these groups approached the

Nuremberg", *Past and Present* 36 (1967), pp. 38-58; Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975), esp. "Strikes and Salvation at Lyon", pp. 1-16; Steven E. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); Olaf Mörke, *Rat und Bürger in der Reformation: Soziale Gruppen und kirchlicher Wandel in den welfischen Hansestädten Lüneburg, Braunschweig und Göttingen* (Hildesheim, 1983); Heinz Schilling, "The Reformation in the Hanseatic Cities", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 14 (1983), pp. 443-56; R. Po-chia Hsia, ed., *The German People and the Reformation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988). For a recent survey with bibliographic information, see Berndt Hamm, "The Urban Reformation in the Holy Roman Empire", trans. Thomas A. Brady, Jr., in *Handbook of European History, 1400-1600*, vol. 2, edited by T. Brady, H. Oberman, and J. Tracy (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1995), pp. 193-227.

⁶ For a useful discussion of 'fringe' Protestant groups in northern Germany and their messages, see Heinz Schilling, "Alternatives to the Lutheran Reformation and the Rise of Lutheran Identity", in *Germania Illustrata*, edited by A. Fix and S. Karant-Nunn, (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992).

idea of reform, and how baptism emerged as an important mark of their confessional identity.

In the 16th century, Lower Saxony (*Niedersachsen*) was a fluid geographical term that described the loose collection of principalities and independent cities between Electoral Saxony (*Kursachsen*) to the east, Hesse to the south, the Netherlands to the west, and the North Sea to the north. (See Figure 3-1.) The northern reaches of Lower Saxony bordered the sea and were closely associated with maritime activities. In the coastal areas of Lower Saxony (East Friesland), and other parts of northwest and central Lower Saxony, the predominant language was Low German (*Niederdeutsch*), a German dialect with close linguistic affinities to Dutch. In these areas, the evangelical reformers traveling from other parts of Germany occasionally had difficulty spreading their message due to regional differences in the German language. The Lutheran reformer Antonius Corvinus (1501-1553), for example, had problems with the dialect when he helped to publish a High German church order in Calenberg-Göttingen that had been imported from Brandenburg in 1540. Few of the local residents could understand it, and two years later it was finally republished in the local Low German dialect.⁷

Further inland, the coastal plains of Lower Saxony rise gradually to form rocky hills that lead to the rich and forested Harz mountains, where powerful Hohenstaufen kings established their mining operations in the central Middle Ages and developed Goslar as the capital of the Holy Roman Empire. From Goslar, Frederick Barbarossa began his long military campaign into Italy in the 12th century to enforce his imperial

⁷ See Sehling 3, p. 55.

claims. The Welf dukes, a rival German dynasty that produced leaders such as Henry the Lion (duke of Saxony and Bavaria) and Emperor Otto IV (r. 1208-1215), were also based in Goslar and nearby Braunschweig. By the late 15th century, however, the prestige of the Hohenstaufen and Welf houses had declined and the one-time imperial capital had evolved into a free, imperial city (*Reichsstadt*) enjoying political independence from regional power structures. In 1495, the former Welf territories were divided into four principalities: Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, Braunschweig-Lüneburg, Calenberg-Göttingen, and Braunschweig-Grubenhagen. From 1584 to 1634, Calenberg-Göttingen belonged to Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. Yet the Welf dukes were not alone in Lower Saxony; like other territories in Germany, the region was divided into numerous political entities of varying rank and status. There were duchies (*Herzoge*), earldoms (*Grafs*), bishoprics (*Stifts*), free imperial cities (*Reichsstädten*), and other cities (such as Braunschweig) that enjoyed almost complete independence from territorial governments. The rules of hereditary succession continued to fragment and divide the region, and the economic boom of the 15th century bolstered the confidence and independence of many of the larger towns in the Hanseatic trading league. Although military and familial consolidations occasionally joined one entity to another in Lower Saxony, important political, cultural, and economic differences continued to fragment the region.

Figure 3-2 shows the political boundaries in Lower Saxony at about the time of the first evangelical movements in the territory (c. 1520). Between 1520 and the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War (1618) there was considerable change in the region, as individual territories reacted to the political forces of the Reformation and modifications

related to heredity and dynastic consolidation.⁸ It should be noted that the political borders of the modern *Bundesland* of Lower Saxony do not correspond precisely to the political entities presented in this study, or to the community identity people in north Germany felt during the 16th and 17th centuries. Although a few 16th-century chronicles do describe Lower Saxony as a distinct region in Germany,⁹ the category would have sparked only limited feelings of identity and loyalty among the two-dozen politically distinct groups in the region.¹⁰ Accordingly, I plan to study several broadly representative areas in Lower Saxony during the Reformation period, rather than each city and territory individually. The lion's share of my analysis will be concentrated upon three of the Welf territories in the central part of Lower Saxony—the principalities of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, Braunschweig-Lüneburg, and Calenberg-Göttingen. I will also explain how baptism was reformed in the towns of Braunschweig (Brunswick), Goslar, Hildesheim, and Emden (a town in East Friesland). In these regions, the institutional processes associated with reform and confessionalization were the most developed. In addition, the case studies I have selected are diverse enough in size, political organization, and confessional identity to establish useful general conclusions

⁸ For materials that discuss the Protestant Reformation in Lower Saxony, see Historische Kommission für Niedersachsen, ed., *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur allgemeinen Geschichte Niedersachsens in der Neuzeit*, vols. 34-36 (Hildesheim, 1973-1977); Hans-Walter Krumwiede, "Die Reformation in Niedersachsen: Politische, soziale und kirchlich-theologische Aspekte", in *JGNK* 65 (1967), pp. 7-26; Hans Patze, ed., *Geschichte Niedersachsens* (Hildesheim, 1977); Gundrun Pischke, ed., *Geschichtlicher Handatlas von Niedersachsen* (Neumuenster: Wachholtz, 1989).

⁹ For an example, see M. Johannem Pomarium [weilandt Pfarherrn zu S. Peter in Magdeburg], *Chronica Der Sachsen und Nidersachsen...* (Wittenberg, 1588), p. 645; HAB Alv. Ma 18.

¹⁰ For a short history of the word *Niedersachsen* as a political and geographic term, see Sehling 6/1, pp. xxii-xiv.

about how the Reformation worked in Lower Saxony, and in particular how rituals such as baptism expressed local ideas about power, piety, and identity.

Evangelical Theology and Ritual in Braunschweig

Evangelical theology came to the towns of Lower Saxony in the mid-1520s, after Martin Luther and Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt had debated the nature of Christian worship in the iconoclastic debates of 1521-1522. News from the Wittenberg reformers entered the territory via diplomatic reports, printed treatises, biblical translations, pastoral letters, and the sermons of excited itinerant preachers. The cities of northern Germany were bustling commercial centers and actively traded with the towns in neighboring Saxony and the powerful south German and Swiss cities, as well as the maritime ports of England and the Netherlands, and other places along the North Sea trade routes. As centers of literary and artistic production, printing, trade, and a local flowering humanist culture, the larger cities of Lower Saxony were the ideal soil for the evangelical movement, which spread rapidly along the trade routes through the influence of numerous printed materials and the effort of preachers sent from Wittenberg and other sources of reform.¹¹ Translations of Luther's new German Bible, vivid pamphlets and broadsides, mass-produced woodcuts and copper engravings, theological treatises, and expanding sermon and catechetical collections advanced quickly from one city to the next as the popularity of the evangelical movement grew in the 1520s. As elsewhere in Germany, local advocates of evangelism emerged in Lower Saxon towns, and these men

¹¹ Berndt Hamm, "Urban Reformation in the Holy Roman Empire", p. 198.

were soon supported by letters of encouragement and personal visits from those in Wittenberg and other places.

In 1521 and 1522, Gottschalk Kruse (1499-1540), a monk from Braunschweig who had studied with Luther and Karlstadt in Wittenberg, brought early evangelical teachings back to his home in Braunschweig and became one of the first residents to preach the evangelical message. After a short period of preaching, Kruse was expelled from his Benedictine cloister (St. Aegidien) by the command of a prince who worked mightily against the Protestant cause until his death in 1569—Duke Henry of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, a powerful supporter of traditional religion who worked ceaselessly to control the affairs of Braunschweig, despite its recent show of independence from the duke.¹² Kruse's evangelical message had caused serious division and unrest in the community, and the Braunschweig city council joined Duke Henry in trying to stop the influence of Lutheran ideas by prohibiting the purchase and use of Lutheran books. It is difficult to reconstruct Kruse's precise theology at this time; he probably had 'spiritualist' tendencies and was almost certainly associated with the Braunschweig spiritualist Hans Horneborch, but after the Reformation succeeded he was regarded as an orthodox Lutheran by subsequent apologists and historians. It is therefore difficult to evaluate him accurately, or to present his unique evangelical message.¹³ Nevertheless, Kruse returned to Wittenberg and wrote the first Low German pamphlet of

¹² Paul Raabe, *Reformatoren in Niedersachsen* (Wolfenbüttel, Germany: Herzog August Bibliothek, 1983), p. 10. For a later chronicle account, see Philip Julius Rhetmeyer, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Incytae Urbis Brunsvigae, Pars III / Oder: Der berühmten stadt Braunschweig Kirken-Historie / Dritter Theil / Darrin Die Reformations-Historie...* (Braunschweig, 1710), Chapter 1.

¹³ Schilling, "Alternatives to the Lutheran Reformation", p. 100, fn 3 and p. 107.

the Reformation, a work entitled *Van adams und unsem valle und wedder uperstandinghe*. He later moved to Celle, a town in the neighboring duchy of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, and began preaching his version of the evangelical message, and calling for the closure of the Celle monasteries. In 1527, Kruse was installed as preacher in Harburg by Duke Otto, and worked with town magistrates to reform the city according to Lutheran principles.

The eventual reform of the city of Braunschweig followed a pattern that emerged in many Germany and Swiss cities by the 1520s and 1530s. In 1526, an influential circle of Luther sympathizers, who had been recruited from a wide social spectrum, formed around the popular preachers Heinrich Lampe (1503-1583), Johan Oldendorp (1483?-1567?), and Autor Sander (1500-1540?) in the parish church of St. Magnus (*Sankt Magni*), an important ecclesiastical building dating from the 11th century and located in an older part of the city known as Alte Wiek.¹⁴ This group of reformers energized the leading citizens and the guild masters of the city, who represented the city's commercial and guild-oriented interests.¹⁵ These burgers pressed for greater participation in the government of the city, and by early 1528 the city council granted their request by creating a special citizens' committee that would advise the council on religious and non-religious matters. Although Braunschweig was technically under the control of Duke Henry, the council rebuffed his efforts to preserve the traditional church, a point that provides additional evidence of the city's desire for political independence, as well as the

¹⁴ For the founding of St. Magnus c. 1030, see Heinricus Buenting, *Newe, Volstendige Braunschweigische und Lueneburgische Chronica* (Magdeburg, 1620), p. 112; HAB M: Gn 4o 324.

¹⁵ Mörke, *Rat und Bürger*, pp. 125-143; OER, "Braunschweig", pp. 210-12.

important fact that a significant majority of the councilmen agreed with the evangelical reform program proposed by the burgers and the special advisory committee.

In the spring of 1528, the Braunschweig special committee and the city council called the Jena theologian Heinrich Winkel to reform the city according to Lutheran principles. Winkel's reform program was embraced by many, but also led to theological quarrels with the recently energized supporters of Zwingli and the local Anabaptist community, about whom little concrete is known. To resolve the disputes, the citizen committee called the leading Wittenberg theologian Johannes Bugenhagen (1485-1558) to Braunschweig. Bugenhagen was Luther's close friend and pastor, a masterful leader and systematizer. Originally from Pomerania (and therefore called *Pomern* in some books), Bugenhagen would have an enormous impact on the Reformation in Braunschweig and much of north Germany. As part of his plan for reforming Braunschweig, Bugenhagen set about constructing a church order or *Kirchenordnung* that carefully defined Lutheran institutions, discipline, and ceremonies. Specifically, Bugenhagen's 1528 church order defined proper evangelical theology, organized worship and the procedures for administering the sacraments, described how the community would select its own preachers, created the office of superintendent (reporting to the city council), and defined the respective duties of the clergy and the Braunschweig schools. The church order also established an independent marriage court in the city and created a social welfare system, or common chest. On September 5, 1528, the order was approved by the city council, the guild masters, and other leading citizens in Braunschweig. The

first superintendent empowered to oversee the order was Martin Görnitz, a Lutheran theologian from Torgau, who served the city from 1528 to 1542.

Bugenhagen's church order was an early example of the Lutheran Reformation at work in the cities,¹⁶ an institutional effort at defining and regulating theology and piety so that there would be no confusion about what evangelism was, and how it might reform the life of both ordinary and exalted citizens. In an historical sense, the Lutheran *Kirchenordnungen* were not entirely novel—the orders were in many ways a continuation of late-medieval civic legislation in Germany and other parts of Europe, in which urban governments sought to bring all areas of public and private life under an umbrella of regulating discipline.¹⁷ In the 15th century, the agents of this regulation were magistrates, lawyers, and secretaries who expressed in legal formulas and detailed records their vision for a carefully ordered society unifying political and religious ideas. And to promote a disciplined way of life in their communities further, many north German cities introduced or strengthened contemporary sumptuary laws, poor laws, dress regulations, dancing prohibitions, party ordinances, and mechanisms that defined the social and economic distinctions between people and classes. Regulators also organized hospitals, schools, guilds, business confederations, and monastic institutions in an effort to create a godly and organized society. The *Kirchenordnungen* of the 16th and 17th centuries strengthened these laws, oriented them around evangelical principles, and used the

¹⁶ The first Lutheran church order in Germany was Johann Aepinus's order for the Hanseatic city of Stralsund in 1525, which probably influenced Bugenhagen's organization of the Braunschweig *Kirchenordnung*.

¹⁷ Hamm, "Urban Reformation in the Holy Roman Empire", p. 197.

resources of the early modern state to enforce them.¹⁸ And slowly, these institutional reforms moved from urban contexts to the domain of territorial governments.

Accordingly, the urban reformations of the 16th century built on late medieval achievements by uniting socio-political discipline with a renewal of theology, faith, and piety.¹⁹

In Braunschweig, the Lutheran Reformation coincided with the rise of powerful merchants and guild members who demanded more representation on the city council. As Berndt Hamm has noted, this escalating political trend, evident in other centers of reform, was not a product of evangelical theology, but a result of powerful communal forces stemming from the 15th century, which created both a strong will from below for change and a strong desire from above for stability and moderation.²⁰ The urban constitutions for cities like Braunschweig—unlike the constitutions of territorial states—made town magistrates susceptible to pressure from below in ways that territorial princes were not. The social and legal structures in many larger German cities especially favored reform, and the Reformation’s mobilizing and stabilizing impulses allowed these communities to forge social, political, and religious ideas into one consolidated vision for the city. As Berndt Moeller has observed, the Reformation in the cities was ultimately a

¹⁸ For a discussion of church orders and their influence in Northern Germany, see Jeffrey P. Jaynes, “*Ordo et libertas*”: *Church Discipline and the Makers of Church Order in Sixteenth-Century North Germany*, Ph.D. dissertation (Ohio State University, 1993). Sibylla Flüge also provides a useful orientation in Sibylla Flüge, *Hebammen und heilkundige Frauen: Recht und Rechtswirklichkeit im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Stoemfeld/Nexus, 1998), pp. 313-19.

¹⁹ Hamm, “Urban Reformation in the Holy Roman Empire”, p. 197.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 199-201.

quest for order, unity, and peace.²¹ Cautiously aware of this principle, Bugenhagen instructed in his church order that once the Reformation had been accepted by the representatives of the city, the whole city had to abide by the decision: “whoever wants to rise above the law would fight with God himself and would cause the ruin of bodies and souls by disturbing the peace of the community.”²² From the outset, then, the urban Reformation in Lower Saxony eschewed plurality and sought religious and political unity, which explains why earlier, eclectic evangelical messages in Braunschweig were ignored or suppressed. There was a fundamental consensus between magistrates and ordinary citizens in favor of preserving religious unity as well as civic peace; these ideas aimed at securing the economic, social, and legal privileges of the citizens (*Vollbürger*) against the non-citizen ‘fringe’ groups and the lower classes, who did not possess burger rights.²³ The urban reformers encouraged religious activities that supported community unity; divisive or isolating rituals were modified or censored.

It is in this sense that evangelical baptism became an important symbol and ritual in the reformation of urban communities. The visible and corporate nature of baptism gave the sacrament a crucial place in the changing Protestant landscape, and the Lutheran reformers of Braunschweig drew on its incorporating and pedagogical strengths from the beginning. In Chapter 1, I suggested that the communal nature of baptism was not a new feature of the Reformation, but one of the important reasons that late-medieval baptism

21 “It was necessary to conserve at any price the peace of the city... In contrast to the Middle Ages, everyone was now convinced that the peace could only be maintained or reestablished if the word of God, and it alone, were preached, and this threw into question the traditionally valid ecclesiastical constitution.” Moeller, *Imperial Cities and the Reformation*, p. 65.

22 Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 67. For the original text of the 1528 *Kirchenordnung*, see Sehling, 6/1, pp. 1-350.

23 Schilling, “Alternatives to the Lutheran Reformation”, p. 115.

was still valued in German communities. The reasons for baptism's continuing relevance included liturgical markers, such as the rich physical symbolism of the rite, but also social/cultural aspects, such as the institution of baptismal sponsorship, which united families in urban and rural contexts, provided mechanisms for ongoing economic support, and integrated new members into a town's core Christian institutions.

Contemporary writers also recognized the power of integration that baptism brought to the urban *polis*. For example, in 1518, Erasmus of Rotterdam wrote that baptism worked like a vow of corporate allegiance to Christ and the Christian community. Concluding his important description of communities and the Body of Christ, he asked, "What is the city but a great convent?"²⁴ Erasmus's vision of the ideal Christian city expressed his reformist zeal—most cities were anything but convents—but it also communicated a rich vision of baptism as the ideal ritual to integrate and sanctify European communities.

In 1527, as Lampe, Oldendorp, and Sander worked to spread evangelical teachings in the parish of St. Magnus in Braunschweig, they made specific use of baptism to announce that the city was beginning its conversion to Reformation doctrine and ritual. In the first uniquely evangelical ritual in the city, Oldendorp and Lampe baptized a boy and a girl at St. Magnus church using the German language. The participants were two infants, Autor Kammaker and Catharina Meyers. Autor Sander acted as the godparent for the young boy, so the child was also christened using the sponsor's first name—a common German practice in the early modern period. The basic details of the event were recorded by Phillip Julius Rhetmeyer, a later Lutheran chronicler of the Braunschweig

²⁴ Erasmus, *Enchiridion militis Christiani*, quoted by Hamm, "Urban Reformation in the Holy Roman Empire", p. 199.

Reformation, who described where the boy baby lived (Klint street, in the Alte Wiek district where St. Magnus was located).²⁵ This extra detail about location was provided to make it clear that evidence of the christening could be sought by looking the family up, and that the ritual involved local families, not infants brought in from elsewhere. (In other words, it was an entirely local response to the evangelical movement in Braunschweig.) After Oldendorp baptized Autor Kammaker, Heinrich Lampe then baptized little Catharina using a similar vernacular ritual, demonstrating that the new evangelical sacrament applied to both boys and girls.

The timing of the first baptisms was Advent, 1527—nine months before the city council officially approved Bugenhagen’s church order and several months before either Bugenhagen or the Jena theologian Heinrich Winkel were called to the city. The ritual was therefore an intuitive, local response to conditions on the ground in Braunschweig, actions that put greater emphasis on the vernacular character of the rite than any other theological point. Indeed, the fact that the ritual was performed in clear, understandable German *was* the point of evangelical baptism; it was too early for Luther’s 1526 *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* to have received significant distribution, and the early Braunschweig reformers may not have even been aware of it.²⁶ At this early point, too, ritual unity was important for the members of the Braunschweig evangelical community—both the followers of Luther and Zwingli would have supported this rite,

²⁵ Rhetmeyer, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, p. 30.

²⁶ Indeed, Luther may have recommended a lengthy period of preaching and teaching before abruptly changing the community’s ritual; in these matters, he was more conservative than the first Braunschweig reformers. In 1530, for example, Luther told the Lübeck city council they should proceed cautiously with evangelical reforms: “External changes in ritual ... titillate for [but] one hour.... Adequate reform of ungodly rites will come of itself, however, as soon as the fundamentals of our teaching...have taken root in devout hearts.” LW 49:263.

since it focused on vernacular administration and strongly rejected Anabaptist “believers’ baptism.”

Baptism in the Braunschweig Church Order (1528)

Bugenhagen’s 1528 church order followed when the city council fully authorized evangelism in the city, and it discussed baptism in several contexts. First, it emphasized the evangelical understanding of baptismal theology. Baptism was first and foremost a ritual for infants; just as Christ welcomed the children to him on earth (Mark 10:13-16), so he welcomed them now in baptism.²⁷ This insistence on infant baptism was again clearly designed to counter the Braunschweig Anabaptists; although Bugenhagen did not identify these individuals by name, he specifically rejected the idea that children should be taught before they were brought for baptism.²⁸ Bugenhagen also compared infant baptism to the Old Testament circumcision of Jewish boys on the eighth day of life.²⁹ Like this earlier sign, which demonstrated an enduring trust in God and his promises,

²⁷ “Wente wy hebben uth veleme bewise sulck to dohn christlick recht, besonderlick dat wört Christi Marci amme teynden kapitele: Latet de kynderken to my kamen und vorbedet se nicht, wente sulker is dat rike Gades.” (We have nothing less than the word of Christ in Mark Chapter 10 which encourages this Christian work: Let the children come to me and forbid them not; such is the kingdom of God.) Sehling 6/1, p. 351.

²⁸ “Unde is jo nicht wahr, dat etlike seggen, me schal de kynderken nicht döpen, her me se leren kan unde leret hefft, darumme dat Christus spreckt Matthei imme letsten capitele: Gät hen unde leret alle heydene unde döpet se etc.” (And so it is not true, as some say, that children should not be baptized because they can not properly learn, which Christ said in the last chapter of Mathew [Math. 28:19]: Go and teach all people and baptize them, etc.) Ibid.

²⁹ “Konden nu de kynderken der Jöden, de doch imme achten tage, wen se neynen vorstand hidden, besneden wurden, imme talle der lövigen van Gade sulvest gerekenet werden, worumme nicht de kynderken der Christen? Dewile Christus secht: Sulker is dat rike Gades.” (If the children of Jews, who received circumcision on the eighth day, were reckoned as righteous, why not the children of Christians? Christ has said: Such is the kingdom of God [Mark 10:14].) Ibid, p. 352.

baptism stood as a sign for Christians of their new covenant with Christ. As Paul argued in Titus Chapter 3, people were saved not through their own righteous behavior (the Anabaptist position), but through rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, which came as a gracious gift of Christ at baptism.³⁰

Bugenhagen's theological treatment of baptism was systematic and well supported by scripture; he used several of Luther's arguments from the 1528 pamphlet entitled *Concerning Rebaptism*, which Bugenhagen specifically mentioned along with other supporting works.³¹ Through this, Bugenhagen established a pattern of baptismal regulation that many of the territorial churches in Lower Saxony would follow. First, he carefully defined the Lutheran theological meaning of baptism and the shortcomings of local, confessional rivals. Second, his *Kirchenordnung* described how the baptismal service itself was to be performed, including detailed instructions for the standard service and any exceptions that might be necessary, such as the rites of 'emergency baptism' (*nottaufe*) administered by midwives. Third, Bugenhagen's order regulated many of the

³⁰ "Unde Paulus Tit. 3: Den erschehn de fruntlicheit unde lüdegunsticheit Gades unses heylandes, nicht umme der werke willen der gerechticheit, de wy gedän hidden, sunder na syner bermherticheit makede he uns salich dorch dat bad der weddergebört unde vornyginge des hilgen Geistes, den he rikelick uthgegaten hefft in uns dorch Jesum Christum unsen heyland, up dat wy, dorch dessulvigen gnade gerechtverdiget, erven syn des ewigen levendes nach der höpeninge..." (As Paul says in Titus 3: But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us so richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life... [Titus 3:4-7, RSV]) Ibid., p. 355.

³¹ "Wy mochten lever sterven wen de kynderdope uns laten nemen. Orsake is genoch uth Gades wörde gegeven unde etlike christlike lerer, ock by unsen tiden, to Nurenberge unde to Wittemberge, hebben mehr darvan bescreven" (We would rather not live than have the infant baptism taken from us. [!] It is established in God's word and other Christian teaching; more has been written about it in Nuremberg and Wittenberg.) Ibid., p. 356. The Nuremberg text is probably the contemporary pamphlet *De Anabaptistis* (April 1528), attributed to Friedrich von St. Aegidien. For the text of Luther's *Concerning Rebaptism*, see LW 40:229-262.

supporting ‘baptismal practices’ in the community, such as what midwives, parents, and godparents did before and after the ceremony, how baptismal parties and gifts were regulated, and how ceremonial objects such as fonts, water, and other ‘externals’ things were to be used.

Unlike some later orders, the 1528 Braunschweig *Kirchenordnung* did not recommend a particular liturgy for the administration of Lutheran baptism. Instead, it emphasized the importance of the German language in the celebration of the sacrament (called *düdesch dope*), and removed liturgical symbols that appeared extraneous. Martin Luther had also emphasized these points in his *Order of Baptism Newly Revised*, and Bugenhagen was undoubtedly familiar with Luther’s service. But Bugenhagen didn’t include Luther’s liturgy because he didn’t envision his order as a precise liturgical handbook.³² In addition, Lutheran ritual was still in a considerable state of flux, and creating a permanent liturgical break with other confessions was not the goal of most church orders until at least the mid-1530s. Rather, Bugenhagen wanted to make the ritual understandable and consistent with practice in Wittenberg and other Lutheran centers. He posed the simple question for readers: “Why shouldn’t priests baptize in German, the language used for prayers, reading the Gospel, and other good instruction?”³³ In Bugenhagen’s opinion, baptism must be administered in the language of the people so that it had the greatest chance of being understood by the assembled community. But Bugenhagen followed this rhetorical question with an interesting observation: “You also

³² In addition, Luther’s order was in a different German dialect, so Bugenhagen would have needed to translate it if he wanted the residents of Braunschweig to use it.

³³ “Worumme scholden denne de prestere nicht düdesch döpen...de darby synd, vormanen to beden, en dat evangelion lessen unde gute lere geven?” *Ibid.*, p. 358.

must see that German baptism is not new in this region.”³⁴ Had German baptisms already been administered in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel? Bugenhagen may have been referring to the 1526 baptisms in Braunschweig, or the evangelical baptisms that presumably followed them at St. Magnus. Or Bugenhagen may have been referring to late-medieval traditions in Braunschweig which allowed for portions of the baptism ritual to be spoken in German. The remaining source material does not clarify this point, but clearly Bugenhagen thought there was both precedent and cause for baptizing using the German language.

Bugenhagen also sought to de-emphasize the role of symbols in baptism, arguing that apart from the Word of God material objects held little value. In addition, Bugenhagen argued that a specially consecrated font (*döpewygende* or *Taufweißen*) was unnecessary for baptism, and he also thought that candles, chrism, and other traditional symbols were optional for the proper administration of the sacrament.³⁵ Bugenhagen emphasized that water and the Spirit alone were necessary for baptism, and the traditional baptismal formula invoking the Trinity should be used as Christ commanded at the Great Commission.³⁶ Chrism was not necessary because Jesus did not require it for salvation in his ministry. Yet like the Braunschweig reformers Autor Sander and Johan Oldendorp, Bugenhagen emphasized vernacular administration, not precise liturgical rubrics. Infant

34 “Dat du ock also mogest sehn, dat düdesch döpen in disen landen nicht nyes is.” Ibid.

35 “Andere unnutte herlicheit, angerichtet mit lichten, vanen, döpewygende, kreseme, konen Christene wol entberren.” (Other unnecessary derivations, prepared with candles, banners, fonts, and chrism Christians can do without.) Ibid., p. 356. Compare LW 53:102 and my comments in Chapter 2.

36 “Wente ock Christus bevalen hefft [Math 28]: Gät hen unde leret alle heydene unde döpe se imme namen des Vaders unde des Sones unde des hilgen Geistes.” (As Christ commissioned them [Math. 28:19, RSV]: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.) Ibid., p. 358.

baptism was important, but if liturgical symbols distracted the believer from Christ and his promises, they were to be shunned. With these details clear, the precise rubrics of the baptismal service could be left to the local pastors and the superintendent.

Reform and Ritual in Goslar

The Lutheran reform of Braunschweig was not an isolated process; most of the larger cities and towns in Lower Saxony experimented with evangelical ideas in the 1520s and 1530s, and either adopted them or rejected them. Soon after the Braunschweig Reformation, the imperial city of Goslar accepted Lutheran teaching and stood defiantly with Braunschweig as a center of Protestant reform in the strongly Catholic principality of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. The process began in relative peace, as the Goslar city council established the Reformation at the behest of leading citizens in 1528 “to avoid all discord and disunity in the common citizenry”.³⁷ But later, Goslar’s evangelism resulted in an armed confrontation between Goslar and Catholic Duke Henry of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, a point to which I shall return later.

Johannes Bugenhagen was also involved with the reform of Goslar, and he worked with others to construct a church order that brought many of the same institutional reforms he established in Braunschweig. Bugenhagen’s partner in the reform of the city was an important Lutheran theologian named Nicholas von Amsdorf (1483-1565), a close friend of Luther and the godfather of his daughter Magdalen Luther (1529-1542). Amsdorf was also the nephew of Luther’s older mentor, Johann von

³⁷ Moeller, *Imperial Cities and the Reformation*, p. 65.

Staupitz, and on account of these relationships he served on the Wittenberg faculty with Luther for many years. In addition, Amsdorf would become a strong defender of Luther's legacy in the intra-Lutheran conflicts between Philippists and Gnesio-Lutherans, in which Amsdorf took up the Gnesio-Lutheran position.³⁸ As we shall see, this type of close connection with Luther was something from which many evangelical communities benefited during the 1520s and 1530s, and it was one of the key reasons that Lower Saxony developed such strong Lutheran affiliations.

The evidence from Goslar suggests that the onset of evangelical reforms was less controversial than in many cities, although the pattern still conforms well to the 'urban reform' phenomenon described by Moeller, Hamm, and others. First, the evangelical message was introduced into the city by a handful of preachers and evangelical advocates, many with close connections to Luther and the Wittenberg.³⁹ When the evangelical message found sufficient support among the general citizenry and especially the guilds, the general reform of the city was brought before the town council and the magistrates, who (in the case of Goslar) found Lutheran reforms personally advantageous and in harmony with the urban, communal ethos. After authorizing Lutheran reforms, the town council called respected Lutheran pastors and theologians to the city to institutionalize evangelical reforms, develop church orders and confessional statements to regulate theology and practice, and preach the evangelical message. Over time, this institutional reform supported the legal and material development of the city and enabled

³⁸ "Gnesio-Lutherans", OER 2:178.

³⁹ Luther concerned himself with Goslar from at least 1522, when he wrote a letter of encouragement to a priest working in the city. See LW 49:16.

the magistrates to control political and religious life jointly, and in many cases, more effectively.

A doctrinal work known as the *Articuli Jacobitarum* (the articles of the Goslar church of St. Jacob) established evangelical theology and practice in Goslar in the year 1528. This document introduced Lutheran reforms in the community and received the broad support of the town's guilds and citizens. The *Articuli Jacobitarum* can technically be called an early evangelical church order, but they also bore close relation to the late-medieval city constitutions (*Stadtverfassungen*) of Germany, in which city magistrates contended with bishops and territorial princes for the control of religious affairs in their community. This initial effort at institutional reform was followed by the evangelical reform of St. Stephens, a parish church under the leadership of pastor Antonius Corvinus, a Lutheran reformer with close connections to Martin Bucer and the Reformed traditions of Southern Germany and Switzerland. In 1529, Corvinus published a pamphlet about how evangelical reforms were introduced in Braunschweig and Goslar, focusing especially on how the pure Word of God led men to reform, which was accomplished without undo disturbance.⁴⁰

In 1529, the direction of evangelical reforms in Goslar became less certain when iconoclastic riots shook the city. The Lutheran reformers struggled to regain control of the city and blamed the influence of 'spiritualists'. Luther also wrote to the church of St. Jacob in Goslar and encouraged more moderate reform as he had done in the 1521-1522

⁴⁰ Anto. Corvinus, *Warhafftig Bericht / Das das wort Gotts / ohn tumult / ohn schwermerey / zu Goslar und Braunschweigk gepredigt wird* (Wittenberg: Rhaw, 1529); HAB H 59.4o Helmst. (9).

debates with Karlstadt in Wittenberg.⁴¹ Although the influence of these more radical Protestants was eventually subdued, the iconoclastic tendencies in Goslar provide additional evidence that tensions were high in Lower Saxony over the role of symbols in worship. Bugenhagen's strong rejection of material objects in the Braunschweig liturgy may be a reflection of this same concern.

In 1531, Goslar became a participant in the German Protestant military federation known as the Schmalkald League (active 1531-1547), and in the same year introduced a formal *Kirchenordnung* that regulated evangelical theology and worship. The order was written largely by Nicholas Amsdorf, who used Bugenhagen's 1528 Braunschweig order as a model for regulating theology and piety in the imperial city. Amsdorf's section on baptism emphasized infant baptism and provided numerous scriptural citations in support of the practice. Although he did not recommend a particular baptismal liturgy, Amsdorf required that baptism be performed in the German vernacular and that it distance itself from both Anabaptist and Catholic practices. As in Braunschweig, baptism became an important marker of Lutheran orthodoxy and was carefully regulated from the earliest institutional reforms. In other words, the reform of a second city in Lower Saxony was accomplished with the assistance of baptismal definition and regulation. The expectation of the reformers was that Christian initiation would continue to play an important role in the spirituality of the city's residents, and that baptism would be among the first visible fruits of the new evangelical teaching. With the relationship between ritual and reform carefully established, Amsdorf moved on to reform the city of Einbeck (1531) and

⁴¹ Raabe, *Reformatoren in Niedersachsen*, p. 15.

Hannover (1534), and then served briefly as an evangelical bishop in the diocese of Naumburg, Saxony.⁴²

A Princely Reformation: The Evangelical Movement in Braunschweig-Lüneburg

According to Berndt Hamm, one important consequence of the Urban Reformation was the powerful radiation of evangelical reforms from independent urban environments into the territorial reform movements directed by princes.⁴³ In Lower Saxony, this fundamental trend was often the case; when the larger towns of Braunschweig, Goslar, Celle, and Göttingen introduced the Reformation, neighboring princes with sufficient interest and ability followed suit within their own territories. The earliest example of princely reform in Lower Saxony was the Lutheran reform of Braunschweig-Lüneburg by Duke Ernst the Confessor (1497-1546), a sovereign who had studied with Luther in Wittenberg and began instituting his own reforms in the year 1526. Duke Ernst had his court in the town of Celle, and developed his political and ecclesiastical policies there. With the assistance of Gottschalk Kruse, Duke Ernst published an *Artikelbuch* in 1527 clarifying evangelical theology and practice in the principality and began soon after to reform local monastic institutions.⁴⁴ This “Article Book” is a very early example of legislation defined by a territorial church government in the Reformation, and was made possible in a legal sense by the Diet of Speyer (1526), which stipulated that individual estates in the Holy Roman Empire could proceed in

⁴² For a description of Amsdorf’s role as the godparent of Luther’s daughter Magdalen, see Chapter 5.

⁴³ Hamm, “Urban Reformation in the Holy Roman Empire”, p. 204.

⁴⁴ Sehling 6/2, p. 484.

religious matters as they considered justified before God and the emperor. Duke Ernst used the Diet of Speyer as justification to reform Braunschweig-Lüneburg according to Lutheran principles, and in this sense the *Artikelbuch* should be considered among the first territorial church orders.

In 1530, Duke Ernst traveled to Augsburg to consult with Lutheran leaders and to sign the important statement of Lutheran orthodoxy called the Augsburg Confession. While there, he met the Lutheran reformer Urbanus Rhegius (1489-1541), a humanist and theologian who had corresponded with Desiderius Erasmus, studied under Johann Eck, and assisted in the evangelical reform of Augsburg.⁴⁵ Duke Ernst invited Rhegius to return with him to Lower Saxony and to act as the court preacher and the Lutheran superintendent of Braunschweig-Lüneburg. Rhegius accepted both positions, and in the autumn of 1530 he moved to Celle with his family, stopping along the way to meet Luther in person for the first time.⁴⁶

Like the other Lutheran reformers who came to Lower Saxony, Rhegius went about his task by promulgating the official theology and ritual of the Lutheran church through written documents and legal mechanisms. Rather than constructing an entirely new church order for the principality, he relied on Duke Ernst's *Artikelbuch* (1527) and *Instructions for Preachers* (1529), and a few addenda Rhegius published in the early 1530s.⁴⁷ Duke Ernst's "Article Book" described the sacraments only generally, mandating that 'papist' and Anabaptist ceremonies be shunned for rituals that followed

⁴⁵ For Rhegius' Augsburg years, see esp. Douglas B. Hampton, *Urbanus Rhegius and the Spread of the German Reformation*, unpublished Ph.D. diss. (Ohio State University, 1973).

⁴⁶ "Urbanus Rhegius", OER 3:430.

⁴⁷ For the original texts of these directives, see Sehling 6/2, pp. 492-527.

God's biblical commands and the life of Jesus.⁴⁸ The directive went on to specifically reject the use of salt, holy water, and other sacramental objects by making an appeal to the First Commandment and a rejection of idolatry.⁴⁹ In a short section on baptism or *döpe*, the Braunschweig-Lüneburg *Artikelbuch* also did not recommend a particular liturgy; instead, it insisted that baptism be performed in the vernacular, so that godparents might fully understand their baptismal promises, correctly renounce Satan, and speak the words of the Apostle's Creed.⁵⁰ Baptism in Braunschweig-Lüneburg thus had much in common with contemporary developments in the cities of Braunschweig and Goslar—residents were encouraged to use the vernacular for Christian initiation, and baptism was described as a rite for infants to counter the teaching of Anabaptists. The most important issue in this early period of evangelism was again the German vernacular—this, in itself, would be enough to satisfy the test that 'papist' ceremonies were no longer being observed.

With Lutheran reforms well under way, Rhegius continued to work with Duke Ernst to reform other important cities in the region, including Hannover, Minden,

48 "Christliche ceremonien nach Gottes befehlich inhalt seiner lieb ornung geübet werden." (Christian ceremonies according to God's command and from his life should be practiced.) Sehling 6/2, p. 487.

49 "Gewyet was, water, solt, vüre [?], palm unde krüde, ock wat süs uth grunde des ungelovens jegen Goddes erste gebot allenthalven mochte gewyet werden, schal gar nictes geleden werden." (Holy water, salt, palms, herbs, and other items without foundation that go against God's First Commandment shall not be permitted.) Sehling 6/2, p. 519.

50 "Dewyle denne dyt sacramente so merklick unde hoch ys, ock eyn ytlick vadder thor antwort van des kyndes wegen, ock de ummestendigen tho gemenem kreftigem gebede mede gefördert werden, moth jo solckes nicht anders wen yn guder düdescher sprake by uns vorhandelt werden." (Therefore this sacrament is so noteworthy and important that a godfather should answer for the child, in the presence of the community, using nothing other than good German language that can be understood by us.) Sehling 6/2, p. 520.

Hildesheim, Soest, and Hamburg.⁵¹ Rhegius also worked tirelessly as a writer of theological treatises and pastoral handbooks, including some materials that rather atypically recommended the tolerant treatment of Jews. When Urbanus Rhegius died in 1541, Duke Ernst appointed Martin Ondermarck as superintendent of the principality, and in 1543 they began the first thorough visitations of the principality of Braunschweig-Lüneburg. This highlighted a perennial problem for the early Lutheran reformers—the difficulty in actually establishing evangelical discipline in many of the rural areas. Although the reform of Braunschweig-Lüneburg was theoretically a ‘territory-wide’ affair, it is probably true that the coercive capacities of dukes and superintendents were mostly limited to the cities and towns for many years.⁵²

In 1564, Duke Ernst’s sons, Wilhelm and Heinrich, jointly issued a new church order that described more systematically how Lutheran ritual was to be administered in the principality and how special circumstances were to be handled.⁵³ This order was the first to include Luther’s specific instructions on the sacraments, and the entire text of his *German Mass* and *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* were included in the work, along with clarifications and notations about particular concerns (such as emergency baptism).⁵⁴ The author of the *Kirchenordnung* is not known, although it seems clear that superintendent Martin Ondermarck was a contributor to the work and it met with the

⁵¹ Richard Gerecke, “Studien zu Urbanus Rhegius’ kirchenregimentlicher Tätigkeit in Norddeutschland”, *JGNK* 74 (1976), pp. 131-77.

⁵² The issue of ‘success’ or ‘failure’ in the evangelical campaign to reform popular culture is a complex one. For an introduction to the problem, see Gerald Strauss, *Luther’s House of Learning* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978). For an analysis of the recent literature and my conclusions about Lutheran baptismal regulations, see Chapters 4 and 5.

⁵³ Sehling 6/1, p. 533-575.

⁵⁴ For baptism (“Von der taufe”), see Sehling 6/1, pp. 554-560.

approval of both Duke Wilhelm and the Lüneburg town council.⁵⁵ However, the textual roots of the 1564 church order have been traced back to earlier Lutheran sources, particularly the Mecklenburg church order of 1552, a document used to model many church orders in Germany.⁵⁶ These theological and liturgical materials had considerable influence in Lower Saxony; they were used as a model for the 1569 church order in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, and the orders for the Counties of Hoya (1581) and Bruchhausen (1581). Since the rubrics are identical for the principality of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, they will be discussed below.

Lutherans and Catholics in Calenberg-Göttingen

Another important center of princely reform in Lower Saxony was the territory of Calenberg-Göttingen (also called Braunschweig-Calenberg), one of four principalities in the former Welf lands, oriented west of Hildesheim and Wolfenbüttel in north/central Germany. Between 1494 and 1540, Duke Erich I from Braunschweig-Lüneburg ruled the principality of Calenberg-Göttingen, a strong and loyal Catholic. Beginning in 1538, however, Duke Erich's wife Elisabeth emerged as a supporter of evangelical theology, and maintained contacts with Lutheran sympathizers despite the objections of her husband. When Duke Erich died in 1540, the Lutheran-minded duchess began a five-year period of regency for their minor son Erich II, and used the interim to systematically introduce Lutheran reforms in Calenberg-Göttingen. The pathway to reform lay, as it did in other Lower Saxon territories, with the calling of a respected Lutheran reformer and

⁵⁵ Sehling 6/1, p. 486.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

the introduction of a constitutional church order that administered Lutheran reforms in the principality. Duchess Elisabeth called Lutheran loyalist Antonius Corvinus, the reformer who had successfully introduced evangelical reforms in Goslar (1528), Witzenhausen (1529), and Northeim (1539), and in 1541-1542 helped to reform the territory in Lower Saxony conquered by the Schmalkald League. With the help of Corvinus, Duchess Elisabeth published a church order in 1542 that thoroughly defined Lutheran theology and ritual in the principality, and provided basic guidelines for the organization of the office of superintendent, a common chest, the reform of local monasteries, model texts for catechetical instruction, and the introduction of parish visitations.⁵⁷ These reforms held the power of law in the principality, and those who refused to follow the order were disciplined by the superintendent and consistory.

Baptismal reforms played an important part in the reorientation of so-called ‘papist’ ceremonies that were found wanting when compared to biblical models and evangelical principles. In addition, Corvinus was among the first Lower Saxon reformers to recommend that Lutheran godparents assist in the catechetical instruction of their godchildren and stand with them when it came time for confirmation.⁵⁸ The impetus for these new requirements came from the contemporary Brandenburg church order, which Duchess Elisabeth’s father Joachim I, the Elector of Brandenburg, published two years earlier in 1540. The textual similarity between the two orders is so close that the Calenberg-Göttingen *Kirchenordnung* is composed using the same High German dialect of the Brandenburg order—something so confusing to Calenberg pastors and laymen that

⁵⁷ See Sehling 6/2, pp. 708-861; for introductory notes, pp. 702-07.

⁵⁸ See Chapter 5.

Corvinus had to translate the third part of the order (the ceremonial instructions) into Low German for general use in the principality in 1542.⁵⁹

Like many church orders of the 1540s, the Calenberg-Göttingen model had more detailed instructions for regulating the sacrament of baptism than earlier evangelical attempts, which had merely reinforced infant baptism and emphasized vernacular administration. A baptismal section entitled “Ordnung der heiligen taufe und der nottaufe” began with an introduction to the sacrament of baptism from the Lutheran perspective, and a discussion of ‘emergency’ baptism (*nottaufe*), the abbreviated rite of initiation that could be administered by midwives or others at hand when a newborn’s life was thought to be in danger.⁶⁰ Although Protestants were divided about the necessity of emergency baptism, Luther and most of his supporters approved of the practice, and their advice for its performance (including a follow-up visit to verify that the proper words were used) filled out the theological writing on baptism.⁶¹

The 1542 order then presented the baptismal service, which began with a baptismal admonition (*Ermanung*) that described the theological importance of baptism and the gifts it provided. This baptismal catechesis, which also appeared in the Brandenburg church order, featured a liturgical directive asking the pastor to inquire

⁵⁹ Raabe, *Reformatoren in Niedersachsen*, p. 29; see also Sehling 6/2, p. 703.

⁶⁰ Emergency baptism was commonly administered by women, an additional source of concern for early modern theologians. For a detailed discussion of emergency baptism and other childbirth rituals, see Chapter 4.

⁶¹ Sehling 6/2, p. 799.

about the parents of the child and how the infant was to be named.⁶² (As elsewhere, infant baptism was assumed.) The admonition then taught that God's word instructed Christians each day about the sinful state of mankind and the necessity for all believers to seek the assistance of God's only-begotten Son.⁶³ It further argued that God graciously gave his Son to the world so that children, as well as adults, could come to Christ and avoid death and damnation.⁶⁴ Finally, the admonition emphasized that the holy sacrament of baptism was the Christian's consolation and their entry into God's grace and the communion of saints.⁶⁵

The Calenberg-Göttingen order continued with an unusual baptismal liturgy, a text that combined parts of Luther's 1523 *Order of Baptism* service with revisions from Brandenburg and some local adaptations to the service. Although many Lutheran church orders simply recommended that Luther's 1526 *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* be used,

⁶² "Erstlich sol der priester fragen, wes das kind sey, wie es heissen solle, und darnach folgende ermanung thun." (First the priest should ask whose child this is, and how it should be named, and then he should read the following admonition.) Ibid.

⁶³ "Lieben freunde in Christo, wir hören alle tage aus Gotts wort, erfarens auch beide, an unserm leben und sterben, das wir von Adam her allesamt in sünden empfangen und geboren sein, darin wir dann unter Gotts zorn in weigkeit verdampt und verloren sein müsten, wo uns nicht durch den eingeborn Gottsson, unsern lieben Herrn Jhesum Christum, daraus geholfen were." (Dear friends in Christ, we hear every day from God's word about both our life and death, that we received from Adam all of our sins and were born into them, and that we would be damned in all eternity under God's wrath, had we not been saved through the only-begotten Son of God, our dear Lord Jesus Christ.) Sehling 6/2, p. 800.

⁶⁴ "Aber Gott, der Vater aller gnaden und barmherzigkeit, seinen Sohn Christum der ganzen welt, den kindlein nichts weniger denn den alten, verheissen und gesandt hat, welcher auch der ganzen welt sünd getragen und die armen kindlein nichts weniger, sonder gleich sowol als die alten von sünden, tod un verdammis erlöset und selig gemacht hat und befolhen, man sole sie zu ihm bringen [Mk 10, 14]." (But God, the Father of all grace and mercy, promised and sent his son Christ to the entire world, to children no less than adults. And he also bore the sins of the entire world, the poor children no less than adults, dissolving death and damnation, and bringing salvation. And he commands that people should bring the children to him [Mark 10:14]). Ibid.

⁶⁵ "...dis hochwirdige sacrament der tauf unser einiger trost und eingang ist zu allen göttlichen güteren und gemeinschaft aller heiligen." (...this holy sacrament of baptism is our consolation and entrance to all godly goodness and the community of the saints.) Ibid.

Corvinus amended the rubrics considerably in Calenberg-Göttingen, retaining Luther's exorcisms and even reinstating some passages from the late-medieval rite.⁶⁶ In this sense, the local adaptation of the baptism ritual continued in Lower Saxony as it had in the 15th century, even as the territorial church pressed for more authority and control in terms of ritual and social discipline. Corvinus substituted Luther's "flood prayer" (*Sintflutgebet*) with the collect "God of our Fathers" (*Deus patrum nostrorum*), and he included a more extensive medieval prayer of exorcism that Luther had deleted from his 1523 service.⁶⁷ However, unlike Luther's service and the Brandenburg rite, Corvinus removed all the physical symbols of baptism except the baptismal water and the white christening robe—he discarded the salt, spittle, oils, and candle that the earlier rites had used. In this way, the Calenberg-Göttingen church had used the adiaphora principle in reverse—they exercised their Christian freedom to remove unnecessary symbols from the rite, even though other Lutherans retained them.

In addition to the reduction of symbols, the most dramatic changes in the service relate to the activities of the godparents (*paten*). Corvinus continued the tradition of asking the godparents to renounce Satan on behalf of the infant,⁶⁸ and of directing them to state their Christian beliefs by agreeing to each part of the Apostle's Creed. However, in an addition specifically addressed to the godparents, the pastor instructed the sponsors

⁶⁶ For a discussion of late-medieval baptism and the differences between Luther's 1523 *Order of Baptism* and his 1526 *Order of Baptism Newly Revised*, see Chapter 2.

⁶⁷ "Da höre nu, du verfluchter satan, beschworen durch den namen des weigen Gotts und unsers heilands Jhesu Christ, und weiche von dannen, zitterend, mit deinem hass überwunden..." (Now hear, you cursed Satan, I adjure thee in the name of almighty God and our savior Jesus Christ, to depart, trembling, with your hatred overcome...) Sehling 6/2, p. 801.

⁶⁸ N., widersagestu dem teufel? Antwort: Ich widersage. (*Name*, do you renounce the Devil? Answer: I renounce [him].) Sehling 6/2, p. 803.

to teach the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, and then read the sponsors the Lord's Prayer and the Apostle's Creed. The interesting part of this ritual of sponsorship within the baptismal service is that the sponsors also confessed the Apostle's Creed later in the service—the liturgical purpose of the first statement is apparently catechetical instruction. In addition, it is interesting to see that the sponsors alone are singled out (not the parents), so that when the Apostle's Creed is recited they will be able to respond to something already presented to them. In conclusion, the sponsors are admonished with the following words:

I beseech you in the power of Christian love, who stand by the font with this child, if his parents die or are unable to carry out their obligations, that you teach it earnestly the Ten Commandments, to understand the will of God and thereby recognize its sin, then the Christian belief through which we receive grace, the forgiveness of sins, and the Holy Ghost. And also teach the child the Lord's Prayer so that it may call on God for help and resist Satan, so that God will fulfill all that he has promised here in baptism and save the child.⁶⁹

As I discuss in Chapter 5, I believe these editorial elaborations by Corvinus begin a Lower Saxon tradition of involving godparents more specifically in catechetical instruction at baptism, which marked a departure from traditional Catholic sponsorship practices. The reform of baptismal sponsorship thus became an important aspect of the Lutheran reform of Calenberg-Göttingen.

⁶⁹ "Ich ermane euch in kraft christlicher liebe, die ihr itzo an des kindleins stadt bey der taufe thut, wenn es seiner elteren durch tods oder anderen unfal beraubt würde, ehe denn es zum brauch seiner vernunft keme, das ihrs fleissig und treulich wollet unterrichten und lernen: erstlich die zehen gebot, auf das es den willen Gotts und seine sünde dadurch lerne erkennen, darnach den shristlichen glauben, durch welchen wir gnad, vergebung der sünde und den heiligen Geist empfahen, zuletzt auch das Vater unser, damit es Gott anruffen und umb hülfe bitten könne, dem satan widerstand zu thun und christlich zu leben, biss Gott an ihm erfülle, was er itzt in der taufe angefangen hat, und es selig werde." Ibid.

In 1545, confessional conflicts deeply divided the principality a second time, as Herzog Erich II, the son of Erich I and Elisabeth, attained the proper age and officially began his rule. Through the influence of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, Duke Erich II was restored to Catholic orthodoxy, and afterwards worked against his mother to reintroduce traditional religion in Calenberg-Göttingen.⁷⁰ After the Augsburg Interim (1548), both Lutheranism and Catholicism became legitimate confessional options in the empire, and the cities of Calenberg-Göttingen were divided between these two politico-religious camps for a time. Baptism took on a visible role in the confrontation as different communities recognized the liturgical differences between Catholic and Lutheran ritual, and expressed their individual pieties in different ways. Antonius Corvinus and Joachim Mörlin continued to work for Lutheran reform, and by the early 1550s a majority of the population (including many of the monastic institutions) confessed Lutheran sympathies.⁷¹ In 1553, Duke Erich II agreed himself to limited Lutheran reforms, which brought needed financial support from the economically powerful Lutheran towns and cities. Eventually, Lutheran evangelism became the predominant confession in the territory, and remained so until Erich II's death in 1584. After 1584, the dukes of the neighboring territory of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel ruled Calenberg-Göttingen, and the 1569 Lutheran church order of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel became the religious law of the principality.⁷²

⁷⁰ Sehling 6/2, pp. 704-706.

⁷¹ Raabe, *Reformatoren in Niedersachsen*, p. 29.

⁷² Sehling 6/2, p. 706.

Confessional Conflict in the Bishopric of Hildesheim

Even with the success of Lutheran reform in many cities and principalities, a few areas resisted change and stood alone amidst the push for evangelism. The Catholic bishopric (*Stift*) of Hildesheim was once such place, an independent political entity consisting of a larger city, several towns, and a portion of the countryside in the southern part of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. According to a 12th century agreement with Henry the Lion, Hildesheim and the surrounding territory (including the important towns of Steuerwald, Marienburg, and Peine) remained under the direct control of the local bishop, and enjoyed its own religious, political, and legal jurisdictions. This ecclesiastical independence was largely respected by neighboring principalities throughout the early modern period, though political borders and dynastic loyalties changed continuously and the entire region fell under Lutheran influence in the 17th century.⁷³

By 1519, Luther's early writings had received limited distribution in Hildesheim and were actively discussed in the towns and numerous monastic institutions.⁷⁴ Yet Luther's evangelical message was controversial and made little headway in the *Stift*. When the respected evangelists Autor Sander and Urbanus Rhegius came to the city, they were unable to introduce lasting Lutheran reforms, and the residents of Hildesheim delighted in the periodic burning of Protestant writings.⁷⁵ An active participant in the defense of traditional religion in Hildesheim was Duke Henry, the powerful ruler of the surrounding principality of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. Although the duke had been

⁷³ For an introduction to Hildesheim and the secondary literature, see Sehling 7/2, pp. 756-66.

⁷⁴ Raabe, *Reformatoren in Niedersachsen*, p. 23.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

unsuccessful in preventing the Reformation in Braunschweig, he was able to rally Catholics in Hildesheim against evangelical reforms.

The pro-Catholic situation remained in Hildesheim until 1542, when the Schmalkald League temporarily defeated Duke Henry and forcibly introduced evangelism in Hildesheim and other parts of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. Johannes Bugenhagen, Heinrich Winckel, and Antonius Corvinus were sent to Hildesheim and systematically introduced Lutheran institutions and worship forms. Stift Hildesheim had a large number of monastic institutions, which were placed under Lutheran control, though not completely abolished as similar institutions were in other places. In 1544, Bugenhagen issued a church order with a foreword by Corvinus that systematically regulated Lutheran theology, liturgy, and discipline in Hildesheim.⁷⁶ The order was a version of the 1543 *Kirchenordnung* composed for the principality of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. In the order, baptism (*Döpe*) appeared in a section describing proper teaching and ceremony, and the use of oils, chrism, and salves was specifically forbidden in the rite, expressing the reformer's continuing concern about the role of external symbols in the ritual.⁷⁷ Since co-author Corvinus had spent considerable time with Martin Bucer in Strasbourg before returning to northern Germany, it is possible that Bucer's theology of baptism lies behind some of the specific changes that found their way into the Hildesheim order through Corvinus.⁷⁸ After an introductory discussion of

⁷⁶ Sehling 7/2, p. 829-84.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 835.

⁷⁸ For an introduction to Bucer's baptismal theology and ritual, see Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite in the Sixteenth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), pp. 54-62.

baptism, the order made it clear that nothing other than the example of the Acts of the Apostles or the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan river should guide the administration of baptism.⁷⁹ This is an important departure from Luther, who valued traditional baptismal ritual and symbolism, though he wanted to reform what he saw as the sacrament's most obvious historic abuses. This disagreement about the baptismal liturgy may be one reason that no specific baptismal rubric is recommended in Hildesheim's 1544 church order—Corvinus probably thought that Luther's paring of the liturgy had not gone far enough.

The bishop of Stift Hildesheim during this disruptive period of reform was Valentin von Teteleben (r. 1537-1551), who died in 1551 in exile, resisting reforms to the end. Duke Friedrich of Schleswig-Holstein then became the bishop of Hildesheim, and in 1553 the emperor also appointed him as the Stift's legal administrator. In another confessional swing, the duke's brother, Adolf of Schleswig-Holstein, introduced evangelical teaching in the Hildesheim towns of Peine and Steuerwald along the lines of the 1530 Augsburg Confession. This was followed by a 1561 church order that regulated doctrine and worship, and featured Luther's 1526 *Order of Baptism Newly Revised*.⁸⁰ The author of this *Kirchenordnung* was the Lutheran reformer Joachim Mörlin (1514-1571), who had studied in Wittenberg and worked as the Lutheran superintendent of

⁷⁹ "Papensantelent und –smerent [oils, anointing, smearing, etc.] dörve wy tor döpe nicht, wy willen nicht anders edder beter gedofft syn, denn also Christus yngesettet unde bevolen hefft, unde also de leven apostele geleret unde gedofft hebben, welck klar ys ut der Apostelgeschichte edder Actis apostolorum, also ock unse leve Here Jhesus Christus sülvest van Johannes Baptista gedofft ys yn dem Jordane." (Oils used for anointing or smearing should not be used in baptism; we have no better example than what Christ taught, or how the apostles taught and baptized, which is clear to us from the Acts of the Apostles, or the baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist in the Jordan.) Ibid., pp. 835-36.

⁸⁰ Sehling 7/2, p. 767.

Arnstadt, Göttingen, and Braunschweig. In the second article of the order, Mörlin announced the importance of replacing ‘godless’ Catholic rituals with more appropriate evangelical rubrics: All papist rites related to the Mass and other inappropriate, godless ceremonies were to be forbidden and discarded.⁸¹ Unlike Luther, who asked that traditional ceremonies be allowed until ‘weaker neighbors’ were prepared, Mörlin demanded that Catholic ceremonies immediately be replaced with Lutheran worship forms, and conducted visitations in the surrounding towns to insure that these reforms were carried out.⁸² Luther’s baptismal order was specifically mentioned as a part of this new liturgical practice, and the continuing confessional difficulties in Stift Hildesheim again highlighted the important role that ritual played in the confessional conflicts of Lower Saxony. The situation became no less tense when new bishops in the 1560s encouraged re-Catholization efforts.⁸³

From Catholic Hans Wurst to Lutheran Duke Julius: The “Late” Lutheran Reform of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel

Although the independent cities of Braunschweig and Goslar converted to Lutheranism within Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel in the 1520s, the principality itself did not convert to the Lutheran faith until the relatively late date of 1568. Behind this gradual conversion from Catholic to Lutheran identity is the fascinating story of a father who embraced traditional religion and sought concord with the Emperor, and a son who

⁸¹ “Aller papistischen grauel in der mess und anderer unzuchtlich, gotlosen ceremonien mussig gehn...” (All papist abominations in the Mass and other useless, godless ceremonies must go...) Sehling 7/2, p. 767.

⁸² Sehling 7/2, p. 761.

⁸³ For Hildesheim’s connection to Bavaria during the Counter Reformation, see Philip M. Soergel, *Wondrous in His Saints* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 79.

supported evangelism and turned against his father's wishes immediately after his father's death. For the historian interested in the process of confessionalization, the princely reform of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel is another excellent demonstration of the tensions and hot points associated with reform in both the 'early' and 'late' Lutheran Reformations. In Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, as in many of the towns and principalities of Lower Saxony, baptism played an important role in this confessionalization process.

The political leader of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel for most of the early Reformation period was Duke Henry (r. 1514-1568), a conservative Catholic who stood for decades as one of the most determined opponents of Lutheran reform.⁸⁴ In addition to a respect for the piety and institutional structures of the Catholic Church, Duke Henry was dependent on the favor of Emperor Charles V for the retention of recently acquired territory in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel.⁸⁵ After the Emperor pronounced against the Protestants in the 1521 Diet of Worms, Henry followed his lead and worked to suppress evangelical teaching and reform throughout his lands. As the 1520s wore on, however, this position came into direct conflict with the evangelical reforms begun in Braunschweig, Goslar, and Hildesheim. Although these cities enjoyed varying degrees of independence from territorial authority, Duke Henry saw their Lutheran orientation as dangerous political and religious threats to Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel and as a personal embarrassment. The situation was exacerbated by an ongoing dispute with Goslar over mining and forest rights.

⁸⁴ Duke Henry is also known as Heinrich der Jüngere (d. J.) or Henry II.

⁸⁵ Mark U. Edwards, Jr., *Luther's Last Battles* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 144.

In the 1530s, Braunschweig and Goslar joined the Protestant Schmalkald League to consolidate their defense against Duke Henry and other regional Catholic princes. In return, Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel joined the Catholic League in 1538, a defensive alliance featuring Charles V, King Ferdinand, the dukes of Bavaria, and Cardinal Albrecht of Mainz. The situation in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel became especially tense when the Schmalkald League chose to have its spring 1538 meeting in the city of Braunschweig, just 10 km north of the capital city of Wolfenbüttel. When Schmalkald leaders Elector Johann Friedrich and Landgrave Philipp marched by the fortress of Wolfenbüttel, Duke Henry denied them safe-conduct and fired on them, provoking angry objections and a series of counter attacks against the duke and the Catholic League.⁸⁶ As part of this confrontation between Duke Henry and the Schmalkald League, Martin Luther wrote his well-known pamphlet *Against Hanswurst*, a coarse attack on Henry's rule that defended the Lutheran cities of Goslar and Braunschweig, and the reforming efforts of the Schmalkald League.⁸⁷

In 1542, the confrontation turned to open warfare between the Catholic and Protestant parties. After a number of smaller skirmishes, Duke Henry attacked the imperial city of Goslar and the Schmalkald alliance came to its defense. Confronted by an overwhelmingly superior force, the duke fled Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel for France, where he consulted with his Catholic supporters. Between 1542 and 1547, the

⁸⁶ Thomas A. Brady, Jr., *Communities, Politics, and Reformation in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1998), pp. 149-67 and esp. p. 151.

⁸⁷ 'Hanswurst' refers to a carnival character in early modern Germany, who carried a long leather sausage around his neck and wore a clown-like uniform—in other words, a person worthy of ridicule and derision. For the text of Luther's attack, see WA 51:469-572 and LW 41:185-256. For an analysis of Luther's polemic, see Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles*, pp. 143-62.

Schmalkald League occupied Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel and began the systematic process of instituting Lutheran reforms in the territory. Johannes Bugenhagen was again called to construct a church order that regulated theology and worship in the principality, and the order he produced in 1543 bore many similarities to his earlier orders in Braunschweig (1528), Hamburg (1529), Lübeck (1531), Pomerania (1535), and the kingdom of Denmark (1537).⁸⁸ In terms of baptism, Bugenhagen again reinforced the necessity of infant baptism and German vernacular administration. Although no specific liturgy was mentioned, Bugenhagen urged pastors to minimize the use of oil and other symbols at baptism, because neither the Gospels or the Acts of the Apostles mentioned them, and nothing man-made could make baptism better than the one Christ instituted.⁸⁹ As previously mentioned, the 1543 Wolfenbüttel church order was later used in Hildesheim (1544), and other parts of the principality, as the Schmalkald League expanded their control of the region and pressed Lutheran reforms. As the Schmalkald League converted the territory, they brought Lutheran baptism with them.

Baptism defined the confessional conflict a second time in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, as Duke Henry momentarily regained control of the territory in September of 1545, when with the assistance of French money he assembled a large army and occupied the dukedom by force.⁹⁰ In the weeks that followed, Duke Henry ordered the Reformation suppressed and expelled the remaining Protestant clergy from his lands. Henry and his councilors were clearly nervous that Lutheran reforms had penetrated

⁸⁸ For the 1543 Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel order, see Sehling 6/1, pp. 22-80.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

⁹⁰ Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles*, p. 160.

significantly into the principality, and that the piety and confessional orientation of the people was in jeopardy. To counter this threat, Duke Henry condemned Lutheran reforms and distanced Wolfenbüttel from what he saw as heretical and disruptive new rituals. Using this line of reasoning, he promptly demanded that parents who had had their children baptized according to Lutheran ritual have them rebaptized using the Catholic rite, because the evangelical ceremony was not considered valid or efficacious.⁹¹ This binding, legal directive clearly placed baptism at the center of the confessional disagreement in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, and the important flash point shows that in periods of re-Catholicization, at least one Catholic prince demanded that Catholics repeat baptisms administered by Protestants.⁹² Although confessional creeds could be restated by the people after re-Catholicization, and the iterative sacraments such as Holy Communion reconfigured in a new way, there was clearly something deep about baptism that penetrated the body and required the rite to be repeated according to precise confessional creeds. In short, Christian initiation during the confessional conflicts occasionally became denominational initiation, and it needed to be redone if the confessional orientation changed from Protestant to Catholic. The episode also suggests that to Duke Henry, the Lutheran presence in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel was much

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² This belief was in contrast to the opinion of most mainstream Protestants, who accepted those baptized in other traditions or 'denominations', as long as the proper triune formula was used. In *Against Hanswurst*, for example, Luther wrote that Catholics had the same baptism as the Protestants, but had strayed from it. "For it is such a whore that I have in mind when I rebuke you as an apostate, straying whore—you who in your childhood were baptized in the dear Lord as true Christians and lived several years like the ancient church. Subsequently, when you became grown and reached the age of reason (as I myself with many others also did), you saw and heard the beautiful ceremonies of the papal church as well as its glittering income, honor, and power, yes, the splendid holiness and great worship services and fabled kingdom of heaven. Then you forgot your Christians faith, baptism, and sacrament..." WA 51:503, trans. Mark U. Edwards, Jr.

more dangerous than the Anabaptist presence—it was better to rebaptize Lutherans and risk encouraging the Anabaptists, than to allow Catholic infants to risk eternal damnation due to lack of baptism.

Although the liturgical reversal was stunning in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, it was short lived. By October 1545, the Protestant forces of the Schmalkald League entered Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel again, this time taking Duke Henry and his eldest son Karl Victor into custody near the town of Northeim. The League restored Lutheran reforms and sought to enforce the 1543 church order again; pastors were recalled, and evangelical baptisms began anew in Wolfenbüttel churches. Luther wrote the Saxon princes again and advised them not to allow Duke Henry to reassert his control over the duchy and wipe out evangelical gains in Goslar and Braunschweig.⁹³ Yet two years later the political situation reversed itself when Charles V negotiated truces with Valois France (1544) and the Ottoman Turks (1546), and was able to fully engage Protestant forces in the so-called Schmalkald War (July 1546 to April 1547).

After the Schmalkald War peace treaty, Duke Henry again recovered his territory, and from then on remained the last major Catholic prince in northern Germany. After that Charles V imposed the Augsburg Interim (1548) on Protestant cities and territories, a religious settlement that marginally recognized Lutheran institutions, but that also sought the restoration of Catholicism in the Empire. The leaders of evangelical reform in the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel were then severely punished. For example, Charles V required the city of Goslar to pay a penalty of 30,000 Rhenish Florins and twelve large

⁹³ Martin Luther, “To the Elector of Saxony and the Landgrave of Hesse on the Captive of Duke of Braunschweig” (1545), LW 43:251-288; WA 54, (374) 389-411.

cannons with ammunition to the emperor. The financially strapped city council could only pay the debt by borrowing extensively from the city's Jewish community, a development that would have later implications.⁹⁴ The five-year Schmalkald 'experiment' thus had an uncertain impact on Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel; the residents of the territory experienced dislocation and a revolving door of religious requirements, but also new forms of piety and self-determination. In the end, the cultural impact was probably mixed: Wolfenbüttel and most of the towns and rural areas maintained their traditional Catholic piety relatively uninterrupted, while Goslar, Braunschweig, and Hildesheim continued with their new Lutheran traditions, albeit with the problems that financial penalties and the Augsburg Interim imposed.

Duke Julius, Martin Chemnitz, and Reform

Upon Duke Henry's death in 1568, the territory of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel underwent a relatively peaceful Lutheran reform. The effort was led by Henry's third son Julius (r. 1568-1589), the oldest surviving heir who had long-planned an evangelical reform of the territory. When his father died, Julius contacted Lutheran theologian Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586) to assist in the effort of doctrinal and institutional reform in the territory.⁹⁵ Chemnitz is a fascinating figure in the history of the late Lutheran Reformation; the so-called "second Martin" acted as reformer and superintendent for

⁹⁴ Rotraud Ries, *Jüdisches Leben in Niedersachsen im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Hannover: Verlag Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1994), p. 49.

⁹⁵ For general information about the reforms of Duke Julius and Chemnitz, see Inge Mager, "Die Einführung der Reformation in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel und die Gründung der Universität Helmstedt", in *Staatsklugheit und Frömmigkeit: Herzog Julius zu Braunschweig-Lüneburg, ein norddeutscher Landesherr des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek, 1989), pp. 24-33.

numerous northern territorial churches, wrote leading doctrinal works (including the *Loci Theologici* and *Examination of the Council of Trent*), co-authored the important doctrinal statement known as the Formula of Concord, and constructed numerous church orders for Lutheran communities, including the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel order of 1569.⁹⁶

Chemnitz began his reform of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel by producing a doctrinal statement known as the *Corpus Julianum* in 1568. This Lutheran document was a *Corpora Doctrina* or confessional statement that stood with the Augsburg Confession and other creedal declarations as the highest arbiters of doctrine in the principality.⁹⁷ As Lutheran territories evolved, confessional statements became more and more important in governance of principalities and in the resolution of disputes between competing Lutheran princes. The early years of Julius' reign coincide with a tense period of denominational struggle within Lutheranism itself, as princes and theologians tried to sort out how to be authentic followers of Luther (d. 1546) while responding to new theological insights and political, confessional, and institutional developments. One aspect of this conflict was the adiaphora controversy, which now divided Lutheran theologians as it had divided first-generation Protestants earlier in Wittenberg, Zurich, and Geneva. The Philippist Lutherans (the followers of Philipp Melancthon) assumed a more yielding position regarding adiaphora, defending the Leipzig Interim and the associated reintroduction of traditional or "Romish" ceremonies into the Lutheran church. In addition, Philippists were also more likely to support a compromise with Charles V on

⁹⁶ See Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part 1, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), pp. 17-24.

⁹⁷ For an analysis of Lutheran confessional documents, see Robert Kolb, *Confessing the Faith: Reformers Define the Church, 1530-1580* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1991).

religious matters, and worked steadily to do so.⁹⁸ In terms of baptism, the Philippists were willing to change Luther's baptismal liturgy if the modifications found greater appeal among Reformed or Catholic churches, and this compromise position led to wider toleration and cooperation.

The Philippists were opposed by the Gnesio-Lutherans or 'genuine Lutherans', who were led by the conservative Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520-1575), a theologian based at the University of Jena who wanted to maintain Luther's teaching and a stricter understanding of the adiaphora principle.⁹⁹ In terms of baptism, this meant a more careful devotion to the precise liturgy of Luther and the use of traditional symbols and baptismal exorcism. As the controversy wore on, the Gnesio-Lutherans were joined by pastors from many of the cities in Lower Saxony, including Braunschweig, Lüneburg, Hamburg, and Lübeck.¹⁰⁰ These men charged that the policies of the Philippists were harmful to true doctrine, and not simply indifferent matters. Furthermore, although some practices introduced by the Philippists through the Emperor's influence could legitimately be called adiaphora, the Gnesio-Lutherans argued that reintroducing them at the present time would confuse and harm many lay people, as the recent events in

⁹⁸ For an important study of Philippist positions, see Luther D. Peterson, "The Philippist Theologians and the Interims of 1548: Soteriological, Ecclesiastical, and Liturgical Compromises and Controversies within German Lutheranism", Ph.D. diss. (University of Wisconsin, 1974).

⁹⁹ For the Gnesio-Lutheran position, see Robert Kolb, "Georg Major as Controversialist: Polemics in the Late Reformation", *Church History* 45 (1976), pp. 455-68; Robert Kolb, "Dynamics of Party Conflict in the Saxon Late Reformation: Gnesio-Lutherans vs. Philippists", *Journal of Modern History* 49, 3 (1977); Robert Kolb, *Andreae and the Formula of Concord* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), esp. pp. 19-42.

¹⁰⁰ "Philippists", OER, 3:257.

Wolfenbüttel had demonstrated.¹⁰¹ The same accusation was leveled later during the ‘Crypto-Calvinist Controversy’, when Gnesio-Lutherans accused a younger generation of Philippists of moving toward a Reformed understanding of the sacraments. The two sides could not agree on what constituted genuine adiaphora.¹⁰²

Martin Chemnitz helped to resolve the controversy between Philippists and Gnesio-Lutherans by assisting in the drafting of the Formula of Concord (1577), a doctrinal agreement written with the assistance of Jakob Andreae (1528-1590), Nicholas Selnecker (1530-1592), and Elector August of Albertine Saxony (r. 1553-1586).¹⁰³ The Formula of Concord was agreed to by the majority of Lutheran territories in Germany, and marked the temporary ascendance of the Gnesio-Lutheran party. Although the result proved unsatisfactory to some Philippists, the agreement was crucial to the survival of the Lutheran church, and the construction of clear doctrinal lines that would be easily distinguishable from Catholic and Reformed competitors. The final agreement was published in a doctrinal compendium called the *Book of Concord* (1580), which also included the older confessional statements such as the Augsburg Confession and Luther’s Smalkald Articles. Chemnitz was thus at the center of Lutheran reforms in northern Germany, and began his residency in Wolfenbüttel as the supreme arbiter of Lutheran doctrine and ecclesiastical policy.

¹⁰¹ For a sermon by Jakob Andreae that outlined that Gnesio-Lutheran position on adiaphora, see Kolb, *Andreae and the Formula of Concord*, pp. 92-96.

¹⁰² Nischan, “Ritual and Protestant Identity”, p. 144.

¹⁰³ See Inge Mager, *Die Konkordienformel im Fürstentum Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986).

Chemnitz's Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel church order (1569) should be seen as a mature example of the *Kirchenordnung* genre in Lower Saxony, a document made possible by the development of sophisticated Lutheran institutions that unified both political and ecclesiastical functions.¹⁰⁴ The 1569 church order carefully defined ecclesiastical discipline in the territory and placed a regional superintendent in each major city that reported to a general superintendent, based in Wolfenbüttel. The order defined Lutheran doctrine, teaching, worship, discipline, poor relief, education, the regulation of monastic institutions, and the description of ecclesiastical offices and hierarchies. In terms of baptism, the church order emphasized the importance of Luther's *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* liturgy, identifying the work as the occasional service appended to Luther's 1529 *Small Catechism*.¹⁰⁵ This notation provides additional evidence that the *Small Catechism* was one of the main distribution vehicles for Luther's baptismal order, in addition to mature Lutheran *Kirchenordnungen*.

The 1569 order is a departure from Bugenhagen's earliest baptismal teaching, which recommended simply that pastors use the vernacular for administration and avoid 'papist' symbols. Taking the Gnesio-Lutheran position in the concurrent inter-Lutheran controversies, the 1569 church order required that Luther's exact baptismal service be used, and that pastors around the principality become well versed in its content and

¹⁰⁴ For the text of the order, see Sehling 6/1, pp. 83-277.

¹⁰⁵ "Und wiewoll die forma der taufe menniglichen bekant und im catechismo Lutheri gefast ist, so wöllen wir sie doch hieher von worten zu worten setzen lassen, damit sich ein jeder pastor soviel desto baß darnach zu richten." (Even though the form of baptism is well known and set into words in Luther's catechism, we will set it here word for word, so that each pastor will be able to get it right.) Ibid., p. 157.

administration.¹⁰⁶ In addition, the order required that pastors use the sign of the cross, the christening robe, and the two baptismal exorcisms that Luther had required in 1526—clear support for Luther’s liturgical authority. These symbolic items now became highly recognizable signs of orthodox Lutheranism in north Germany, and of the Gnesio-Lutheran position in particular. (In this way the Gnesio-Lutheran approach to ritual was less “Roman” than the Philippists, but still more “Roman” than the other Protestant groups in Europe.) Regulating the matter further, the order also stipulated that baptisms were to take place within 7 days of birth, like the earlier Catholic custom. Parents who did not bring their children to the font within 7 days were misusing the sacrament and putting their children at risk of eternal damnation.¹⁰⁷

Chemnitz and Duke Julius did not create the baptismal rubrics in the 1569 church order themselves, but borrowed them with other materials from the 1564 church order of neighboring Braunschweig-Lüneburg (see above), supporters of Lutheran reform since the early work of Duke Ernst ‘the confessor’.¹⁰⁸ This was probably due to the haste in which Duke Julius wanted to introduce Lutheran reforms in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, and the orthodox position that Lüneburg held in Lutheran circles. In addition, most of the

¹⁰⁶ In a different part of the lengthy church order, pastors were even asked to commit the baptismal teachings to memory. See *Ibid.*, p. 125.

¹⁰⁷ “Nachdem auch bey etlichen ein böser brauch, das sie allein umb des gefreß oder prachts willen die kindertaufe biß in die acht, vierzehen tage, dritt und mehr wochen verziehen, dardurch die kinder versaumt und etwa ungetauft dahinsterven, sollen hinfuro die eltern ihre kinder unverzogenlich zur heiligen taufe befürdern und derhalben kein mangel an ihnen erscheinen lassen.” (There are also numerous cases of a wicked practice, that just for the sake of eating or splendor, children lie unbaptized for 8 days, 14 days, three and more weeks, and some of these children succumb and die unbaptized. Instead, parents should take their children to holy baptism right away to avoid any fault.) *Ibid.*, p. 156.

¹⁰⁸ The Braunschweig-Lüneburg church order was in turn influenced by the 1552 Mecklenberg church order. See *Sehling 5*, p. 204.

Lüneburg theologians were supporters of the Gnesio-Lutheran position in the 1550s and 1560s, so Chemnitz probably approved of their regulations in ceremonial and liturgical matters. In short, they embraced a conservative Lutheran position, in direct opposition to the Emperor, the Reformed church, and the Catholics. In this way, baptismal orthodoxy in the late Lutheran Reformation became closely associated with Luther's own baptismal liturgy, and those who attempted to change the ritual were accused of favoring Philippist or proto-Calvinist positions. The ritual that first demonstrated evangelism had taken hold in a community had now become a performance test for doctrinal orthodoxy in Lutheran communities.

There is one important modification of Luther's baptismal service worth noting in the standard 1564 and 1569 church orders—the editors of the rite have removed Luther's introductory preface about baptism, and have inserted instead three short admonitions or *vermanungen* in the middle of the baptismal liturgy. These short lessons are apparently provided as optional catechetical materials, and the instructions invite the pastor to read either the first or the second admonition after the gospel lesson (Mark 10:13-16), and the third either before or after the final exorcism. The exorcism admonition is important evidence of a continuing controversy within baptismal circles, and will be studied more carefully at the end of this chapter. The first two admonitions are important to summarize here. These roughly parallel texts provide short pastoral instructions about the meaning of baptism—what happens in the sacrament, who it is for, and how it benefits them.¹⁰⁹ The fact that these useful, explanatory texts were an obvious omission

¹⁰⁹ There is considerable overlap between the admonitions, and both review themes Luther had discussed in his own baptismal preface and theological writings (see Chapter 2). In the

from Luther's original baptismal liturgies was noted in Chapter 2, and has been explained by Luther's reluctance to change the liturgical flow of the traditional baptismal service, both for the sake of local 'weaker neighbors' and his own liturgical sensibilities. The *vermanungen* were good teaching tools, however, especially in a confessional context in which individual symbols and actions mattered a great deal. The Reformed churches had developed such admonitions in their baptismal liturgy from a very early period, and the addition had done much to separate the Reformed rite from Lutheran, Catholic, and Anabaptist ceremonies. We turn now to one missing link in the discussion of the Protestant reform of Lower Saxony—the historical roots of a Reformed (Calvinist) community in Lower Saxony, and the baptismal rites used there.

Calvinism and the Reform of East Friesland

The County of East Friesland (Ostfriesland) provides the most compelling example of an extended confrontation between Reformed (Calvinist) supporters and Lutherans in Lower Saxony during the Reformation period, and allows the historian a unique opportunity to examine Reformed baptismal traditions as they took root among confessional rivals in northern Germany. The development of 'Civic Calvinism' has been written about extensively by Heinz Schilling, and I rely on Schilling's work here to

heightened confessional context, the crucial markers of Lutheran orthodoxy would have been the statements that all people are born in sin and to a fallen humanity (rejected by Anabaptists), that baptism applies especially to infants (rejected by Anabaptists), that baptism brings the forgiveness of sin (rejected by Calvinists), a washing in Christ's blood (rejected by Calvinists), and eternal salvation (rejected by Calvinists). The second admonition featured more scriptural quotations and spoke more directly to the responsibility of parents than the first, which may be evidence of the growing pedagogical role that parents were asked to fulfill in the late Lutheran Reformation. For the texts of the *vermanungen*, see Sehling 6/1, p. 158 and compare Sehling 6/1, pp. 555-56.

provide the necessary backdrop for my discussion of Reformed baptism in Emden, an important center of reform in East Friesland.¹¹⁰

East Friesland, a territory in northwestern Lower Saxony bordering the North Sea and the Netherlands, was ruled in the early modern period by a line of imperial counts. Since 1464, the Cirksena line ruled the principality, making Emden their base of power, a coastal town with numerous economic and cultural ties to the Netherlands. Emden was unusual in its political and communal organization; unlike many German towns with extensive trading connections, Emden had a town government with very limited citizen involvement and few communal institutions. The town council, in particular, was more a seignorial institution of the ruling counts than a civic constitutional one.¹¹¹ When evangelical preaching came to Emden, therefore, the movement was not embraced by urban burgers as a vehicle for political reform (as in other parts of Lower Saxony), but as a theological revival. And due to the town's close connections with the Netherlands, the evangelical message carried a distinctively Dutch flavor. The first Reformation preacher was Georg Aportanus, who between 1520 and 1522 took a course different from Lutheranism and especially Luther's interpretation of the Eucharist. Aportanus interpreted the Eucharist as a memorial meal (like Cornelius Hoen and Huldrych

¹¹⁰ For Schilling's works on Emden and East Friesland, see Heinz Schilling, *Civic Calvinism* (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1991); Heinz Schilling, "Between the Territorial State and Urban Liberty: Lutheranism and Calvinism in the County of Lippe", in *The German People and the Reformation*, edited by R. Po-chia Hsia (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Heinz Schilling, "Reform and Supervision of Family Life in Germany and the Netherlands", in *Sin and the Calvinists*, edited by Raymond A. Mentzer (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1994).

¹¹¹ Schilling, *Civic Calvinism*, p. 14.

Zwingli), and this teaching took firm root in the town's main church, the *Große Kirche*.¹¹²

As the Emden citizens debated the merits of Catholic and proto-Reformed theology in the 1520s, the new count of East Friesland, Enno II (1528-1540), converted to Lutheranism and demanded that the entire territory follow his Lutheran theology and practice. The count's insistence on Lutheranism polarized the religious community in Emden, and brought an angry defense of the Reformed religion. In a dramatic protest against the Lutheran understanding of the Eucharist, Emden residents rejected the Lutheran theologians who were sent to Emden to reorganize the community according to Lutheran principles, and distributed placards with the motto *Schlagt die...Fleischfresser tot!* (Kill the flesh eaters!)¹¹³ In 1529, count Enno distributed a church order throughout East Friesland that attempted to promulgate Lutheran theology and worship as earlier orders in Lower Saxony had done. In the baptism section of this order, the Lutheran reformers insisted that baptism be administered to children only, that it be performed in the vernacular, and that external symbols such as chrism be avoided—the well-established Lower Saxon pattern of baptismal reform.¹¹⁴ In fact, the contents of Enno's church order were much like Bugenhagen's 1528 *Kirchenordnung* published in Braunschweig a year earlier. Yet curiously, the new East Friesland order made no mention of Reformed doctrines or practices—Enno's Lutheran editors clearly knew little about the new confessional attitudes in Emden, and the important influence of Dutch

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 18-19.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 20.

¹¹⁴ Sehling 7/1, p. 365.

teaching in the region. Emden was also ignored in 1535, when a second church order clarified Lutheran baptism and other ceremonial matters in East Friesland. Importantly, the source of this teaching was not Braunschweig or Lower Saxony at all, but Osiander's Brandenburg-Nuremberg church order of 1533.¹¹⁵

In the 1540s, Emden's Reformed community was powerfully united under the leadership of pastor John à Lasco (1499-1560), a theologian from Poland with extensive connections in the Reformed world. À Lasco also benefited from a recent change of leadership in the East Frisian territory; in 1542, Countess Anna succeeded her husband Enno to the throne, and ruled as regent while her sons Edzard II and Johann were minors. Anna reversed the Lutheran confessional policy of her husband and shifted the principality to a moderate form of the Reformed religion, influenced collectively by the teaching of Zwingli, Calvin, Bucer, and Melanchthon. À Lasco was appointed the superintendent of the church in East Friesland and also the lead pastor of the *Große Kirche* in Emden.¹¹⁶ In 1543 and 1544, à Lasco founded the presbytery, an organizational unit that established ecclesiastical supervision and morals control in Emden and the surrounding villages. According to Heinz Schilling, this early presbytery served as a model for other Reformed communities throughout Germany.¹¹⁷ In 1545, the Reformed orientation of East Friesland was further strengthened by a police ordinance (*Polizeiordnung*) published by Countess Anna, which described the ecclesiastical

¹¹⁵ For an English translation of the baptismal instructions, see J. D. C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: The Reformation Period* (London: S. P. C. K., 1970), pp. 26-29. For the original text of the East Friesland church order, see *Karckenordenynge vor dem pastoren unde kerckendenern* (1535), Sehling 7/1, pp. 373-397, esp. 373-375 for baptism. For the 1533 Brandenburg-Nuremberg church order, see Sehling 11, pp. 174-180.

¹¹⁶ Schilling, *Civic Calvinism*, p. 23.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, fn 36.

organization of the Reformed church, highlighted important theological points, and proscribed monetary punishments for violating the new ecclesiastical laws.¹¹⁸ Early modern police ordinances (*Polizeiordnungen*) had much in common with church orders (*Kirchenordnungen*), except that police ordinances typically established fines and penalties for improper behavior and took the form of territorial legislation (*Landesordnungen*). Police ordinances were used by Reformed presbyteries as tools to enforce social discipline, but also by Lutheran princes and consistories to bring both secular and ecclesiastical law under one administrative framework.¹¹⁹

The 1545 police ordinance of Countess Anna regulated Reformed baptism in a few unusual ways. Rather than describe the particular baptismal service which should be followed (which was left to the discretion of the presbytery and the superintendent), the police ordinance focused on an aspect of traditional baptismal that appeared particularly ungodly to Reformed pastors in Emden: excessive parties that took place after the baptism and periodically throughout the mother's six-week lying-in period. In a section entitled "Wan de kinder gebaren werden" ("When a child is born"), the regulations point out that the birth of a child is often the occasion for great abuse, when numerous guests invaded the house and proceeded to drink and celebrate while the poor mother and child

¹¹⁸ Sehling 7/1, pp. 398-413.

¹¹⁹ Early Reformed church orders had appeared in other parts of Germany and France that influenced the reformers in East Friesland. Bucer published church orders for Strasbourg (1534), Hesse (1539), and Cologne (1543), and Calvin's *Ordonnances ecclésiastiques* appeared in Geneva in 1541. For additional information about Reformed church orders and their composition, see Amy Burnett, *The Yoke of Christ: Martin Bucer and Christian Discipline*, (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1994); Fred W. Graham, *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives*, (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1994); Andrew Pettegree, *Emden and the Dutch Revolt: Exile and the Development of Reformed Protestantism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

lay in a fragile state.¹²⁰ Rather than party into the night, the women around the mother (limited to four or five) were ordered to thank God Almighty for his great gifts, and avoid further noise and excess. Each person over the set guest limit was to be fined 10 gold guildens as a penalty.¹²¹

Similar regulations applied to baptismal parties called “kyndelberen” (child beers) in the Reformed communities of Emden and East Friesland. At the baptism itself, a maximum of two or three godparents were allowed so that families would not be excessively beholden to those who had stood for their children at baptism and brought costly baptismal gifts.¹²² Afterward, the baptismal party was to be kept small and could only last one day. To avoid excessive feasting, a sumptuary limit of one meal of five or six courses was insisted upon at the penalty of 10 gold guildens. In this way, Reformed divines attempted to reform childbirth and baptism as godly rituals, not opportunities for excessive feasting and drinking. In short, baptismal excess had become an issue of morals and civic order. The 1545 police ordinance also included other attempts to regulate the life of citizens who had recently experienced the ‘negative’ aspects of the region’s economic boom. Eggerick Beninga, one of the co-authors of the ordinance and a

¹²⁰ “Soe ock ein groet mysbruck an volen orden geschut yn der tyt, wanner de kinder gebaren werden, dar de fruwen mannichvolt ungebeden hengaen, darover vele unnutte kostspildunge gescheen des drunkendrinkendes, wordorch de kraemfruwen und junge kinder to besorgen... (So also it is a great misuse and problem that when a child is born and the mother lies in childbed, that there is unnecessary and costly drinking, which bothers the recovering mother and young child...) Sehling 7/1, pp. 409-410.

¹²¹ De darbaven anders befunden werden, de scholen 10 goltgulden yn handen (woe hirvor angetagen) vorfallen sin.” (If more than [4 or 5] are found, the penalty shall be 10 gold guildens in hand for the incident.) Ibid.

¹²² “Wanneer de kinder gedopet werden, schal nemant mer dan twe eder dre gefadderden... dan up dat hogeste bi twe verkante discke und nicht mer als 5 eder 6 gerichte.” (When a child is baptized, take no more than 2 or 3 godparents... and at most there should be 2 meals and not more than 5 or 6 courses.) Ibid.

councilor to the countess, wrote actively about the social problems that attended local increases in trade and agriculture, and he recommended the Emden presbytery work hard to limit sumptuary excess and promote godly discipline.¹²³ As I describe in Chapter 5, the Lutheran authorities in Lower Saxony also attempted a similar reform of baptismal sponsorship and excessive celebration, efforts that met with only limited success due to the administrative limitations of many Lower Saxon territorial governments.

The 1545 police ordinance was the first Reformed ecclesiastical statute in north Germany to bring sacramental practices under the arm of state-sponsored law and discipline, an effort that would have important confessional consequences in Lower Saxony. In contrast to later confessional disputes between Lutheran and Reformed reformers, however, this early ordinance was less concerned with what remnants appeared as ‘papist’ in Lutheran ritual, than with the more immediate threat of Anabaptist teachings, which swelled dramatically in East Friesland when Menno Simons (1496-1561) and other Anabaptists fled to the territory after aggressive persecution in Münster, southern Germany, and the Netherlands.¹²⁴ Countess Anna’s police ordinance specifically mentioned the dangerous influence of the Mennonites and the powers that superintendent à Lasco had to examine and expel them.¹²⁵ This supported Emperor

¹²³ Schilling, *Civic Calvinism*, p. 24.

¹²⁴ Anabaptist Melchior Hoffman (1495-1543) had visited Emden earlier, and allegedly baptized 300 adults in 1529 before being expelled. See James D. Tracy, *Europe’s Reformations, 1450-1650* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), pp. 82-83.

¹²⁵ Along with Menno Simons, the Anabaptists David Joris and Johann von Batenburg were also mentioned: “Soe averst de Daviten und de batenborgesche sekten yn ore confession nicht to vortruwen sinnen, sudt men ane noet, de vor den superadintendenten to examineren. De Menniten averst vor den superadintendenten to examineren, acht men nutte. We sick dan van one myt der hillige scrift nicht wil onderwysen laten, de schal nicht geleden werden.” (Since the followers of David Joris and the followers of Johann von Batenburg cannot be trusted with their

Charles V's 1542 edict against the Mennonites, and Countess Anna's subsequent ban on Mennonite writings in 1544. The legislative barrage against the Mennonites was at least partially successful; by 1545 Menno Simons had fled East Friesland for Cologne, and soon after he moved north to Schleswig-Holstein.

If the 1540s was a time to fight Anabaptists in East Friesland, the 1550s was a time to counter the efforts of the Augsburg Interim and re-Catholization. When the Augsburg Interim was passed in 1548, Countess Anna failed to achieve a special exemption for her territories, and the Reformed church in East Friesland was forced to allow Catholic worship in the principality. Liturgical vestments were reintroduced along with many traditionally Catholic practices. When the Reformed pastors and theologians of Emden refused to comply with the Catholic revival, Protestant preaching was no longer allowed in Emden church buildings and all Reformed baptismal services had to be administered in the open air.¹²⁶ As in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, the Counter Reformation brought dramatic changes to Protestant baptismal, and the ceremonial disjuncture would have been obvious and disconcerting for the residents of Emden. As a response to these events, John á Lasco resigned his office in Emden and moved to London to work for the Protestant reform of the English church under the rule of Edward VI (r. 1547-1553).

confession, they should not be examined except by the superintendent. The followers of Menno Simons should also be examined by the superintendent. They should not be allowed to instruct anyone in the holy scripture or teach.) Sehling 7/1, pp. 401-02. For a useful review article of Simons and Joris, see S. Zijlstra, "Menno Simons and David Joris", *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 62 (1988), pp. 249-256.

¹²⁶ Schilling, *Civic Calvinism*, p. 25.

Yet as Heinz Schilling has observed, the Augsburg Interim provoked a political crisis in East Friesland that eventually led to the independence of Emden and a final settling of the religious question in the principality in favor of Calvinism. When the reign of Edward VI ended in England, waves of Reform-minded exiles from England landed in Emden and bolstered the Reformed community. In 1554, á Lasco and his Dutch colleague Maarten Micron (1523-1559) published a church order for the exile Reformed congregation in East Friesland, which immediately found use in Norden, Emden, and the Netherlands, even though it was technically not permitted by the law of the land.¹²⁷ This order provided more detailed instructions for Reformed baptism, and included a baptismal liturgy influenced by John Calvin's recent French rite, the theological writings of Martin Bucer and Heinrich Bullinger, and catechetical materials written in East Friesland by á Lasco.¹²⁸ Reformed ritual continued in Emden even as the surrounding territory returned again to Lutheran domination in the 1570s under Count Edzard II, and, as before, the administration of the sacraments continued to provoke controversies.¹²⁹ The town of Emden, which slowly moved from a provincial backwater to an economic and political powerhouse in the later years of the 16th century, finally achieved political and religious independence from the East Friesland counts between 1595 and 1599. With a substantial militia and the threat of support from neighboring Dutch Calvinists, Emden became the first autonomous Reformed town in Lower Saxony and a dramatic example

¹²⁷ For a High German translation of the original Dutch (1565), see Sehling 7/1, pp. 579-670.

¹²⁸ Sehling 7/1, pp. 609-614.

¹²⁹ For the debate about the Lord's Supper, see A. Pettegree, "The London Exile Community and the Second Sacrament Controversy, 1550-1560", *Archive for Reformation History* 78 (1987), pp. 223-52. For the controversy surrounding the Lutheran burial of Count Edzard II's daughter, see Schilling, *Civic Calvinism*, pp. 35-36.

of a German “town republic” which gained its independence through a combination of political and religious forces.

Examining the Reformed Baptismal Liturgy

The baptismal liturgy used by the Reformed church in East Friesland emerged not from Lutheran or Anabaptist traditions, but from the liturgical work of Leo Jud, Martin Bucer, Huldrych Zwingli, John Calvin, and other reformers who worked systematically to return the baptismal liturgy to the form they felt it had taken in the primitive church. The content of the Reformed liturgy is important to this chapter’s discussion of confessionalization in Lower Saxony, because the polemical discourse that developed around the administration of the sacraments had much to do with the presence of symbols in Protestant worship, and the corresponding positions the territorial churches took on adiaphora, or the contentious “middle things” (indifferent matters) of the liturgy.

The historical roots of Reformed baptism date to the activities of Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531), the reformer who came to the Swiss city of Zurich in 1519 as people's priest at the cathedral known as *Grossmünster*. Upon his arrival, Zwingli immediately announced that his intention was to preach not from the appointed scriptural texts (as the traditional lectionary suggested) but directly from the gospel of Matthew, from beginning to end. Zwingli thus established his career in Zurich as a devotee of scripture, and over the coming years he developed an evangelical theology that was based on scripture alone, and yet distinct from the evangelism of Luther and the Wittenberg reformers. In 1522, Zwingli preached in Zurich against traditional Catholic worship

forms of worship, and rejected the Catholic penitential system, pilgrimages, the cult of the saints, the late-medieval emphasis on Mary, and monastic asceticism. In 1523, the town council of Zurich began formal debates about the nature and content of Swiss evangelism, and the reformers in Zwingli's circle pressed for the godly reform of the city. As an organizing tool, they followed what became known as the "negative scriptural principle"—if a Christian ritual or custom was not specifically defined in scripture, it was to be dropped. In August of 1523, a priest named Leo Jud seized the opportunity to begin the reform of communal rituals, and performed the first evangelical baptism in Zurich. (Before administering the revised sacrament, he obtained Zwingli's approval.) Jud translated the local, Catholic order of baptism from Latin into German, arguing, as Luther had done, that a vernacular rite was the most important way to separate the evangelical movement from Catholic tradition.¹³⁰

Current scholarship interprets Jud's 1523 *Baptismal Book* as an adaptation of Luther's 1523 *Order of Baptism* that allowed for local differences in the German language and the retention of important late-medieval baptismal traditions from the Diocese of Constance, where Zurich was located.¹³¹ From this adaptation, it is clear that Jud read the baptismal rubrics of both Luther and the Constance tradition closely.¹³² However, even in this early rite he made several revisions that can be seen as paring

¹³⁰ For the text of the rite, see Fisher, *Christian Initiation: The Reformation*, pp. 126-129. For the German original, see *Ein kurtze und gemeine forme für die schwachgleubigen, kinder zu touffen* (Zurich: Christof Froschouer, 1523), in *Corpus Reformatorum*, vol. 91, pp. 710-13.

¹³¹ Old, *The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite*, p. 41.

¹³² For the text of the Diocese of Constance ritual, see *Obsequiale sive benedictionale secundum ecclesiam Constantiensem* (Augsburg, 1510), in Alban Dold, ed., *Die Konstanzer Ritualientexte in ihrer Entwicklung von 1482-1721* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1923).

down the symbolic content of the ritual—an editorial strategy that would play a large part in the construction of future ‘Reformed’ baptismal rites. In addition to reworking Luther’s “great flood” prayer, Jud reduced Luther’s three exorcisms to one, shortened the prayer that followed the presentation of the white baptismal robe, and removed the presentation of a burning candle to the infant’s godparents.¹³³ Although it is not appropriate to call this early liturgy a ‘Reformed’ rite, it emerged from Zwingli’s circle at a critical time and was an important transitional step to Reformed practice that emphasized the clarity of the German vernacular and an economy of liturgical symbols as Luther’s early rites had done.

In the dynamic city of Strasbourg, evangelism was also in full swing and an important impetus for baptismal reforms. In 1524, a priest named Wolfgang Capito (1478-1541) published a commentary in Strasbourg about the debate that took place between Martin Luther and Andreas Karlstadt in 1521-1522.¹³⁴ As I suggest in Chapter 1, an important feature of this debate was a disagreement over the use of external symbols in worship—Karlstadt rejected “man made” symbols as marks of idolatry that were contrary to scripture, while Luther accepted medieval developments in the liturgy and in particular symbols that seemed meaningful to communities as an extension of the adiaphora principle (i.e. for the sake of ‘weaker neighbors’). Capito now weighed in on the symbol controversy in a way that became highly characteristic of later Reformed writings—he attacked the use of symbolic markers such as chrism and oil as unnecessary

¹³³ For a useful summary of these and other textual differences, see Old, *Reformed Baptismal Rite*, pp. 43-45. For an English translation of the rite, see Fisher, *Christian Initiation: The Reformation*, pp. 126-29.

¹³⁴ Wolfgang Capito, *Wass man halten unnd antworten soll von der spaltung zwischen Martin Luther und Andres Carolstadt* (Strasbourg, 1524); HAB A: 156.15 Theol. (15).

and dangerous agents in the liturgy, which both darkened the grace of baptism and led to superstitious practices among the congregation:

To baptism belongs only water and this word, I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son...etc. All the rest is supplementary which from ancient times was used for decoration. We leave out the chrism and the oil when people come who will allow us to leave it out, because those things have been considered far too highly and for us they darken the grace of baptism. One gives more respect to the chrism and the oil which the suffragan bishop has bewitched with his consecration formulae than to simple water which God has blessed with his Word. It is from this that has arisen that other misuse [emergency baptism], that so many ignorant people have their sickly children baptized once again in the Church, who without chrism and oil had been baptized at home by midwives.¹³⁵

Although Capito did not propose a new baptismal liturgy, he emphasized the point that baptism itself did not 'save' a Christian, and people were neither lost nor saved before their Christian baptisms. Baptism was better understood as a marker under which Christians lived out their whole lives; it stood as a sign of the continual washing from sins that formed the character of the Christian's transitory life.

Later that year, Martin Bucer (1491-1551), Wolfgang Capito, and seven other pastors in Strasbourg published a lengthy work known as *Grund und Ursach* to explain the process of liturgical reform in Strasbourg.¹³⁶ In a chapter on baptism, Bucer agreed with Capito that the internal grace and renewal of baptism was more important than the external sign. He also identified an important goal of the Reformed baptismal tradition—to restore the rite of baptism to the simplicity and power it had enjoyed in the primitive, New Testament church. By suggesting a return to the earliest Christian practices, Bucer

¹³⁵ Quoted in Old, *Reformed Baptismal Rite*, pp. 52-53; trans. Old.

¹³⁶ Martinus Butzer, *Grund und ursach auss gotlicher schrift der neuwerungen, an dem nachtmal des herren, so man die Mess nennet, Tauff, Geyrtagen, bildern und gesang, in der gemein Christi...zu Strassburg fuergenommen: Ein sendtbrief an den...herrn, Fridreich Pfaltzgrave* (Strassburg, Koepfel, 1524). HAB A: 194.4 Theol. (1).

did not intend to reject infant baptism, but rather to simplify the rite so that it resembled the baptism of Christ in the Jordan River or the early baptisms of the Apostles. And the core of this simplification was removing the ceremonies and symbols that cluttered the late-medieval baptismal liturgy. By this he meant the numerous exorcisms, the prebaptismal and postbaptismal anointings, the use of consecrated water, and the rituals associated with salt, saliva, and lighted candles.¹³⁷

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, this interest in returning the baptismal ritual to its apostolic origins was not, by modern standards, a completely historic enterprise—recent scholars have been unable to identify a complete baptismal liturgy in New Testament scripture, and the earliest known western baptismal liturgy (the *Apostolic Tradition*, c. 200) contains numerous symbolic ‘additions’, including exorcism. However, the Strasbourg reformers strongly felt that the circumstances surrounding New Testament baptisms indicated brevity and simplicity, even if the exact liturgies used were not preserved by scripture. Accordingly, *Grund und Ursach* recommended a short exhortation on how the sacrament was to be understood, a simple prayer asking Christ to baptize the child in Spirit, and a simple water baptism using the scriptural triune formula. In 1525, a baptismal service following these basic guidelines was published along with other liturgical rubrics in Strasbourg.¹³⁸ The author was Johannes Schwan, a supporter of Bucer and the other reformers. In addition to the prescribed elements, the service

¹³⁷ Old, *Reformed Baptismal Rite*, p. 55.

¹³⁸ *Ordnung des Herren Hachtmal: so man die Messz nennet sampt der Tauff und Insegung der Ee, Wie yetzt die diener des Wort gots zuo Strassburg Erneüwert und nach götlicher gschrift gebessert haben uss ursach in nachgenger Epistel gemeldet* (Strasbourg, Johannes Schwan, 1525). For bibliographic information, see Old, *Reformed Baptismal Rite*, p. 57 fn. 24. For an English translation, see Fisher, *Christian Initiation: The Reformation Period*, pp. 34-37.

featured the traditional scripture reading (Mark 10:13-16), the Lord's Prayer, the Apostle's Creed, and an invitation for parents to join the godparents in standing with the infant to be baptized.

Back in Zurich, Zwingli faced similar pressures to reform worship according to the textual impulses of Christian humanism. In particular, increasing pressure from Jud, emerging iconoclastic groups, and nascent Anabaptists forced Zwingli to determine precisely how Swiss evangelism would respond to the reform of Christian worship and ritual. In a series of pamphlets published between 1524 and 1527, Zwingli responded to these issues by carefully outlining his theological positions on the Mass, baptism, Anabaptism, and the nature of Christian worship. Zwingli argued that at the Lord's Supper, Christ was not present in body, or in the elements of the meal, but among the faithful believers, in spirit. He believed that communion should be a commemorative meal in which the historic moment when Christ lived among men was recalled, but no priestly consecration conjured Christ's 'real presence', which found theological expression in the words transubstantiation (the Catholic position) or consubstantiation (the Lutheran position). In a parallel way, Zwingli taught that baptism was not a historic act of justification that redeemed infants, but a pious initiation that brought new members into the Christian community. Like a pledge or military oath, baptism acted as "an outward sign that we have been engaged to a new life and incorporated in Christ."¹³⁹ Accordingly, Zwingli rejected the *ex opere operato* efficacy of Catholic baptism, the idea that mature Christians could confirm or demonstrate their faith in Anabaptist baptism,

¹³⁹ Huldrych Zwingli, *Von der Taufe, von der Widertaufe, von der Kindertaufe*, in *Corpus Reformatorum*, 91, ed. C. G. Bretschneider (Halle, 1834), p. 245.

and the idea that baptism conveyed the grace it signified in Lutheran baptism. In particular, Zwingli rejected the belief that baptism was a requirement for salvation.

Like the Strasbourg reformers, Zwingli pared the Catholic rite of baptism down significantly, stripping away all liturgical rubrics that did not have a clear foundation in scripture. Beginning with Leo Jud's vernacular rite, Zwingli removed the rubrics associated with exorcism, the signing of the Cross, and the instructions on how a child should be baptized. (Luther and Jud both recommended immersion; Zwingli apparently left it up to individual pastors and families to decide.) The liturgy was published in 1525 as an appendix to the theological work *On Baptism*, in which Zwingli attacked Anabaptist theology and outlined his own teaching on baptism.¹⁴⁰ Its opening preamble announced his goal in compiling the service:

Now follows the form of baptism which is now used in Zurich, and all the additions, which have no foundation in the word of God, have been removed.¹⁴¹

The service is less than two pages long, and consists of a few short questions to the baptismal sponsors ("Will ye that this child be baptized...?"),¹⁴² a version of Luther's *Sintflutgebet* or flood prayer, the traditional gospel of Mark, and a water baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Zwingli also retained the use of godparents, which in the Reformed tradition would grow to have important catechetical functions as the Reformed church developed rites of adolescent confirmation. All non-

¹⁴⁰ The rite was featured later in Zwingli's *Zurich Order* (1532), which served as an early Reformed church order for the Zurich community. For an English translation of the baptismal rite, see Fisher, *Christian Initiation: The Reformation*, pp. 129-131.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

scriptural symbols were carefully removed from the liturgy, however, distancing the baptism of Zwingli and Bucer from that of Luther. This liturgical decision, in basic agreement with the contemporary writing of Karlstadt (though he went further to reject infant baptism), would contribute significantly to the confessional battles between Lutheran and Reformed Christians in the second half of the 16th century.

Zwingli did retain one symbolic marker in the liturgy, a remnant of both Lutheran and Catholic rites. He retained the white christening robe in the service as a sign of the Christian's clean and open conscience before God:

At the bestowal of the chrism:

God grant thee that as thou art now clothed bodily with the white robe, so at the last day thou mayest appear before him with a clean and open conscience. Amen.¹⁴³

Similar wording appeared in the late-medieval *Magdeburg Agenda* of 1497:

Receive a white robe, holy and spotless, which thou shalt bring before the judgment seat of Christ and have eternal life.¹⁴⁴

The baptismal robe accentuates Zwingli's theological position that faith and obedience to God on earth are the most important acts for gaining salvation, and these qualities will be most pleasing to God at the last judgment. The passage may also be read as a benediction,¹⁴⁵ although this interpretation does not explain the use of a symbol that seems to violate Zwingli's principle that only elements specified in scripture be included

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁴⁵ Old, *Reformed Baptismal Ritual*, p. 66.

in the rite.¹⁴⁶ Recognizing that many German towns also found the christening gown to be an especially valued symbol, it may be that Zwingli retained the sign in deference to its high importance in the Zurich community.¹⁴⁷

Calvin's 1542 *Form of Baptism*

John Calvin began his career as a liturgical reformer in Strasbourg, while living near Bucer and ministering to a congregation of French refugees at St. Nicholas Church. Reflecting on the events of his Strasbourg tenure (1538-1540), Calvin wrote years later in his farewell sermon from Geneva "I was constrained also to compile the form of baptism while I was at Strasbourg, and they brought to me the children of the Anabaptists from five to ten leagues around to baptize."¹⁴⁸ Unfortunately, Calvin wrote no more about baptizing "the children of the Anabaptists," but when he returned to Geneva in 1541 to reform the church there, he apparently incorporated his French rite of baptism into the new ecclesiastical constitution and required its use in Geneva for infant baptism. In 1542, he modified the rite and published it along with a standard collection of prayers and liturgical materials, and it became a foundation document for the Reformed Church.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ The Anabaptists, of course, also argued that Zwingli did not follow his negative scriptural principle when he recommended the baptism of infants.

¹⁴⁷ See Chapter 2.

¹⁴⁸ "Je fus contrainct aussi de faire le formulaire du Baptesme, estant a Strasbourg, et qu'on m'apportoit les enfans des anabaptistes de cinq et de dix lieues a la ronde pour les baptiser." B. J. Kidd, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the Continental Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), p. 650.

¹⁴⁹ The full title of the work was "The Form of Prayers and Ecclesiastical Chants with the Manner of Administering the Sacraments and Solemnizing Marriage According to the Custom of the Ancient Church, 1542". See Fisher, *Christian Initiation: The Reformation*, p. 112-17.

Calvin's French rite is unique and bears only passing resemblance to the rites of Luther, Zwingli, Bucer, or traditional Catholicism. Placing his emphasis on scriptural exhortation, Calvin completely recast the baptismal liturgy into a pastoral statement explaining the meaning of baptism, which he directed the clergy to read immediately after the Sunday sermon. The rite asked few questions of the baptismal candidates, minimized the role of sponsors, and made no use of exorcism, signing, baptismal gowns, or other traditional symbols. Completing the work begun by Jud, Zwingli, and Bucer, Calvin wiped away all non-scriptural 'additions' to the ritual, retaining only water, the words of institution, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles Creed. Calvin summarized his motivation for purifying the liturgy with the following epilogue to his service:

We know that elsewhere many other ceremonies are used, which we do not deny to have been very ancient; but because they have been invented at will, or at least for some slight consideration, whatever it may be, since they have not been founded upon the word of God, and furthermore seeing that so many superstitions have arisen out of them, we have had no hesitation in abolishing them, so that there might be no more impediment to prevent the people from going directly to Jesus Christ. First with regard to what is not commanded us by God we are free to choose. Again all that serves in no way to edification must not be received in the church: and if it has been introduced, it must be cast out. For a much stronger reason all that only serves to give offense and is the means of idolatry and false opinions, must not be tolerated at all. But it is certain that the chrism, candle and other such pomps are not of God's ordinance, but have been added by men: and finally they have come to this, that people are more attracted by them and hold them in greater esteem than the ordinances of Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁰

Calvin believed that the core of baptism had been received intact from the primitive church, but that it had been encrusted by a number of superstitious rites that

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 116-117.

obscured the basic sacramental action.¹⁵¹ Like Luther, Calvin brought up the adiaphora principle, suggesting, “What is not commanded by God we are free to choose.” However, Calvin thought that this Christian liberty should not be abused, but applied specifically to stamp out idolatrous practices.¹⁵² This fundamental disagreement over the interpretation of the adiaphora principle would produce a lasting legacy in the confessional debates between Lutherans and Reformed theologians—while Luther used adiaphora to permit traditional developments in worship and protect ‘weaker neighbors’, Calvin used adiaphora to insist on a purged liturgy that took its form from scripture alone. As Carlos Eire has recognized, the iconoclasm that removed idolatrous images from Reformed churches also worked to purge the Reformed liturgy of non-scriptural symbolism, and this became a crucial difference between Lutheran and Reformed churches.¹⁵³

In theological terms, Calvin also loosened the connection between the event of baptism and the reception of God's gift of grace, resulting in a new understanding of the sacrament. Although in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* Calvin agreed that “through baptism Christ makes us sharers in his death,”¹⁵⁴ the reformer typically restricted God's

¹⁵¹ Old, *Reformed Baptismal Ritual*, p. 176.

¹⁵² “Premierement, ce qui ne nous est point commandé de Dieu, est en nostre liberté; d'avantage tout ce qui ne sert de rien à edification ne doit estre receu en l'Eglise; et s'il avoit esté introduit, il doit estre osté. Par plus forte raison, ce qui ne sert que á scandaliser, et est comme instrument d'idolatrie et de faulses opinions, ne doit estre nullement toleré.” ‘La Forme d'Administrer le Baptesme’ in *Joannis Calvini Opera Selecta*, ed. P. Barth and D. Scheuner (Munich, 1926-62), vol. 2, p. 38.

¹⁵³ Carlos Eire, *War Against The Idols* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 142-44 and 195-233.

¹⁵⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 22, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), bk. 4, ch. 15, p. 5.

activity at baptism to a signifying (*significare*), promising (*polliceri*), or sealing (*obsignare*) of God's promise of future blessing and salvation in his writings. Baptism itself could be no sure sign of election and future salvation, but in many cases it would indeed produce such fruit. In other words, Calvin's rejection of traditional baptism emphasized the idea that God alone saved (and not the baptismal act), that baptismal renewal happened throughout the life of Christians, and that baptism was in essence a sharing in Christ's death and resurrection.¹⁵⁵ In this theology, the Geneva reformer saw no essential difference between the Christian baptism he administered and the baptism of John in the New Testament—both ceremonies promised baptism in the Spirit but did not impart it.¹⁵⁶ Baptism was similar to the Old Testament rites in which God established a covenant with mankind promising future action, and for this reason Calvin supported the baptism of infants when Christian families brought them.¹⁵⁷

Calvin's liturgy encouraged a further break with medieval custom by virtually eliminating the role of baptismal sponsors in the rite of initiation. In Calvin's 1542 service, sponsors are not specifically mentioned, and adults that presented the child were only mentioned passively.

¹⁵⁵ “Since then it is so, that these two things [regeneration and the promise of the Spirit] are accomplished in us by the grace of Jesus Christ, it follows that the truth and substance of baptism consists in him. For we have no other washing but his blood, and we have no other renewal but in his death and resurrection.” Calvin, “Form of Baptism”, in Fisher, *Christian Initiation: The Reformation*, pp. 114-15.

¹⁵⁶ Edmund Schlink, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, trans. Herbert Bouman (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), p. 100.

¹⁵⁷ “However, although the infant children of the faithful are of the corrupt race of Adam, yet he does not at all refuse to accept them, for the sake of his covenant, so as to count them among the number of his children. For this reason he has wished from the beginning that in his church infants should receive the sign of circumcision, by which he represented then all that is today signified to us by baptism.” Calvin, “Form of Baptism”, in Fisher, *Christian Initiation: The Reformation*, p. 115.

The sermon ended, the infant is presented. And then the Minister begins to say:

Our help be in the name of God who has made heaven and earth. Amen.
Do you present this child to be baptized?

They reply:

Yes.¹⁵⁸

Calvin never specifically mentioned sponsorship in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, choosing instead to charge the natural parents and the congregation with the task of rearing the child. In place of the baptismal pledge of sponsors, Calvin included the following pledge for the congregation, encouraging their future support of the child:

Minister: Since it is a matter of receiving this infant into the company of the Christian church, do you promise, when he comes to the age of discretion, to instruct him in the doctrine which is received among the people of God, as it is briefly summarized in the confession of faith which we all have.

The Congregation recites the Apostle's Creed: I believe in God the Father...

The Reformed ambivalence toward godparents also became a feature of many Calvinist churches in Germany. The church order composed by Micron and à Lasco for the London exile church in Emden included a few more questions for the adults who carried the child, but the emphasis was on the father of the infant, not the godparents.¹⁵⁹ When godparents were mentioned, they played a supporting role, and were asked to support the child's Christian education. Joseph Lynch has described this new

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 113.

¹⁵⁹ "Darnach spricht er zu dem vater des kinds und den zeugen also: Lieben brüder, die ihr diß kind zu dem tauf bringet, ihr habet gehöret, daß der tauf von Christo dem Herren ist eingesetzt zu einem sigel des bunds Gottes mit uns, von welchem man unsere kinder nicht mag wehren, dieweil sie in demselbigen begriffen sind." (Then he speaks to the father of the child, and also the witnesses: Dear brothers, you have brought this child to the font, and have heard that the baptism of Christ the Lord is designed as a token of the covenant of God with us, of which people should not refuse our children, because they lack understanding.) Sehling 7/1, p. 613.

ambivalence about sponsorship as a development that emphasized familial bonds over the community bonds created through godparent networks, which had an important effect on Reformed communities in early modern Europe:

Calvin's service did retain sponsors, but their role was unclear, since the natural parents and the congregation shared with them the responsibility of presenting the child for baptism. In other words, the sponsor survived in the Calvinist tradition only because infant baptism itself survived. But the role was vestigial, stripped of its kinship functions and tending to be eclipsed by or absorbed into the parental role.¹⁶⁰

Although the baptismal liturgy had been completely recast in the Reformed tradition, baptism continued to be an important expression of religious devotion and community solidarity. In theological terms, baptism also maintained its valued position as a sacrament, and it became an important aspect of Calvinist preaching and catechetical instruction. However, by removing many of the traditional symbols associated with baptism, and downplaying the liturgical role of godparents, Calvinist baptism emerged as a very distinct ritual in the 1540s. These differences were quickly noticed in German communities that were struggling with questions of confessional identity.

The Exorcism Controversy: Baptism As Confessional Struggle

Until the Peace of Augsburg (1555), confessional struggles in Lower Saxony can be characterized as taking place largely between Protestant and Catholic groups, with the exception of limited confrontations between Calvinist and Lutheran factions in East Friesland in the 1530s and the systematic attempt by both Lutheran and Reformed

¹⁶⁰ Joseph H. Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 23.

communities to suppress the teachings of the Anabaptists. Recatholization was an important threat to all Protestant communities in the 1540s and 1550s, a problem that only subsided when the Emperor agreed to allow Lutheran princes the control of religion in their territories, and to recognize the *de facto* existence of a limited number of Calvinist towns. After the death of Luther, however, the struggle between Lutheran factions for a genuine Lutheran legacy, and the availability of dynamic and mature Reformed traditions, created a contentious religious environment that divided many communities in north and central Germany along sacramental lines. This consolidation and polarization resulted in the so-called 'Second Reformation', in which Calvinists worked with princes and town councils to discard the remaining 'popish relics' and 'leftover papal dung' that the Lutheran reformers had not eliminated. This happened dramatically in East Friesland, the Palatinate (1563), Nassau, Bremen, and Anhalt (1590), Hesse (1605), and it was attempted in Saxony (1587-91) and in Brandenburg (1613-15). In these confessional struggles, the sacraments played an important role as the arbiters of a discourse about power, social values, and theological constructs such as the contentious adiaphora principle.¹⁶¹

Since the 1520s, Lutheran and Reformed theologians had used baptism to teach new theological ideas in their confessions and to develop authentic Protestant practices

¹⁶¹ Bodo Nischan has written extensively about the role of the sacraments in the confessional struggles of the Second Reformation, and I rely on his work here for a basic orientation to the controversies. See Bodo Nischan, "Ritual and Protestant Identity in Late Reformation Germany", in *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, vol. 2, edited by Bruce Gordon (Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1996); Bodo Nischan, *Prince, People, and Confession: The Second Reformation in Brandenburg* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994); Bodo Nischan, "The Exorcism Controversy and Baptism in the Late Reformation", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 18 (Spring 1987), pp. 31-51.

that would express the piety and cultural values of their members. As the Second Reformation began, the reformers again turned to baptism as debating ground for their ecclesiastical policies. The confrontation began over the exorcism rubrics that Luther and his successors had left in the baptism ritual, and the Reformed church had removed. The exorcism controversy took shape in Thuringia in 1549 when George Merula, assistant pastor at St. Margaret's Church in Gotha, started to omit Luther's second exorcism from the baptismal rite whenever he administered the sacrament.¹⁶² This renunciation appeared in Luther's 1526 baptismal liturgy, and was specified in numerous church orders, including the orders for Braunschweig-Lüneburg (1564) and Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (1569):

Ich beschwere dich, du unreiner geist, bey dem namen des Vaters und des Sohns und des heiligen Geistes, das du ausfahrest und weichest von diesem deiner Jhesu Christi N. Amen.¹⁶³

I adjure thee, thou unclean spirit, by the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost that thou come out of and depart from this servant of Jesus Christ, N. Amen.

Against the wishes of his superior, Justus Menius, Merula argued the second exorcism was not only redundant but useless. In 1551 a heated public debate arose and Merula claimed baptismal exorcism was “magical Satanic adjuration.”¹⁶⁴ Later that year, Duke John Frederick dismissed Merula from his office and banished him from the territory. Variation from Luther's *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* would not be tolerated and was viewed as a sign of heretical beliefs.

¹⁶² Nischan, “The Exorcism Controversy”, p. 33.

¹⁶³ Sehling 6/1, p. 157.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

In Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, Martin Chemnitz and Jacob Andreae retained the controversial exorcism rubric in 1569 to stop what they saw as a dangerous Reformed teaching spreading among the people: the idea that children born of believing parents were not born in sin and wrath, but that their membership in Christian families meant that they were saved and under Christ's covenant:

The Calvinists spread among the people a shameful error, that a child born of converted, believing parents, although conceived and born in sin, nevertheless its natural birth of believing parents means that before baptism it is not a child of wrath under the kingdom and power of Satan, but even without baptism is truly in the kingdom of Christ and under the grace of God. Thus baptism is only an external sign which witnesses that the child previously had forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation.¹⁶⁵

If Lutheran communities began to believe the Calvinist teaching on baptism, they might view baptism as an outward sign only, and not a meaningful sacrament that forgave sin, rescued a child from the power of Satan, and brought salvation and eternal life. In the opinion of Chemnitz and Andreae, exorcism was a crucial way to counter this significant threat.

In the baptismal liturgy that followed later in the church order, the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel reformers recommended a *vermanung* or admonition about exorcism, so that there would be no mistaking the importance of the liturgical formula. The admonition asked those assembled to remember that all people were bound and born in sin and lay under the curse of eternal damnation, but through the water of baptism and the

¹⁶⁵ "Die Calvinisten sprengen unter die leute gar einen shedlichen irrthumb, das die kinder, so von bekereten, gleubigen eltern geborn werden, ob sie gleich in sünden entfangen und geborn werden, dennoch mit der natürlichen geburt auß gleubigen eltern das mit sich bringen, das sie auch vor der tauf nicht sein kinder des zorns unter dem reich und gewalt des satans, sondern auch one die tauf wahrhaftig sein im reich Christi und in der gnaden Gottes und das die taufe nur allein ein eusserlich zeichen sey, dardurch bezeuget werde, das dieselbigen kinder vorhin vergebung der sünde und weige seligkeit haben." Ibid., p. 125.

work of the Holy Ghost, Christ removed human sin and granted salvation.¹⁶⁶ In essence, exorcism was a sign of the indwelling of original sin for the later Lutheran reformers, and it served as a dramatic reminder to the congregation that all had fallen short of the glory of God and needed the grace of baptism. Lutheran pastors appreciated baptismal exorcism as sign of confessional orthodoxy, and Reformed pastors saw it as a sign of ‘unfinished reform’.

When the teaching of Calvinist theologians made deeper inroads into the Lutheran territories, the exorcism controversy took on a higher profile in the spirituality of German communities. In 1586, the liturgical disagreement broke into open antagonism in Saxony, where Christian, a leader sympathetic to Calvinism, replaced August—a staunch Lutheran—as elector. In 1591, Christian gave public instructions that his newborn daughter was to be baptized without the rite of exorcism, causing rumors to circulate among the people that the young princess had not been christened properly.¹⁶⁷ To squelch these rumors, Christian encouraged a series of debates on baptismal exorcism and in July, 1591, issued a mandate prohibiting the exorcism rite altogether. Some of the Lutheran clergy in Saxony refused to obey the decree and were removed from office and

¹⁶⁶ “Andechtigen lieben freunde in Christo, dem Herrn, demnach diß gegenwertige liebe kindlein (oder diese) gleich wie andere menschen in sünden empfangen und geborn ist und also von wegen der sünde auch steckt under dem weigen todt, vermag sich auch derowegen von solchem grossen schaden nicht zu helfen noch zu entledigen, besonder ihme ist hoch von nöten, das es nach der lehre und auf den bevelch Jhesu Christi zum andern mahl durch das wasser und den heiligen Geist geborn werde und also seinem erlöser und heiland Jhesu Christo eingeleibet werde...” (Dear friends in Christ, the Lord, because this present dear child is, like other people, conceived and born in sin, and due to the saturation of sin under the sentence of death, it would be a great tragedy not to help with its removal in this great urgency. But according to the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, and his invitation to be born again through the water and the Holy Spirit, there is redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ...) Ibid., p. 159.

¹⁶⁷ Nischan, “The Exorcism Controversy”, p. 37.

placed in jail where they had to live on bread and water.¹⁶⁸ In 1589, the controversy spread to neighboring Anhalt, and exorcism was banned from the Lutheran baptismal liturgy later that year. Then, in 1596, Count Palatine John Casimir had the Latin hymns, chasubles, surplices, and altars removed from Anhalt's churches, and mandated that the Lord's Supper be administered in the Reformed manner.¹⁶⁹ The fears of Anhalt Lutherans came true as they had dreaded—the removal of the exorcism ritual from baptism was indeed the first step in introducing Calvinism into the city.

In Brandenburg, the controversy peaked in 1619 when John Finck, a Lutheran pastor at St. Mary's Church in the village of Prenzlau, refused to administer baptism to the daughter of Christian Ramm, an electoral official, because the family wanted the exorcism rite removed. The baby girl died without receiving baptism before the controversy could be resolved. Finck later tried to justify his actions by arguing that “Ram and his wife were Reformed and... he would not cast pearls before swine.”¹⁷⁰ Ramm, concerned that his daughter might now be damned, reported the incident and Finck was severely reprimanded. The issue did not begin to die down until elector George William issued an anti-polemics edict in 1624. The edict stated that pastors were not to withhold baptism from members of the parish simply because they wanted the exorcism language removed from the ritual. To make sure that new pastors would be held accountable to this decree, the elector even tried to get new candidates for the ministry to sign the 1624 edict before their installation. As Bodo Nishan points out, this

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 45.

effort was not completely successful and exorcism remained an issue for many Lutherans until the second half of the seventeenth century.¹⁷¹

Only after many of the Lutheran territories were consolidated and this aspect of confessionalization had run its course, did baptismal exorcism wane as a dividing issue for Lutherans and Calvinists. The pietistic and rationalistic movements influenced many of the Lutheran churches, easing confessional tensions and promoting new approaches to ritual and religious diversity. By the end of the 18th century, exorcism was even viewed in a new light by the Lutheran church itself—when new versions of the baptismal liturgy appeared in Germany, they did not include the exorcism rubrics at all. Post-Reformation Lutherans no longer saw a need for Luther's liturgical rejection of the devil and the ancient church's unique expression of original sin. For Lutherans, baptismal exorcism became a relic of the confessional era.

The controversy over the simple words “depart unclean spirit” shows the historian much about the power of liturgy in the process of confessionalization. It is in this context that the Dresden butcher, who in 1590 demanded Lutheran exorcism for his daughter with a cleaver in his hand, is best understood. I began this chapter by introducing a man who argued for Lutheran baptism by threatening violence, yet his appeal was for protection, as well as proper pastoral care and liturgical precision. The Dresden *Schlächtermeister* may not have understood the theological details of a debate over symbols that had simmered in theological circles for almost 70 years, but he did

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 46.

understand the familiar structure of Lutheran baptism, and he knew its important promises. In his examination of the episode, Bodo Nischan concludes:

Lay people, who might not understand the subtle arguments of the theologians, could easily recognize liturgical differences. Exorcism, thus far a minor theological matter, increasingly was becoming a public issue. Its abolition in places where it previously had been in use now was viewed by many Lutherans as an indication of crypto- or outright Calvinism; its retention, by contrast, became a mark of confessional orthodoxy.¹⁷²

Over the years, through constant participation in the rituals of his parish church, the butcher had likely internalized this particular set of Lutheran symbols to the extent that they represented his conception of authentic religion and appropriate devotion. Thus the new father, who threatened the pastor's life if his daughter was not exorcised in the 'right' way, had a predictable and understandable, if dangerous, response to the revolving definition of baptism in his community. Like the villagers in Saxony, who did not feel Christian's daughter "had been christened right," the butcher was moved to action by what he believed to be true about Lutheran piety and contemporary orthodoxy. During much of the Reformation, the exorcism controversy created conflict wherever Reformed and Lutheran teaching collided, and the drama unfolded itself through both learned and popular mechanisms.

Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed the course of Protestant reforms in Lower Saxony, a fluid collection of territories, bishoprics, and independent city/states in northwest Germany. In addition to exploring the institutional and social contexts of the evangelical

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 34.

reformations in the region, this chapter has also attempted to place baptismal reforms in the center of the discourse about evangelical theology, ritual, and social discipline. As the case studies from Braunschweig, Goslar, Braunschweig-Lüneburg, Calenberg-Göttingen, Stift Hildesheim, Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, and East Friesland show, baptism was intimately related to the institutional and spiritual values of German communities during the Reformation period. While baptism was not the only marker of denominational identity in the 16th century struggle, it was among the core rituals that identified Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist, and Catholic confessions. It is essential, then, that baptism be appreciated not only as a vehicle for theological and liturgical orthodoxy, but also as a political and institutional force in its own right, a rite of initiation intimately associated with the process of confessionalization, which reordered German political and religious institutions from the early years of the Reformation to the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War.

At this juncture, four specific conclusions can be made about the relationship between baptism and the Protestant reform of Lower Saxony. 1) Baptismal ritual was an important marker of denominational identity in the process of reform known to historians as the 'Urban Reformation'. The Lutheran reform of Braunschweig, in particular, shows that baptismal reforms were among the first confessional changes made in cities that were about to undergo a change in belief and political orientation. In this context, baptism was an urban event that incorporated new Christians into urban and familial structures, and it became a controversial subject that moved burgers and craftsmen into action. 2) The sacrament of baptism was an important denominational vehicle in the process of

confessionalization, especially during the turbulent period of the so-called 'Second Reformation'. Lower Saxon church orders typically included baptismal reforms in their regulations to gradually direct piety and spirituality toward new Protestant models. In this sense, theology and ritual were placed under the control of Protestant superintendents and consistories, a process that lent itself to the fusion of political and religious institutions in the early modern state. 3) Baptism became an important focus of Lutheran and Reformed piety in 16th century German communities, as late-medieval baptism had been in Catholic communities. Baptism thus gives the historian access to an important component of 'popular religion' in Lower Saxony, and indicates the consolatory role it played in communities during the religious turmoil of the Reformation.¹⁷³ Baptism became a discourse not only for theologians, but for merchants, artisans, and peasants as well. 4) The controversy surrounding baptism in the Reformation can be best understood when competing baptismal rituals are analyzed in their local contexts. As Chapters 1-3 have shown, this textual analysis reveals a complex debate over the role of symbols in early modern ritual, a controversy that can be seen in the debate over the real presence in the Lord's Supper, but most dramatically in the controversy surrounding Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic baptism. This debate over the primitive origins of baptism and the desire to sweep the liturgy clean of idolatrous images employed the adiaphora principle as a yardstick to measure confessional orthodoxy. In the second half of the 16th century, the debate focused on the exorcism rubrics in baptism, a liturgical expression that Reformed theologians were anxious to eradicate but that Lutherans were unwilling to

¹⁷³ In this sense, I agree with the observations made by Robert Scribner in his suggestive article: Robert Scribner, "Ritual and Popular Religion in Catholic Germany at the Time of the Reformation", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984).

part with. Part II of this dissertation describes the social and cultural ramifications of this complex debate over baptismal symbols and practices in 16th century Germany.

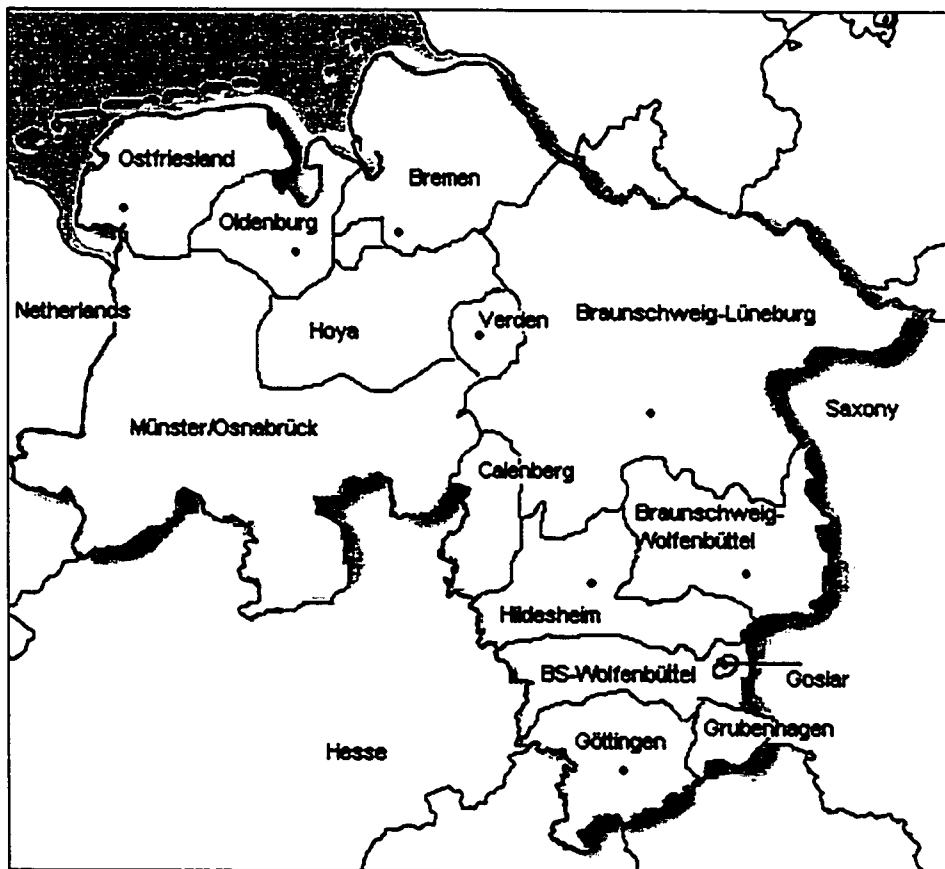


Figure 3-2: Political borders in Lower Saxony during the early years of the Protestant Reformation (c. 1520).

Chapter 4

Emergency Baptism and Gender: The Lutheran Use of Midwives as Agents of Evangelical Reform

Part Two of this dissertation discusses the impact of Lutheran baptismal reforms in Lower Saxony from the first substantive efforts at evangelical reform in the late 1520s to the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War (1618). In Part One, I described how the Lutheran reformers reoriented German baptismal ritual by developing a new understanding of baptism and the sacraments, revising the Catholic baptismal liturgy, integrating baptismal teaching in numerous church orders (*Kirchenordnungen*), and arguing about baptismal reforms with Catholic and Reformed rivals in a late-Reformation process known as confessionalization. The next three chapters describe how the diverse communities of Lower Saxony received this baptismal message, compared it to existing ideas about baptism, and then accepted, rejected, or assimilated Lutheran baptismal teaching. In part, this presentation will be an investigation into a question powerfully raised by Gerald Strauss over two decades ago—to what extent were Lutheran reforms successful in making people think and act like Christians?¹ Strauss's important work

¹ In the visitation reports he examined, Strauss found little to suggest that the Reformation had succeeded if its goal was a universal transformation of individuals and society according to Lutheran principles. "...if it was its [the Reformation's] central purpose to make people—all people—think, feel, and act as Christians, to imbue them with a Christian mind-set, motivational drive, and way of life, it failed." Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 307.

acted as a corrective for historians who may have been too quick to believe the reformers' own assessments of their evangelization efforts, but his conclusions have been debated and modified by scholars who argue that Strauss encapsulated the reformers' goals incorrectly or overlooked important examples of successful Protestant teaching and indoctrination.² Chapters 4-6 will present materials relevant to this ongoing debate about the 'success' of Lutheran reforms in the 16th century by examining evidence relating to contemporary baptismal teachings and regulations in Lower Saxony—the pamphlet literature, edicts, church orders, sermons, letters, and territorial visitation reports produced by the communities and individuals introduced in Part One.

A second component of Part Two will be an exploration of the ways in which Lutheran baptismal reforms interacted with other cultural discussions or 'discourses' to facilitate broader conversations about kinship, social obligation, gender, magic, power, and status in early modern Germany. Although Luther and his supporters constructed new baptismal liturgies and used baptism to initiate and maintain numerous evangelical

² For an introduction to the literature, see James M. Kittelson, "Successes and Failures in the German Reformation: The Report from Strasbourg," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 73 (1982), pp. 153-175; James M. Kittelson, "Visitations and Popular Religious Culture: Further Reports from Strasbourg" in *Pietas et Societas: New Trends in Reformation Social History: Essays in Memory of Harold J. Grimm*, ed. Kyle C. Sessions and Phillip N. Bebb (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1985), pp. 89-101; James M. Kittelson, "Learning and Education: Phase Two of the Reformation," in *The Danish Reformation against its International Background*, ed. Leif Grane and Kai Hørby (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990); Robert Kolb, "The Layman's Bible: The Use of Luther's Catechism in the German Late Reformation," in *Luther's Catechism—450 Years: Essays Commemorating the Small and Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther*, edited by David P. Scaer and Robert D. Preus (Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1979); Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); Mary Jane Haemig, *The Living Voice of the Catechism*, unpublished Ph. D. dissertation (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1996). Strauss defended his position in Gerald Strauss, "The Reformation and Its Public in an Age of Orthodoxy," in *The German People and the Reformation*, edited by R. Po-Chia Hsia (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 194-214.

reforms, the people in German communities approached this new platform with their own ideas about the sacrament. These ideas—some related to traditional Catholic teachings about baptism, others related to more recent intellectual and cultural trends in early modern Germany—created a fertile ground for conversations about baptism in German cities and towns, and strongly influenced how Luther’s baptismal teachings would be received. Baptism was a category of description that influenced how other categories were interpreted; in other words, the sacrament was intertwined with childbirth processes, healing literature, the training of medical practitioners and midwives, and the social obligations of godparents. Baptism was also intimately connected to Christian ideas about sin and the devil, the cultural discourse surrounding the Lord’s Supper, and the ways in which princes and burgers publicly presented and celebrated the birth of young heirs. Accordingly, Chapters 4-6 will explore the subtle and direct connections between baptism as the Lutheran reformers constructed it, and baptism as the diverse cultural forces of early modern Germany gave it ultimate expression. In this investigation, we will hear directly from many of the parents, godparents, burgers, midwives, physicians, princes, and pastors who used baptism to communicate something about their world and their place in it.

Chapter 4 begins this analysis by exploring baptism’s intimate connections to childbirth and the procedures and rituals associated with postpartum care for mothers and children in early modern Germany. Because women traditionally governed childbirth and the first weeks of an infant’s life, this chapter is largely an exploration of female

culture—the rituals, practices, and concerns of the mothers, midwives, and experienced women (*Weise Frauen*) in German communities who gave birth themselves or provided postpartum care for new mothers and infants. Since the high Middle Ages, midwives and others had been empowered by Christian clergymen to baptize infants who were too weak to survive until an official baptism at church. This so-called emergency baptism (*Nothtauffe* or baptism *in extremis*) was considered efficacious by Catholic theologians if the baptism had been performed with water and the ancient Trine formula: “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” But emergency baptism was only one aspect of the traditional church’s interest in the ordeal of childbirth. Medieval preachers and catechists provided directions for how women should behave during pregnancy, the prayers that might be recited during labor and delivery, speculation about the location of an infant’s soul, clarification about the timing of emergency baptism, and directions for the ‘lying-in’ time of seclusion for mothers that followed a successful or unsuccessful birth.

This chapter will explore the ways in which Lutheran theologians, pastors, and superintendents hoped to reform childbirth in Lutheran communities, and how they worked to regulate midwives and others who assisted at childbirth. The central aim of Lutheran clergymen was to promote evangelical understandings of baptism within the core activities that took place in German communities—an ambitious goal that worked hand-in-hand with late-Reformation confessionalization processes and efforts by local authorities to enforce social discipline. Thematically, this chapter will proceed by discussing the late-medieval and Reformation contexts of emergency baptism, the church

orders that regulated emergency baptism in Lutheran communities, the regulations that encouraged German midwives to be evangelical agents in the birth room, and the ways that emergency baptism contributed to the discourses of magic, superstition, and witchcraft. I will also introduce the pastoral literature that emphasized emergency baptism in early modern Germany, including Thomas Guntherus' *Ein trostbüchlein für die Schwangeren und geberenden Weiber* ("A Consolation Booklet for Pregnant and Delivering Women").³ Methodologically, this chapter is informed by the substantial body of literature discussing women and gender in early modern Europe, and in particular the German Reformation.⁴

The Drama of Childbirth

Early modern childbirth was a time of danger and intense drama. It was also a process that could begin without much warning, as Lady Anne Effingham discovered while playing shuttlecock in England in 1602. In a story retold by David Cressy, Lady

³ Thomas Guntherus, *Ein trostbüchlein für die Schwangeren und geberenden Weiber, wie sich dise fuer, inn und nach der Geburt, mit Betten, Dancken, und und andern, christlich verhalten sollen* (Frankfurt: Sigmund Feirabend & Simon Hueter, 1566), f. 73; HAB A: 1000.1 Theol. (2).

⁴ For an introduction to the historiography, I recommend (by date of publication) Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 65-96 and 124-151; Susan Karant-Nunn, "Continuity and change: some effects of the Reformation on the women of Zwickau", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 13 (1982); Merry Wiesner, *Working Women in Renaissance Germany* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986); Lyndal Roper, *Holy Household* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Joy Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1992); Merry Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), esp. bibliography pp. 213-217; Stephen Ozment, *The Burgermeister's Daughter, Scandal in a 16th Century German Town* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997); Susan Karant-Nunn, *Reformation of Ritual* (London: Routledge, 1997); Elsie Anne McKee, *Katarina Schutz Zell*, *Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought*, vol. 69 (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1998); Sibylla Flügge, *Hebammen und Heilkundige Frauen: Recht und Rechtswirklichkeit im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Stroemfeld/Nexus, 1998).

Anne Effingham fell ill during the game and was taken to bed. She suddenly shocked and embarrassed everyone when she gave birth to a child without the assistance of a midwife.⁵ Lady Anne didn't know she was pregnant, and the subsequent scandal was quite unsettling for all involved. Although such episodes were probably rare, it is clear that early modern obstetric techniques made gestation difficult to calculate with precision, and some of the most popular books about pregnancy and childbirth in Europe provided folk remedies for determining when conception had occurred and how information such as gender, physical condition, and disposition might be established while a fetus was still in the womb.⁶ Childbirth also held considerable risk for mothers and new babies. Early modern survival rates suggested that 1%-2% of mothers would die during any given delivery,⁷ and 50% of pregnancies would end with a stillborn child or miscarriage before full term.⁸ The former meant that an average woman stood a 6%-7% chance of dying due to birth complications during an average lifetime of childbearing.⁹ The most common causes of the mother's death were puerile fever and excessive bleeding. Puerile fever was the result of unsanitary conditions and infection during the

⁵ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 41-42.

⁶ Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, p. 64.

⁷ Roger Schofield, "Did the Mothers Really Die? Three Centuries of Maternal Mortality in 'The World We Have Lost'", in Lloyd Bonfield, Richard M. Smith, and Keith Wrightson (eds.), *The World We Have Gained: Histories of Population and Social Structure* (New York: Blackwell, 1986), p. 259. For demographic data specific to early modern Germany, see Arthur E. Imhof, *Lost Worlds: How Our European Ancestors Coped with Everyday Life and Why Life is So Hard Today*, trans. Thomas Robisheaux (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1996), p. 82.

⁸ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 47. See also William H. James, "The Incidence of Spontaneous Abortion", in *Population Studies* 24 (1970), pp. 241-45.

⁹ Schofield estimated that an average married woman could expect six to seven pregnancies during a lifetime, and would therefore have a six to seven percent chance of dying in childbed during her procreative career. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 30.

delivery or afterwards; this dangerous condition could overtake women days or even weeks after the birth. Excessive bleeding resulted from ruptured tissues, an infant becoming trapped in the birth canal, damaging obstetric procedures, or the removal of the placenta. Since transfusions were unknown, the mother would probably die if too much blood was lost during delivery. Even when living children were successfully delivered, one out of four newborns would die before their first birthday.¹⁰

The drama of childbirth affected the entire household and sent waves of concern rippling through the extended family and community. Larger cities in Germany often required that each district have two midwives available for each birth, the extra woman in case the first was busy or otherwise unable to attend a delivery.¹¹ These midwives were instructed to work together in Christian love so that all in the community would benefit from their shared knowledge and skill in assisting women through their time of travail.¹² Fathers and sons needed to be especially attentive, and typically took over the mother's household duties during the delivery and the six-week recovery or 'lying-in' phase that followed. Men rarely assisted in the birthing process, however—the birth room was female space reserved for the midwife and other helping women, including perhaps the mother's siblings, daughters, and other 'experienced women' in the community. Even in

¹⁰ Imhof, *Lost Worlds*, pp. 81-82.

¹¹ Philip Julius Rhetmeyer, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Incytae Urbis Brunsvigae, Pars III / Oder: Der berühmten stadt Braunschweig Kirken-Historie / Dritter Theil / Darrin Die Reformation-Historie...* (Braunschweig, 1710), Chapter 8, p. 380.

¹² P. Wolters, "Die Kirchenvisitationen der Aufbauzeit (1570-1600) in Vormaligen Herzogtum Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel", in *JGNK* 44 (1939), p. 84; Guntherus, *Ein trostbüchlein für die Schwangeren*, f. 73.

princely households, male physicians rarely attended childbirth in the 16th century, leaving the technical aspects of birth to experienced midwives and helping women.¹³

Midwives and expectant women were not without resources to manage pregnancy, delivery, and post-partum care. Oral traditions passed from experienced women to new mothers formed the backbone of early modern obstetric care, and the historian can find traces of oral birthing traditions in the material objects of German culture, popular songs and literature, healing charms and invocations, and contemporary midwife manuals which collected popular advice and commented on it. Yet the fact that men authored most of the written materials produced for pregnancy and childbirth in the early modern period makes it especially difficult to assess without gender bias what really transpired in early modern birth rooms. In this respect, childbirth was one of the central mysteries of the pre-modern period—those who knew about this private female activity learned primarily through participating in the process with other women. In the 15th and 16th centuries, however, delivering women seldom wrote their thoughts down in records that have survived.

The most popular manual for pregnancy and childbirth in Reformation Germany was Eucharius Rösslin's *Swangern Frawen und Hebammen Roszgarten* ("The Rose Garden for Pregnant Women and Midwives"), first published in Frankfurt in 1513 and reprinted 14 times between 1513 and 1541.¹⁴ In 1532, Rösslin's son translated the book

¹³ Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, p. 66.

¹⁴ Eucharius Rösslin, *When Midwifery Became the Male Physician's Province: The Sixteenth Century Handbook The Rose Garden for Pregnant Women and Midwives, Newly Englished*, trans. Wendy Arons (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1994), translator's introduction p. 2. For a witness to *Roszgarten* in Wolfenbüttel, see E. Roesslin, *Der Schwangeren Frauen und Hebammen* (Strasbourg, 1522); HAB QuH 75.8.

into Latin (*De Partu Hominis*) and in the following years it was translated into Dutch, French, Spanish, Danish, Czech, and English (*The Byrth of Mankynde*).¹⁵ Rösslin (d. 1526) was a German doctor who hoped to educate physicians, midwives, and pregnant women about the stages of pregnancy, delivery, and post-partum care for mothers and infants. Rösslin worked in several German cities in the early decades of the 16th century, including Frankfurt, Worms, and Celle, where he was the court physician to Duchess Katherine of Braunschweig-Lüneburg (to whom Rösslin dedicated the first edition of the book). Although Rösslin's short treatise was written using simple language and featured several descriptive illustrations, Rösslin's own experience with childbirth was apparently quite limited. His advice rested instead on the authority of classical authors such as Galen, Rhazes, Avicenna, Averroes, and "others whom it is not necessary to name", which he listed carefully in a prologue to the work. These men established his credibility and highlighted the importance of accepted texts that came "from the light of eternal wisdom... and [were] infused with divine grace."¹⁶

Rösslin was critical of contemporary birthing practices and of the 'negligent' midwives who were managing the pregnancy and delivery process. In a poetic introduction to his obstetric manual, Rösslin criticized midwives with the following words:

Now often we're so ill-prepared
 For what God gives us with such care
 That we destroy it totally

¹⁵ After 1562, the book was also available in Germany in an expanded edition entitled *Hebammenbüchlein*, which was printed 10 times before 1608. Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 38.

And such great things go unperceived
 I mean the midwives each and all
 Who know so little of their call
 That through neglect and oversight
 They destroy children far and wide.¹⁷

As a Catholic physician, Rösslin found ignorant midwives guilty not only of negligence and the death of numerous infants, but more importantly he saw this clumsiness to have eternal consequences: unbaptized children would be denied the sacrament of holy baptism and thus eternal life. Making a specific reference to the saving grace of baptism, Rösslin summarized his attack with these words:

For when a child of life's deprived
 And without holy baptism dies
 The guilt is on the midwife's hands
 E'er far from God's countenance must she stand
 As God himself shuts heaven's gates
 For she can never atone for the babe
 The onus for whose death was hers
 And she cannot this deed reverse
 To bring to grace the innocent
 Killed by her dumb mismanagement!¹⁸

“Dumb mismanagement” put the guilt on the hands of the midwife for the death of children and the closing of heaven’s gates. The Prologue of this influential midwife manual combined the discourses of childbirth, baptism, and midwives in a new way that explicitly criticized the midwife and her role as an ecclesiastical agent in the birth room. But who actually read this work, and how accurate were Rösslin’s claims that midwives had mismanaged their duties in the delivery room? There has been some debate about who the readers of *Rossgarten* were and how this popular text might have influenced the

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 34 (trans. Wendy Arons).

¹⁸ Ibid.

quality of early modern birthing practices. In the 19th century, J. H. Aveling suggested that in England *The Byrth of Mankynde* (the English translation of *Rossgarten*, published in 1540), was the only book from which midwives gained any knowledge of their art.¹⁹ David Cressy has recently modified this assessment, arguing that country midwives were largely illiterate, and these women would have found *Rossgarten* and other midwife manuals almost inaccessible.²⁰ The audience for such texts must have included, in Cressy's opinion, many medical professionals and educated laymen.²¹ In addition, urban midwives in England who had better reading proficiency probably did use *The Byrth of Mankynde* to augment the skills that they had learned through the traditional mechanisms of apprenticeship, experience, and oral tradition.²²

Although Cressy seems cautious about the impact of Rösslin's work on midwives and birthing techniques, Merry Wiesner is convinced that in early modern Germany civic authorities in the larger towns expected their midwives to be literate, and often passed ordinances which took for granted the fact that experienced midwives could read. In the second half of the 16th century, these ordinances even required midwives to own their own obstetric manuals, the leading title being *Swangern Frawen und Hebammen Rossgarten*.²³ A diverse readership must underlie the impressive sales history of *Rossgarten* well into the 17th century. Rösslin's work was authoritative and accessible to

¹⁹ J. H. Aveling, *English Midwives: Their History and Prospects* (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1872; reprint 1967), p. 12.

²⁰ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 36.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 36. See also David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

²³ Merry Wiesner, *Working Women in Renaissance Germany* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986), p. 66.

lay as well as academic audiences. It contained material that midwives found useful and professional physicians found intellectually satisfying, and slowly became required reading for early modern midwives in the absence of many alternatives. In addition, a number of laymen not directly associated with the birthing process found the work useful and even entertaining.²⁴ Despite relying on ancient sources for many techniques and procedures, *Rossgarten* accurately described a typical birthing procedure and the complications that might result.

The fourth chapter of *Rossgarten* provides a glimpse of what early modern childbirth might have been like. The section began with the title “How a woman should behave during, before, and after the delivery and how one should come to her aid in a difficult delivery”.²⁵ The text advised that a woman should carefully note her physical condition a month before her due date, and determine whether special treatment might be necessary to ease the pains of childbirth. Such a regime would be necessary if the uterus were afflicted with ulcers or other problems, or the woman had painful complications such as burning during urination, kidney stones, constipation, or other ailments. For these problems, Rösslin proscribed natural remedies such as baked apples with sugar, wine, soaps, herbal baths, and special suppositories. Rösslin was also careful to ask pregnant women and midwives to seek the assistance of a surgeon if it became necessary

²⁴ Detailed descriptions of the female body and its workings were considered pornographic to some contemporary readers. For Cressy’s comments on this aspect of childbirth manuals, see Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, p. 39.

²⁵ Rösslin, *The Rose Garden*, p. 50.

during these regimens.²⁶ When the time for birth came, the mother was advised to sit on a special birthing chair, “as they use in the high German lands and Italy”, which was hollow on the inside and had a low back to permit the mother to labor in a reclined position.²⁷ Rösslin’s illustration of this birthing chair is shown in Figure 4-1; the image was replicated in numerous editions of *Rossgarten* and was apparently a stock symbol of childbirth associated with midwives in early modern literature. The midwife was to sit in front of the mother and the chair, so that she could observe the mother’s organs and orient herself to receive the baby. Rösslin then counseled the midwife to encourage the mother, help her to breathe, and be sure that she had had enough food to strengthen her during the arduous birthing process. As Merry Wiesner has observed, these instructions provide at least some evidence that Rösslin had consulted with experienced midwives before completing the book. The details of labor and delivery surpass a mere recollection of ancient wisdom from classic texts.²⁸

The second part of Rösslin’s Chapter 4 described some of the problems that the mother and the midwife might encounter during delivery. This section is strictly limited to problems of orientation within the womb—what if the baby did not come head first (the normal, desired orientation), but came instead feet first (breech), feet first but with one leg trailing behind, sideways, bottom first, stomach first, or in some other contorted position? Figure 4-2 shows two possible birth orientations: normal birth position (though

²⁶ “If the uterus or the woman’s genitals are afflicted... on account of which the woman’s genitals cannot widen and stretch due to pain, then one should take counsel from a surgeon well before the delivery.” Ibid. (trans. Arons).

²⁷ Ibid., p. 54.

²⁸ Wiesner, *Working Women in Renaissance Germany*, p. 66.

note according to modern standards the head should be face down), and bottom first position. What is fascinating in Rösslin's presentation, in addition to the obvious medical emergency that such orientations would entail, is the peaceful and even humorous wood cut illustrations that appear with the text. As Figure 4-2 shows, each infant in the womb is a small sized version of a boy child, complete with hair and genitals. These drawings, perhaps based originally on work done by Soranus of Ephesus,²⁹ bear little resemblance to real infants in the womb. The uterus is fancifully shaped like a balloon—and the crucial difference—the head of the infant is shown much smaller than that of a real baby. The large size of a human head was (and still is) the major obstacle to a smooth birth, so in this regard, the out-of-proportion illustrations did not provide accurate obstetric information. Midwives who actually consulted this section of the book during the climax of labor would not have found useful information about reorienting the child and facilitating a successful delivery. The potential crisis is clearly visible in the chapter headings that follow, which include “Medicines to Aid the Delivery”, “Conditions Which Befall a Woman During and After the Delivery”, “Miscarriages of the Baby”, and “Dead Baby in the Womb”. Although the euphemistic pictures soften the impact, much of the material in Rösslin's book reflected the true danger of early modern childbirth for mother and child and the limitations of contemporary printed sources.

This introduction to Eucharius Rösslin's *Swangern Frawen und Hebammen Roszgarten* demonstrates one way that childbirth, baptism, and obstetric illustrations were combined and presented to early modern audiences. Due to the financial success of this

²⁹ Merry Wiesner, “Early Modern Midwifery: A Case Study”, in Barbara A. Hanawalt, ed., *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 100.

work, other midwife manuals joined Rösslin's text by the middle of the 16th century. At mid-century, Jacob Rueff published an expanded treatment of pregnancy and childbirth based on Rösslin's work that he entitled *Ein schoenes lustiges Trostbuechlein von den Empfaengnissen und Geburten der Menschen* ("A Good and Pleasant Book of Consolation about the Conception and Birth of People"). In 1554, a Latin version of the same work was published entitled *De Conceptu et Generatione Hominis*.³⁰ This book went through many editions and translations in German and other languages. By the early 17th century, numerous books about pregnancy and childbirth were coming off German presses;³¹ pregnancy and childbirth had become an important genre of popular literature.

Curiously, most books about pregnancy and childbirth were not confessionally-oriented; manuals like Rösslin's *Rossgarten* were popular among Catholics and Protestants, and changed little as the Reformation took hold in Germany and other European communities. Only in the 1560s, when some Lutheran pastors entered the field, were books issued that presented Lutheran teachings about pregnancy and childbirth to pregnant women and midwives in their communities. For example, Thomas Guntherus' *Ein trostbüchlein für die Schwangeren und geberenden Weiber*, published in

³⁰ A copy of this book in Wolfenbüttel is cataloged as Iacobus Rueff, *De conceptu et generatione hominis, et iis quae circa hec potissimum consyderantur: Libri sex, congesti opera* (Tiguri: Froshauer, 1554); HAB A: 179 Quod. (2).

³¹ Examples include Johannes Hiltprand, *Nützliche Underweisung Für die Hebammen und Schwangeren Frawen...* (Ingolstadt, 1601); Ambroise Paré, *WundtArtzney oder Artzneyspiegell des hocherfahrnen und weitberühmbten Herrn Ambrosii Paret... von der Geburt deß Menschen* (Franckfurt, 1601); David Herlicium, *De Cura Gravidarum, Puerperarum & Infantum—Newe Frawen Zimmer / Oder Gründliche Unterrichtung von den Schwangern und Kindelbetterinnen...* (Magdeburg, 1614); Louyse Bourgeois, *Ein gantz new / nützlich und nothwendig Hebammen Buch / Darinn von der Fruchbarkeit und Unfruchtbarkeit der Weiber / zeitigen und unzeitigen Geburt...* (Oppenheim, 1619).

Frankfurt in 1566, was written by a Lutheran pastor who was also the court preacher at Glauchau.³² (Figure 4-3 near the end of this chapter contains a reproduction of the book's interesting title page.) Using clear language that integrated Lutheran theological ideas with practical information about pregnancy, delivery, and post-partum care, Guntherus emphasized baptism as a crucial component of the childbirth process. Expanding on the warning Rösslin offered about children dying unbaptized, Guntherus emphasized how crucial it was for Christian women to approach the sacred offices of pregnancy and childbirth with prayer and reverence, so that "none of God's precious fruit be lost."³³ He also articulated the theological subtleties of Lutheran baptism, emphasizing Lutheran ideas about the forgiveness of sin through baptism, the importance of water and visible signs, and the procedures for emergency baptism when it became necessary. In addition, Guntherus recommended prayers and meditation exercises during delivery so that the delivery might proceed smoothly, and offered the new Lutheran teaching about the lying-in period for new mothers.

What was Guntherus' motivation to publish such a work? Unlike traditional physicians, who published medical books largely to advertise their own skills and regulate medical care in their appointed districts, Guntherus seems to be responding directly to the contemporary Lutheran church orders which required that pregnant women and midwives be taught their Christian responsibilities in childbirth so that earlier 'superstitions' could be avoided and so that all children might receive baptismal grace. These orders also reoriented the traditional church service for new mothers from a rite of

³² See note 3 above for complete citation.

³³ *Ibid.*, f. 46.

purification to a ritual emphasizing thanksgiving. If the example of Guntherus is typical, a new dimension of the Lutheran program to reform popular culture becomes visible.

Lutheran churchmen not only regulated popular practices through church orders and civic constitutions, but they also produced sermon collections and midwife manuals in their quest to reorient society around godly principles.

In the following sections, the confessional tensions between Lutherans and Catholics about childbirth and emergency baptism will be explored using several questions. What were the Catholic origins of emergency baptism and how did Catholic traditions manage the anxiety of childbirth? How did Protestants reform emergency baptism and so-called conditional baptisms? How did Lutheran theological ideas about baptism make their way into church orders and civic constitutions in the towns of Lower Saxony? Finally, what other types of literature were produced by the Lutheran reformers who hoped to broaden the discussion of childbirth and emergency baptism into other categories of public discourse?

Emergency Baptism in Catholic Tradition

Eucharius Rösslin spoke disparagingly about careless midwives in *Rossgarten* because, in his opinion, these women endangered the spiritual wellbeing of infants not yet in the world. When such children were deprived of life, they were also deprived of the sacrament of baptism, which was in Catholic tradition the only rite through which people could reliably enter heaven.³⁴ How long had this been the position of the Church?

³⁴ “For when a child of life’s deprived / And without holy baptism dies / ... God himself shuts heaven’s gates.” Rösslin, *The Rose Garden*, p. 34 (trans. Arons).

As I explained in Chapter 1, baptism became a sacramental necessity for infants as the doctrine of Original Sin gradually found acceptance in the theology of the Western Church in the late antique period. Although Tertullian did not recommend the baptism of infants in the first part of the 3rd century, Cyprian (d. 258) saw in infants a contagion contracted by the sin of Adam, and recommended baptism soon after birth. This was all the easier for infants, Cyprian argued, for they had committed no sin of their own. Infants needed remission from the ancient transgression, and the Church offered it through the sacrament of baptism.³⁵ St. Augustine developed Cyprian's idea into the comprehensive theology of Original Sin, which provided powerful motivation to seek baptism soon after birth. When Augustine examined the church's ancient rite of baptism and its dramatic exorcisms, he found a unique remedy that could treat the depth of evil into which mankind had sunk through Adam's fall.³⁶ Infant baptism was the one essential sacrament, and demonstrated the universal necessity of God's grace.³⁷ By the time of John the Deacon (c. 500), infants were regularly being baptized using the same baptismal rituals as adult catechumens. The issue for early medieval Christians therefore was not whether infants should be baptized, but how soon after birth.

Emergency baptism was practiced in the early Middle Ages, but it did not become a central teaching of the Catholic Church until the 13th century. Although some influential churchmen like Guilbert of Nogent argued forcefully that infants would suffer

³⁵ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine 1: The Emergence of Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 291.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

the pains of hell if they were not baptized properly,³⁸ the German custom of routinely delaying the baptism of its most notable princes suggests that many in the central Middle Ages did not feel particular anxiety about rushing to the font for baptism.³⁹ Thomas Aquinas brought a new urgency to baptism in theological terms when he wrote in *Summa Theologiae* that baptism “is the sole succor we can extend to children”; without the sacrament children were in extreme danger.⁴⁰ Aquinas encouraged special regulations that allowed those at home and those in attendance at childbirth to baptize children *in extremis* (or *in articulo mortis*), so that weakening children would not be without the succor of baptism. Any person—lay or cleric, male or female, could conduct such a baptism. Moreover, any person near the dying infant was not only permitted to baptize the child, but was obliged to do so as a Christian duty.⁴¹ Church edicts and synodal decrees in the 13th century made this a binding regulation in many areas, and priests were instructed to discuss emergency baptism as a holy duty and obligation for their parishioners. For the first time, the baptismal regulations of the Catholic Church influenced European midwives in a very specific way—midwives were to be ecclesiastical agents in the community responsible for baptism, as well as the medical specialists who managed pregnancy and childbirth.

³⁸ Gilbert rejected the idea that Limbo was a more suitable place for unbaptized children. When Dante placed unbaptized infants in Limbo in *The Inferno*, however, he was reflecting the most popular theological opinion.

³⁹ Otto I was baptized at the age of six months (c. 912), Henry IV was baptized on Easter (1051) at the age of five months, and Henry the Lion was baptized on Pentecost (1135) at the age of five years. See Chapter 1.

⁴⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Tertia pars, q. 68, art. 3 (vol. 57, pp. 88-90).

⁴¹ Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 49.

The first baptismal legislation that specifically mentions midwives is from a 1311 Paris synod; it states that in every town there should be skilled midwives sworn to perform emergency baptism.⁴² Legislation from a 1365 Meaux synod declares that because of the perils of birth, a midwife or two should be found in each parish.⁴³ In Germany, midwives soon appeared as sworn city officials in many of the larger cities, including Nuremberg (1417), Frankfurt (1456), Munich (1480), and Stuttgart (1489).⁴⁴ In this public context, midwives were seen not only as valuable civic agents who received salaries and training, but also as workers in the public sphere at a time when most female activities were regulated to private spaces. Beginning in the middle of the 15th century, many German towns further regulated midwives using urban constitutions, including Regensburg (1452), Munich (1488), Strasbourg (1500), and Frankfurt (1509).⁴⁵ These legal and political ordinances often mentioned emergency baptism as a routine responsibility for midwives, threatening that if midwives failed to baptize children in their care who were at risk they would have to answer to God for their laziness and irresponsibility.⁴⁶

The new urgency the Catholic Church felt about emergency baptism should be seen in the context of the Church's overall interest in the administration of the sacraments

⁴² Fr. de Harlay, ed., *Synodicon Ecclesiae Parisiensis Auctoritate* (Paris, 1674), p. 33.

⁴³ Kathryn Ann Taglia, "The Cultural Construction of Childhood: Baptism, Communion, and Confirmation", in Constance M. Rousseau and Joel T. Rosenthal, eds., *Women, Marriage, and Family in Medieval Christendom* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998), p. 263.

⁴⁴ Merry Wiesner, "The midwives of south Germany and the public/private dichotomy", in Hilary Marland, ed., *The Art of Midwifery* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 78.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴⁶ Munich ordinance of 1488 quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 85.

after the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), and in particular the attention theologians and legislators paid to the sacraments of baptism, confession, and the Mass in these years. Medieval churchmen clearly felt some ambivalence about leaving the sacrament of baptism to midwives, but they also acknowledged that for practical reasons, women were often the only caregivers present during the dangerous time of childbirth. To assuage the anxiety about lay baptism, late-medieval preachers made emergency baptism a regular topic of sermons and public instruction, and there is evidence that late medieval catechisms mentioned emergency baptism frequently when they discussed baptism and the other sacraments.⁴⁷ However, midwives and parents were reminded that they were allowed to perform emergency baptisms only in the “highest necessity”.⁴⁸

To identify the correct moment of baptism, medieval theologians had developed special guidelines regulating the first acceptable moment in the birthing process when baptism could be administered. According to Aristotle, the whole soul of a man existed in each and every part of his body; Augustine used this understanding to assert that baptism applied to any part of the body worked sufficiently for the entire soul. Aquinas preferred that the head be baptized, since in his opinion the head was the seat of consciousness, but he also permitted baptism if only an arm or a leg was protruding from the mother’s body during childbirth.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Michael Halvorson, “‘Bounde to teche rightsynnes’: Catechetical Instruction in Late-Medieval England, 1300-1550”, unpublished paper (1998), pp. 16-17.

⁴⁸ The synod for Meaux promulgated such a teaching in 1346: “Doceant etiam sacerdotes patrem et matrem posse baptizare in maxima et summa necessitate, aliter autem non.” (Priests should teach fathers and mothers to baptize in great and highest necessity, and not otherwise.) Dom E. Martène and Ursin Durand, eds., *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1717; reprint New York, 1968), vol. 4, p. 892.

⁴⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Tertia pars, q. 68, art. 11 (vol. 57, pp. 114-17).

The question of the location of the soul was debated by Catholics into the early modern period, and occasionally surfaced in anatomical treatises when baptism was discussed. In Venice, Realdo Colombo published such a work in 1559 called *De uaudtomica*. This treatise concerned itself with human anatomy and featured a lengthy section on deformities and unusual births.⁵⁰ In the book, Colombo described an Italian episode in which a child was born with two heads and one chest. The child survived for a while after delivery, and those attending the birth realized the gravity of the situation and prepared for emergency baptism. But how many baptisms should be performed—one or two? Knowledgeable medical authorities were consulted and they agreed that the issue revolved around the location of the soul in the infant; in their opinion, the soul resided primarily in the heart, so since the baby seemed to have only one heart, it probably had only one soul, not two. (Had they followed Aquinas and believed in the head as the seat of consciousness and the soul, they may have concluded that the baby maintained two souls and therefore needed two baptisms.) The medical men recommended that the baby be baptized only once, presumably by baptizing one of the heads *in extremis* using water and the Triune formula. The poor infant apparently died soon afterward, and an autopsy later confirmed that the child had only one heart. This meant that the medical authorities were justified in their opinion—there was only one soul. The doctors had been fortunate in their advice—finding two hearts would have meant one of the ‘souls’ would have perished unbaptized and be eternally assigned to Limbo. Such a case demonstrates one way in which the Catholic discourse of emergency baptism operated within medical

⁵⁰ Realdo Colombo, *De uaudtomica* (Venice, 1559). I thank Andrea Carlino for sharing this source with me at the 2000 History of Science Society Conference in Vancouver, B.C.

communities into the early modern period, and became associated with continuing speculation about the location of the soul and the construction of human bodies. It also demonstrates that most Catholic physicians and academic specialists were convinced that emergency baptism was an essential ecclesiastical ritual.

If the situation in the birthing room became dire, could infants be baptized while they remained completely within the mother's womb? Or, to be even safer, could a fetus be baptized *in utero* even before the delivery began? Accordingly to a Catholic tradition recorded in the canon law of Gratian (c. 1140), the answer was no.⁵¹ Catholic midwives were specifically instructed not to baptize the mother's stomach during her pregnancy or before delivery, although the mother did have full recourse to the other sacraments of the church and was often specifically encouraged to receive confession and the Eucharist before her dangerous travail began.⁵² Confession and the Eucharist were thought to provide not only the benefits of health and vigor for the mother, but they also served as a substitute for last rights if the mother died during childbirth. In this way, the physical body of the fetus was associated with the mother's body and charged to her care during the pregnancy, but the spiritual care of the fetus was left to God—infants could not

⁵¹ "quia qui natus adhuc secundum Adam non est, regenerari secundum Christum non potest." (The person who is not yet born a second Adam, is not able to be regenerated a second time by Christ.) Gratian, *Decretum* 3.4.115, in E. Friedberg, *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, I (Leipzig, 1879), p. 1397.

⁵² A 15th century English catechism summarized this popular idea: "Each woman before her travail of child [should] come to church and take shrift and housel [confession and Eucharist] for peril of death that might fall in the birth." *Quattuor sermones*, ed. N. F. Blake, *Middle English Texts/2* (Heidelberg, 1975), p. 37.

become baptized Christians or ‘born again’ until they were physically born the first time.⁵³

A further stipulation of medieval canon law pertaining to emergency baptism was the requirement that grotesque infants be verified as “human” before baptism, since Catholicism did not permit the baptism of animals, plants, or other objects.⁵⁴ If a midwife or physician delivered a radically deformed child, the newborn might be suspected of being a so-called “monstrous birth” and could be physically examined for the signs of a monster or demon. One Italian midwife manual from the 16th century described these features as a round neck, a beaked or misshapen muzzle, glowing eyes, or a pointed tail—characteristics that were probably rarely, if ever, witnessed, but ones that resonated fancifully in popular literature and especially academic or speculative books that described the attributes of demonic or monstrous beings.⁵⁵ In several fantastic incidents well-known to modern scholars, contemporary chronicles identified these *monstrui* as signs of divine ire or omens of imminent catastrophe; for example, the famous Monster of Ravenna allegedly born in central Italy in March, 1512, a “creature” that provoked numerous broadsheets, pamphlet literature, papal correspondence, and

⁵³ New Testament passages cited to stress the idea that baptism was a second birth included John 3:7, Titus 3:5-6, and 1 Peter 1:23.

⁵⁴ Ottavia Niccoli, “Menstruum Quasi Monstruum’: Monstrous Births and Menstrual Taboo in the Sixteenth Century”, in *Sex and Gender in Historical Perspective*, edited by Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), p. 3; Ottavia Niccoli, *Prophecy and People in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 19.

⁵⁵ For the Italian midwife manual, see L. Lemnes, *De gli occulti miracoli, et varii ammaestramenti delle cose della natura...* (Venice, 1560). For German examples, M. Weinrich, *De ortu monstrorum commentarius, in quo essentia, differentiae, causae et affectiones mirabilium animalium explicantur* (Leipzig, 1595), HAB A: 90 Phys. (3); Jacob Ruff, *Hebammenbuch...* (Frankfurt, 1600), Book 5, pp. 93-152, HAB A: 52.3 Phys. (1); Guntherus, *Ein Trostbüchlein für die Schwangeren*, folios 83-91.

diplomatic letters that reached as far as Spain, France, and Germany.⁵⁶ The authorities recommended that infants who did not appear to be human should be baptized conditionally (*sub conditione*) with the preface *Si tu es homo...* (“If you are human...”). Midwives were then instructed to seek help from the proper authorities. Although rarely the central topics of discussion in late-medieval baptismal treatises, the categories of monstrous births and conditional baptism would continue to shape the discourses of childbirth and emergency baptism into the Reformation period, as I discuss below.

Death and Survival: Emergency Baptism as an aspect of the *Ars Moriendi*

Several questions remain about the Catholic traditions associated with emergency baptism and how the dramatic events of childbirth were processed by families on the eve of the Reformation. If a newborn infant was baptized using a hurried service of emergency baptism and then died, what was the response of the Christian community? How did the family grieve and mark the event using ritual? If such a baby lived, how would the child’s emergency baptism be perceived by the church? Finally, what did communities do when children died unbaptized in their parishes?

J. Huizinga in his influential book *Waning of the Middle Ages* describes the enormous energy and creativity late medieval peoples took in their approach to death and dying, and how they marked the last stage of life with ritual, literature, and art.⁵⁷ The

⁵⁶ Niccoli, *Prophecy and People*, pp. 35-51. For a description of the Monster of Ravenna current in Lower Saxony, see M. Johannem Pomarium [weilandt Pfarherrn zu S. Peter in Magdeburg], *Chronica Der Sachsen und Nidersachsen...* (Wittenberg, 1588); HAB Alv. Ma 18.

⁵⁷ J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (New York: Anchor Books, 1954; original English trans. St. Martin’s Press, 1949), Chapter 11. See also the recent expanded translation of

medieval *Ars Moriendi* described by Huizinga was a crucial feature of late-medieval society, and its cultural importance has been greatly emphasized by recent historians.⁵⁸ An untimely death was tragic, and the death of a newborn child was especially painful to families and communities. In the midst of this pain, the saving grace of baptism could be a powerful solace for grieving families. Yet the Church's regulations about baptismal procedures were specific—children who had received baptism before death were entitled to a Christian burial; this funeral service might feature a special liturgy with consoling rubrics for infants, the ringing of the parish church bell, and an internment within the consecrated property of the church. However, children who had not been baptized before death were not entitled to a Christian funeral service and might be buried apart from the Christian dead who lay together in the church or consecrated churchyard.⁵⁹ Because of this dichotomy, crucial choices within the delivery room determined the final status of many infants in the Christian community; their bodies could be judged polluted or sanctified. Infants who died without baptism were, in the eyes of many, still under the corrupt influence of Original Sin, and (like Jews, Turks, and other non-Christians) were to be buried apart from Christians according to canon law.

The regulations that denied the Christian status of unbaptized infants created urgency and anxiety among late-medieval Catholics, emotions that resonated in burial customs, hagiographic stories, little-known 'warming' practices, and a type of

the second Dutch printing of 1922: J. Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

⁵⁸ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 301-54; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, pp. 379-474; Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 44-52.

⁵⁹ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, pp. 114-117; Imhof, *Lost Worlds*, p. 132.

intercessory prayer known as the 'baptism of tears'. It is difficult to fully approach the pain and diverse emotions late medieval people experienced at the death of their children and as they were confronted by the physical reality of their dead bodies. David Cressy has described early modern funeral customs as a simultaneous display of love and honor for the departed and revulsion toward the corpse.⁶⁰ This mixture was certainly at work in funerals for infants, which would have been a relatively common occurrence in most communities. It is, however, in the funerals for unbaptized children that the fear and revulsion of the dead 'other' could take center stage in the ritual. According to late-medieval teaching, unbaptized children were outside the Christian community and potentially a threat to its spiritual and physical well-being. The central European belief in *Nachzehren*, that the dead came back seeking either their worldly goods or a companion from the world of the living, was a constant feature of both Catholic and Protestant popular belief.⁶¹ In Burchard of Worm's 11th century *Decretorum Libri Viginti*, it is recorded that unbaptized infants were sometimes buried with stakes in their hearts in Germany, so that they would not return from the dead to menace the community.⁶² Although the Church disapproved of this custom as pagan and imposed up to two years of penance for it, such practices clearly spoke to real fear that the laity and clergy had about the unbaptized dead. Although they might have been commended to God, they

⁶⁰ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, pp. 425-32.

⁶¹ Robert W. Scribner, "Elements of Popular Belief", in *Handbook of European History 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation*, Vol. 1, edited by Thomas A. Brady, Jr., Heiko A. Oberman, and James D. Tracy (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1994), p. 237.

⁶² Burchard of Worms, "Decretorum Libri Viginti", in *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 140, cols. 974-5.

would usually be buried apart from the Christian community. As Shulamith Shahar has summarized in a description of medieval baptism and the work of Burchard of Worms:

The unbaptized infant cast fear into the hearts of the living, and the stake driven into its heart was intended to prevent it from returning to harm them. Dread of the return of the dead and, in particular, of the return of that dead individual who had never belonged to the community of the living is both ancient and universal, but the specific dread inspired by the unbaptized who had no part in the world of the living in the Christian sense was implanted by the church itself... The unbaptized infant was now consigned to Limbo, but the attitude toward those who died unbaptized still appears to have been dominated by negative images.⁶³

Another indication of this anxiety over baptismal status of newborns is visible in medieval saint's lives. Several episodes in the *Acta Sanctorum* record parents who worried fretfully about the baptism of their children, prayed to the saints that their children be born alive, or asked that their children be baptized by a priest or midwife before their death. If the child did survive birth and receive baptism, it was often considered a miracle.⁶⁴ When such children were baptized, the parents felt the reassurance that God would accept them into heaven even if they had died prematurely; many parents are shown in the *Acta Sanctorum* offering prayers of thanksgiving to the saints and making financial contributions in their honor. Emergency baptism lent its influence in this way to popular hagiographic accounts and saintly literature.

Another indicator of parental interest in Catholic emergency baptism was the use of warming rituals in parts of Europe, which miraculously brought dead infants back to life momentarily so that they could be baptized. Canon law prohibited the baptism of

⁶³ Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 52.

⁶⁴ See J. Bollandus and G. Henschenius, *Acta Sanctorum...editio novissima*, edited by J. Carnandet et al (Paris: Palmé, etc., 1863-), March 2, p. 97; July 1, p. 501.

dead bodies, but priests and doctors candidly admitted that the moment of death was difficult to determine with precision—if sounds, cries, or breath came from a dead infant, these signs might legitimately be considered temporary signs of life and thus an opportunity to administer emergency baptism. As the ecclesiastical imperatives for baptism gained urgency in the 13th century, so did reports of “warming” rituals in which grief stricken parents brought their children to saint’s shrines or resuscitation specialists who advertised their ability to bring children back to life for baptism. In early modern Bavaria, several of these Catholic warming shrines were still in operation during the Counter Reformation, and they attracted pilgrims from throughout Switzerland and Germany. (Indeed, Counter Reformation confessionalization can be seen as a factor in the *growth* of these shrines as pilgrimage sites.) The Premonstratensian monastery of Ursberg on the Mindel River in Swabia, thirty-five kilometers southwest of Augsburg, featured the most popular German shrine for warming miracles; here grief-stricken parents who had not baptized their infants could place their dead bodies on altars dedicated to the Virgin and see their faces glow momentarily. Midwives or priests then rushed in for emergency baptism. Afterwards the children ‘died’ again but the parents could rest with the assurance that their children now enjoyed a state of bliss with Christ and the Saints in paradise.⁶⁵

Although warming never received formal sanction from the Roman hierarchy, it served as an important aspect of local popular religion in many areas of Germany, Austria, Italy, and Switzerland. Warming occasionally reflected confessional tensions as

⁶⁵ See Imhof, *Lost Worlds*, pp. 127-134; Georg Rückert, “Brauchtum und Diözesanrituale im Aufklärungszeitalter” and “Zur Taufe toter Kinder”, in *Volk und Vokstum: Jahrbuch für Volkskunde* 2 (1937), pp. 297-305 and 343-46.

well. In 1535, for example, an Augustinian cloister in Geneva was investigated because it advertised the ability to resuscitate children for baptism and attributed the miracles to the mercy of the Virgin Mary. The cloister later admitted that several old matrons had developed special techniques which made infant corpses exhale air, urinate, or perspire momentarily, thus being “revived” long enough for baptism. The cloister had the warming services stopped because they were drawing strong criticism from local Protestants. Rather than continue the practice in the face of Protestant protests, the Augustinians quietly stopped the service to avoid criticism from influential magistrates.⁶⁶

Parishioners who didn’t have recourse to warming shrines or found the idea objectionable had recourse to another tradition in Catholicism to assuage their anxiety about unbaptized dead children. This was the intense and emotional intercessory prayer known as the ‘baptism of tears’ (also called the ‘baptism of desire’). The baptism of tears takes its name from the heartfelt cries of a mother who has lost her child. Catholic tradition allowed the possibility that God would hear these tears offered in combination with prayer and meditation, and that God would use the mother’s tears as the water of baptism for an unbaptized child.⁶⁷ This substitute baptism stemmed intellectually from the same tradition that earlier theologians had used to suggest that early Christian martyrs were not baptized by water (because some did not have time for the sacrament) but by

⁶⁶ Michel Roset, *Les Chroniques de Genève* (Geneva: H. Fazy, 1894), p. 197. See also Carlos Eire, *War Against the Idols* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 140-41.

⁶⁷ In his *Confessions*, St. Augustine described the tears of his mother using similar language (although in Augustine’s case, he was eventually baptized): “But you [Lord] did not punish me... and preserved me to receive the water of your grace. This was the water that would wash me clean and halt the flood of tears with which my mother daily watered the ground as she bowed her head, praying to you for me.” St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin Books, 1961), Book 5, Part 8, p. 101.

their sacrificial blood, which had been shed by the enemies of Christ for the glory of God. Medieval pastoral literature occasionally mentioned the baptism of tears and it was probably offered by priests as a source of consolation for mothers who had survived the birth process themselves but lost a child.

Martin Luther made use of this tradition when he wrote his sympathetic treatise *Comfort For Women Who Have Had a Miscarriage* in 1542.⁶⁸ The three-page letter was included as an appendix to a commentary on Psalm 29 by Johannes Bugenhagen, the reformer of Lower Saxony introduced in Chapter 3. In the work, Luther suggested that through intercessory prayer devout mothers might convince God to save the lost child:

Because the mother is a believing Christian it is to be hoped that her heartfelt cry and deep longing to bring her child to be baptized will be accepted by God as an effective prayer.⁶⁹

Luther's thoughts on this special intercession—in essence a baptism being performed after death and without the actual rite—are not altogether inconsistent with his baptismal theology. Luther valued the faith of the community at baptism, and he often underlined God's ability to do what he willed in matters of salvation. So Luther encouraged mothers to err on the side of prayer and leave the mystery to God. After listing women in scripture who successfully interceded for their families, Luther concluded: "For this reason one ought not straight-away condemn such infants for whom believers and Christians have devoted their longing and yearning and praying."⁷⁰ As I shall discuss below, Luther and his followers reformed several practices related to emergency baptism,

⁶⁸ LW 43:247-50.

⁶⁹ LW 43:247-48.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

but Luther's use of the baptism of tears was in basic agreement with medieval teaching. Although the emotionally charged intercession shifted the tremendous burden of loss to God, it could provide no absolute surety. The only certain way for Catholics or Lutherans to protect their children was through baptism.

When emergency baptism was administered after a traumatic birth, the prospects for the newborn's survival were probably quite grave, and the tense situation would have likely cast significant gloom over the household. However, if the child later survived and flourished, the mood of the community would naturally have changed from gloom and grief to joy and celebration. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss many of the parties and merriments that took place when a child successfully survived the travail of childbirth and was formally welcomed into the greater Christian community through baptism. The medieval Church welcomed children who had been baptized already as well, but priests were also asked to carefully inquire about what had really happened in the tense moments of the birth room. Was the proper Trinitarian formula used during the baptism? Was water used to wash the child three times? Was the child's entire body, or at least one limb, delivered before the infant was baptized? Did the midwife and other witnesses support the child with prayer, Christian intention, and earnest devotion? So that these questions might be resolved quickly and in the best interest of the child, midwives were asked to report all emergency baptisms to their parish priests, and carry the child to the church herself if others were unable or unwilling.

If there was any doubt about whether the baptism had taken place, late-medieval priests were encouraged to administer a conditional baptism (*sub conditione*) using a

special liturgical rubric so that the child would be baptized only if the proper formula had been neglected by the midwife:

If thou be not baptized already, *Name*, I baptize thee in the name of the
Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.⁷¹

Baptism *sub conditione* was crucial so that the child would not be rebaptized, a practice originally prohibited during the reign of Justinian and later famously reissued by Charles V during the persecution of Anabaptists.⁷² A similar formula was also used for foundlings and other children who had an unknown baptismal status. In Florence, for example, foundlings were baptized as a matter of course if their status was unknown. Orphanage workers who knew that children needed baptism might also tie a bag of salt around their necks as an indicator of their condition.⁷³

Synodal legislation often insisted that a priest administer a formal baptismal ceremony even if there was no question about the emergency baptism being performed in the correct manner.⁷⁴ Although the baptismal washing and Trinitarian formula might not be repeated, priests were encouraged to administer the baptismal exorcisms (including the potent symbols of salt and saliva), marking the child with the sign of the cross, anointing the child with chrism, and acknowledging the child's baptismal sponsors and allowing them to read the responsive parts of the liturgy. The synodal legislation from Angers (c.

⁷¹ *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, vol. II, Decretal Gregor. IX, Book 3, Title 42, Chapter 2, Column 664; J. D. C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: The Reformation Period* (London: S. P. C. K., 1970), p. 147.

⁷² Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 332.

⁷³ Richard Trexler, "Infanticide in Florence: New Sources and First Result", *History of Childhood Quarterly* 1/1 (1973), pp. 98-116.

⁷⁴ Kathryn Ann Taglia lists numerous examples of such legislation in her study of medieval baptism, including Arras (1270-1290), Trèguier (1334), and Chartres (1355-68). See Taglia, "Cultural Construction of Childhood", pp. 264-5, esp. fn. 17.

1231-35) even ruled that a child who had undergone emergency baptism could not be named in public until it was formally named during the public baptismal ritual.⁷⁵ The fact the emergency baptism could not stand on its own as a replacement for late-medieval baptism speaks not only to the question of proper administration, but also to the issue raised in Chapter 1 about the continuing relevance of baptismal symbolism to late-medieval Christians. The reluctance of late-medieval churchmen to rely solely on emergency baptism demonstrates that both clergy and laity wanted the symbolism and liturgical rubrics of the complete service of baptism to protect their children from death and the devil. Only after a public “church” baptism was the child fully accepted and integrated into the Christian community.

Emergency Baptism and the Reformation

The Protestant Reformers were well aware of the late-medieval regulations that controlled emergency baptism and conditional baptism, and their efforts at reforming these baptismal practices reflect their understanding that childbirth was a time of acute distress for parishioners, as well as an important opportunity to promulgate their own baptismal theologies and policies. Martin Luther supported the Catholic tradition of baptizing children within the first eight days of life. In his opinion, this guideline encouraged parents not to neglect the life-giving sacrament of baptism, and it also recalled the Old Testament law that male Jews be circumcised on the eighth day.⁷⁶ After

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 265.

⁷⁶ Circumcision and the Covenant are presented in Genesis 17:9-14. For Luther’s remarks on the passage, see LW 3:102.

1528, such a timely baptism also provided powerful evidence that parents were not considering the adult baptism of the Anabaptists for their children.⁷⁷ However, Luther was opposed to private baptisms and encouraged evangelical communities to administer all baptisms in front of the congregation so that the largest number of believers might be gathered together to profess their faith on behalf of the child. This external faith was a crucial part of Luther's baptismal theology, and one of the main reasons Luther translated the Latin baptismal liturgy into common German.⁷⁸ The eight-day grace period was thought to allow healthy children enough time to make their way to the font for baptism at the next Sunday service, in the arms of the parents, midwife, or baptismal sponsors. But what if, as this chapter has emphasized, the newborn child was not healthy enough to survive until the larger baptismal service?

Like medieval Catholics, Luther agreed that baptism was crucial for the salvation of newborn children, and that in times of need infants could be baptized *in extremis* by midwives or others who were in the company of newly delivered infants.⁷⁹ God had ordained baptism as an important sign and sacrament, and it was through baptism and the other important signs of promise that God was to be found.⁸⁰ In 1531, Luther engaged the issue of emergency baptism not through a specific treatise, but through a letter on the practice of conditional baptism, a practice that many of the Protestant reformers were

⁷⁷ For Luther's most thorough rejection of Anabaptist theology and practice, see Martin Luther, "Concerning Rebaptism" (1528), in LW 40:229-262; WA 26, 144-174.

⁷⁸ See Chapter 2.

⁷⁹ "The baptism administered by a midwife, by which she baptizes an already completely born infant endangered by weakness, I consider to be valid." LW 50:14, note 8. For similar comments about emergency baptism at table, see WA *Tischreden*, vol. 6, pp. 167-69.

⁸⁰ Jonathan D. Trigg, *Baptism in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1994), pp. 40-41.

questioning. Should evangelical pastors still baptize foundlings and those who had received conditional baptism? Should the issue of conditional baptism be included as a matter of policy in forthcoming territorial church orders? As Gottfried Seebass notes in his important essay on Luther's baptismal theology, at first Luther supported the traditional policy of conditional baptism with Andreas Osiander and others, but by 1531 he had rejected all conditional baptisms and recommended that children of uncertain status simply be baptized at church according to the standard practice.⁸¹

Luther wrote the letter defining his final position to Wenceslas Link on May 12, 1531. Link was working with Osiander and others to reform Nürnberg according to Lutheran principles, and the group had fallen into controversy over the conditional baptism issue. The timing was critical since Link and Osiander were also in the process of writing the Brandenburg-Nürnberg church order (published 1533), a document that would be widely influential in the control of social discipline and ritual in Reformation Germany. Luther suggested that he had discussed the matter carefully with Philip Melancthon and they both agreed that while emergency baptism should be retained, conditional baptism should be rejected:

Conditional baptism must be abolished in the church. In case one either doubts or simply doesn't know that a person has been baptized, one is simply to baptize unconditionally, and as if that person never had been baptized.⁸²

Luther went on to argue the logic of his position:

⁸¹ See Gottfried Seebass, "Das Problem der Konditionaltaufe in der Reformation", *Zeitschrift für bayerischen Kirchengeschichte* 35 (1966), pp. 138-68; and Gottfried Seebass, "Die Vorgeschichte von Luthers Verwerfung der Konditionaltaufe nach einem bisher unbekanntem Schreiben Andreas Osianders an Georg Spalatin vom 26. Juni 1531", *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 62 (1971), pp. 193-206.

⁸² LW 50:14-15.

A conditional baptism accomplishes nothing; it neither denies nor affirms anything; it neither gives nor takes away anything. Suppose someone is baptized conditionally; this person is afterwards forced to say: I am now as ignorant and uncertain whether I am baptized as I was before, and so are all who have baptized me. For if the first baptism was a valid one (a fact which has to be unknown, whether I like it or not), then the second baptism is nothing (because it is a conditional one). If the first baptism was not a valid one (and again, I am unable to know this), then the second baptism also is nothing because it is a matter of uncertainty and has to be considered a matter of uncertainty, so long as the first baptism is a matter of uncertainty. Because of the condition attached to the first baptism, which has been a matter of uncertainty, the validity of the second baptism, too, remains forever a matter of uncertainty.⁸³

The crucial point for Luther was that baptism provide certainty, because it was in his teaching a perpetual and life-long sacrament. In this regard, he was willing to run the risk of rebaptizing some children who had been legitimately baptized in the past, a problem with new associations due to the Anabaptist threat, but something that Luther thought less a sin than withholding the gift of baptism.

Luther's letter did not completely resolve the matter in Nürnberg, for Osiander continued to support the idea of conditional baptism, and the matter was not discussed at all in the 1533 Brandenburg-Nürnberg church order. However, most other Lutheran church orders in Reformation Germany prohibited the practice, and by 1540 conditional baptism was a ritual on which Catholics and Lutherans differed substantially. This meant that midwives took on a more important role in Lutheran communities, because emergency baptism was retained as a valuable ecclesiastical rite but recognized to be largely under their control. Pastors could completely re-administer baptisms that were

⁸³ LW 50:15.

thought to be doubtful, but superintendents thought it better to train midwives so that they could properly perform this valuable ecclesiastical mission.

The problem of emergency baptism soon became a controversial issue between Lutherans and Reformed theologians. In 1524, Wolfgang Capito had criticized midwife baptism and suggested that some people still hoped to receive the health benefits of chrism and oil at a second baptism held later at church.⁸⁴ The 1526 baptismal booklet used by Martin Bucer in Strasbourg argued that emergency baptism represented a lack of faith in God's saving power and turned baptism into a magical act.⁸⁵ In Geneva, John Calvin rejected the idea of emergency baptism by suggesting that before a formal church baptism children were in the care of God, who would receive infants who died before baptism on account of the Christian community and in particular on account of their Christian parents. Calvin agreed with Luther that baptism was foreshadowed by the circumcision of the Old Testament, and wanted children to be baptized within eight days as a sign of the new covenant. But before that time, children were in God's care; Calvin found the rite of emergency baptism superstitious and a mockery of God's sovereignty and election.⁸⁶ In addition, Calvin emphasized the necessity of combining baptism with preaching, as Jesus had commanded in Mathew 28: "Therefore go and make disciples of

⁸⁴ "It is from this that has arisen that other misuse, that so many ignorant people have their sickly children baptized once again in the Church, who without chrism and oil had been baptized at home by midwives." *Wass man halten unnd antworten soll von der spaltung zwischen Martin Luther und Andres Carolstadt* (Strasbourg: Wolff Köpphel, 1524), fol. B iij.; trans. Hughes Oliphant Old.

⁸⁵ Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite in the Sixteenth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), p. 58.

⁸⁶ Bodo Nischan, "Ritual and Protestant Identity in Late Reformation Germany", *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, vol. 2, edited by Bruce Gordon (Hants, England: Scholar Press, 1996), p. 151.

all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁷ This precluded, in Calvin’s opinion, not just emergency baptism but all rites of private baptism outside the church.⁸⁸ Calvin’s rejection of emergency baptism was repeated in numerous Reformed communities in France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Germany, and made its way into influential Reformed documents such as the Heidelberg Confession.⁸⁹

Interestingly, Luther would employ similar covenantal language about baptism in his *Genesis Lectures* (1535-1545), written during the last years of his life. Commenting on circumcision and God’s covenant with Abraham, Luther wrote that just as uncircumcised boys who died before the eighth day were safely left to the mercy of God in the Old Testament, so unbaptized children who died before their baptism must be left to the mercy of God in present times.⁹⁰ The worse sin, however, would be for adults to neglect baptism (as the Anabaptists had), just as it was a worse sin for the adult Israelites in the Old Testament who knowingly broke their covenant with God.⁹¹ Echoing an

⁸⁷ Mathew 28:19 NIV. The contemporary German translation makes the requirement to teach even clearer: “Gehet hin und lehret alle völker und taufest sie im namen des vaters, sohns und heiligen geistes und lehret sie halten alles, was ich euch bevolhen habe.” (Go out and teach all people and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and teach them all that I have ordered you.)

⁸⁸ Calvin’s *Form for Administration of Baptism* (1542) was specific about the time and place for baptism: “Either on the Lord’s Day at the time of the catechetical service or on the other days at the time of the sermon, the reason being that since baptism is a solemn reception into the Church, it should take place in the presence of the assembly. The child is to be presented after the sermon has been finished.” John Calvin, *Opera Selecta*, ed. Petrus Barth, vol. 2 (Munich: C. Kaiser, 1926), p. 31.

⁸⁹ For Reformed church orders in Germany that argued this position, see Sehling 8, p. 282 and Sehling 14, p. 337.

⁹⁰ Bugenhagen also articulated this position as early as 1528 in his church order for Braunschweig. See Sehling 6/1, p. 362.

⁹¹ See LW 3:103, 110, and 143fn.

argument he had offered in *Comfort For Women Who Have Had a Miscarriage* (1542), Luther left room for unbaptized infants to be saved through providence. But between the two men and their successors the matter of emergency baptism became an issue of *adiaphora*—Calvin saw emergency baptism as a poor use of Christian freedom, and one that would lead to superstition and ultimately an *ex opere operato* understanding of baptism and grace. Luther saw baptism as one of the crucial places in which Christians were to seek God and find their salvation. In a complex age of theology and controversy, Luther found clarity in a simple gospel truth that he felt Christians must understand: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”⁹² Yet the reformers of the 16th century ultimately could find no consensus in this New Testament statement, which was interpreted differently by Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Anabaptists. The controversy in Western Christianity over emergency baptism became, along with exorcism, an important marker of confessional conflict that has left numerous traces in surviving church orders, sermons, midwife manuals, theological treatises, and parish visitation records. The Lutheran church orders of Lower Saxony provide an excellent example of how this conflict was approached by several territorial governments.

Lutheran Church Orders in Lower Saxony

The Lutherans not only retained emergency baptism, but spent considerable time discussing it in pamphlets, civic constitutions, and church orders. Their goal was to

⁹² Mark 16:16 NIV.

defend emergency baptism against the criticism of Calvinist rivals who wanted to abolish it, and to reform the Catholic practices associated with emergency baptism with which the Lutherans disagreed. Lutheran theologians and superintendents were the architects of this reform; the key agents in transmitting the policy were Lutheran pastors, who were asked to provide regular instruction, and Lutheran midwives, who were to be the agents of evangelism in the private domain of the birth room. When emergency baptism was discussed, it came up in combination with other baptismal regulations, general reforms related to midwives, and new guidelines for the churching of women.

The first church order in Lower Saxony to prominently feature emergency baptism was the 1528 church order for Braunschweig constructed by Johannes Bugenhagen at the request of the town council.⁹³ As I discussed in Chapter 3, Bugenhagen's church order defined evangelical theology and ritual in Braunschweig and also created such Reformation stalwarts as the office of the superintendent, the community chest, educational institutions, and a comprehensive system of social discipline that regulated life in the city. One of the central features of the church order was baptism, which Bugenhagen defined in several carefully worded sections using a Low German dialect current in Braunschweig. Bugenhagen saw local midwives as a crucial component of the Reformation in Braunschweig. As supporters of the pastors, midwives were considered evangelical agents in the delivery room.⁹⁴ Like earlier civic

⁹³ Bugenhagen discussed emergency baptism before Luther, who approached the issue through a letter on conditional baptism in 1531 (see previous section).

⁹⁴ Flügge, *Hebammen und Heilkundige Frauen*, p. 320.

ordinances in German towns, Bugenhagen wanted midwives to be registered and to meet regularly with the pastors so that they knew how to perform emergency baptisms.

In the section “Van den Heveammen”, Bugenhagen wrote that midwives should be named by the city council and extend their services to poor women who could not afford the cost of a normal delivery.⁹⁵ Compensation information (if any) for this type of poor relief was not detailed in the church order, but later it became a regular feature of Lutheran legislation in parts of Lower Saxony (see Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel below). The evangelical superintendent of Braunschweig was to be personally responsible for the Christian education of midwives, which was to include biblical training so that midwives could minister in a spiritual way to laboring women. In particular, midwives were to learn the rubrics of emergency baptism:

Second, midwives should learn from the preacher how to make a Christian of the newborn, so that in an emergency, they can baptize. And they should use these or other words, and in the emergency hasten to commend [the child] to God as follows: Here Jesus Christ, we offer you this child, asking that it be a Christian, as you said: Let the children come to me, such is the kingdom of God... then quickly give water baptism with these words: I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. If the child had not been given a name before the baptism, give it a name, which the parents desire, after the baptism.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ The text of “Van den Heveammen” is reprinted in Sehling 6/1, pp. 359-362. All translations for these texts are my own unless otherwise indicated.

⁹⁶ “Tome anderen, dat de heveammen ock van deme prediker leren, wo se Christo dat gebaren kind, so id nôt were, bevehlen scholen unde dōpen. Dat mach togän mit dissen edder mit anderen wörden, nachdeme also denne in hastiger not eyneme Got ingiff: Here Jesu Christe, wy offeren dy dit kyndeken, nim id an unde lät id ock Christene syn, also du gesecht hest: Latet de kynderken to my kamen, sulker is dat rike Gades, darmede, dewile dar nicht to sümende, is balde gegeben de waterdōpe mit dissen wörden: Ick dōpe dy imme namen des Vaders unde des Sōnes unde des hilgen Geistes. Is deme kynde in der ilinge nicht eyn name gegeben vor de dōpe, so geve me eynen namen, wo de oldern willen, na der dōpe.” Sehling 6/1, p. 360.

Midwives were specifically asked to baptize using water and the ancient Triune formula. In addition, they were asked to recall the familiar Bible passage from Mark Chapter 10, in which Jesus invited children to him and compared their innocence to the kingdom of God. After this baptism, Bugenhagen wanted parents to have the assurance that their children would receive eternal salvation (*ewich salich*) even if they died moments after birth. Accordingly, Bugenhagen envisioned midwives as performing crucial pastoral functions in the birth room, including naming the child if a name had not already been given. The naming formula is important in this context, because public naming was often reserved as a function of priests in late-medieval Catholicism.⁹⁷

The Braunschweig church order then described what midwives should do if the infant who had received emergency baptism lived. Would a rebaptism be necessary later at church? Using Ephesians 4:5, Bugenhagen reminded midwives and pastors that there was only one Christian baptism (“There is...one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”). Once a child had been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, what could a priest add to make the baptism better?⁹⁸ However, Bugenhagen thought it useful for the pastor and congregation to see who had been baptized, and therefore encouraged midwives and parents to bring their children to church after emergency baptism so that the congregation could recite the Lord’s Prayer (*Vader unse*) together, sing a German Psalm (*düdeschen psalm*), hear the Gospel of Mark (Mark 10:13-16), and thank God for the survival of the child and the gift of baptism. Bugenhagen wanted the

⁹⁷ See note 73 above.

⁹⁸ “Dat kyndeken is gedöpet in Christum imme namen des Vaters unde des Sönes unde des hilgen Geistes... what sochstu nu by deme prestere eyne betere döpe?” Ibid.

child and the baptism to be acknowledged, but he didn't permit children to be rebaptized. (Local outbreaks of Anabaptism made this issue especially pressing for him.)

In addition, Bugenhagen broke with Catholic tradition by directing pastors not to read baptismal exorcisms over the child.⁹⁹ Luther significantly reduced the baptismal exorcisms in his 1526 *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* liturgy (which Bugenhagen supported), but Bugenhagen saw an additional problem with exorcisms that followed emergency baptism—if Christians believed that baptism brought the Holy Spirit, wouldn't it then be disrespectful to shout “Be gone, unclean spirit!” over a child who had just been baptized? Earlier in this chapter, I described some of the late-medieval legislation that required Catholic parishioners to come to church after emergency baptism so that their children might be properly exorcized.¹⁰⁰ Bugenhagen's liturgical directions for midwives and pastors reject the necessity of baptismal exorcism after emergency baptism. He is, in this regard, one of the first Protestants to specifically do so. This caution about exorcism brings up an interesting corollary to the exorcism controversy that would divide Lutherans and Calvinists during the late Reformation. Although the Lutherans would become staunch supporters of baptismal exorcism for regular public church baptisms, they specifically wanted to avoid exorcism if a child had already been baptized via emergency baptism. A church order from Haringerland (Hoya) in 1573/4 made this clear: midwives were under no circumstances to keep an emergency baptism

⁹⁹ “Overs de prester schal nicht over deme so gedofften kyndeken den exorcismum lesen, den düvel uthbannen, dat he nicht mit deme lesen den hilgen Geist lestere, de gewislick by deme gedofften kynde is.” (The priest shall not read the exorcism, or the expulsion of the devil, over the baptized infant, so that through the reading he will not disrespect the Holy Spirit, who now dwells within the baptized child.) Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ See note 72 above.

secret, because it might later cause offense to the Holy Spirit, who would be called ‘unclean’ and exorcized during a public baptism at church which was thought to be the first baptism.¹⁰¹ Midwives were warned in this ordinance that they would be severely punished if they committed this grave offense.¹⁰²

Finally, Bugenhagen gave midwives advice about what to do in dire situations in which a child was not expected to survive the actual delivery. Would it be acceptable to baptize only part of the infant’s body as it emerged from the womb as Catholic tradition allowed? Bugenhagen’s answer was no, and his regulations requiring the complete birth of a child before baptism would become a standard feature of virtually all Lutheran baptismal regulations.¹⁰³ He discussed this matter by referring to the popular belief among people that a person was justified in baptizing a child when they could first see part of its body.¹⁰⁴ As I noted above, this was the position of Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae*, and in Catholic lands the idea that partially born babies could be baptized would continue to be popular into the early modern period.¹⁰⁵ However, Bugenhagen

101 “De battenmoumen und frauen deselben nottaufe nit verschweigen, sondern solches den pastorn anzeigen, damit der heilige Geist, so den kindern in der taufe gegeben, im exorcismo ein unreiner geist nicht gescholten werde.” (The midwives and women should not keep emergency baptism secret, but they should tell the pastor, so that the Holy Spirit, who has been given to the child in baptism, is not called an unclean spirit in exorcism.) Sehling 7/1, pp. 730-31.

102 “So jemandß sich hiran vergreifen wurde, soll unß oder unsern beambten angegeben und in schwere straffe genommen werden.” (Those who make this mistake should by us or by our officials, be severely punished.) Ibid., p. 731.

103 See, for example, the order for Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (1569) in Sehling 6/1, p. 160.

104 “...anderen hebben etlike radt gegeven, dat me mochte döpen, wat me konde sehn.” (...others have given the advice that you should baptize what you can see.) Sehling 6/1, p. 360.

105 For example, the compendium of popular beliefs *Erreurs Populaires au fait de le Medecine* written by Laurent Joubert in post-Tridentine France includes a story in which Joubert was called to a birth that had continued unsuccessfully for several days. The baby was in a breech position and its head was stuck in the womb. Joubert’s first act was to baptize the child’s feet, which extended out of the mother’s body. Then he tried reorienting the child and other obstetric

rejected the practice based on Gratian's canon law, which he included in the 1528 church order to support his position: "Non potest renasci qui nondum est natus."¹⁰⁶ (A person is not able to be reborn who has not yet been born.) Bugenhagen emphasized that infants must be entirely born to receive baptism, not only a part ("nicht alleyn eyn part"). He hoped that gradually midwives would reform their procedures to accept this practice, and encouraged local pastors to preach regularly on the subject so that there would be no misunderstanding.

In 1542, duchess Elizabeth issued a Lutheran church order with the help of Antonius Corvinus to regulate liturgical matters and church discipline in Calenberg-Göttingen, the Lower Saxon territory in which she was currently acting as regent.¹⁰⁷ This church order discussed emergency baptism in the context of other baptismal reforms, and had much in common with the church order promulgated in 1540 by Elizabeth's father Joachim I in Mark Brandenburg. The Calenberg-Göttingen order asked that women (i.e. midwives) not take the office of emergency baptism lightly, but remember to value baptism and administer it with the Triune formula and the Lord's Prayer.¹⁰⁸ They were also to remember carefully what had been done at the emergency baptism, so that they

procedures. Unfortunately, the baby died, but at least (according to Joubert) it had received the sacrament of baptism. See Laurent Joubert, *Popular Errors*, trans. Gregory David de Rocher (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1989). For the context of Joubert's work, see Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, pp. 224-25.

¹⁰⁶ Sehling 6/1, p. 360.

¹⁰⁷ For the details of Elizabeth's regency and other features of the Calenberg-Göttingen church order, see Chapter 3.

¹⁰⁸ "Es sollen sich die weiber des notteufens nicht leichtlich annhemen oder unterstehen, wie bisher geschehen ist, sonder wo es die hohe, unvermeidliche not fordert, da sollen sie solchs mit vorgehendem gebete thun des heiligen Vater unsers." (Women should not dare to take emergency baptism lightly, as has happened up to now, but when there is a high, unavoidable emergency, they should proceed by praying the holy Lord's Prayer [Vater unsers].) Sehling 6/2, p. 799.

could report it promptly to the local pastor, and so that there could be a brief service at church which acknowledged the baptism.¹⁰⁹ This short service (a briefer version than the one proposed by Bugenhagen) was to conclude with the following prayer from Luther's

Order of Baptism Newly Revised:

The almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath regenerated thee through water and the Holy Ghost and hath forgiven thee all thy sin, strengthen thee with his grace to life everlasting. Amen.¹¹⁰

Readers familiar with early modern German will notice that the Calenberg-Göttingen rubrics are written in the High German dialect of Mark Brandenburg, and the dialect of many of duchess Elizabeth's regulations. (A Low German order was also produced for the residents of Calenberg-Göttingen two years later.) In 1545 Antonius Corvinus began a parish by parish visitation of Calenberg which instructed pastors to meet regularly with midwives (*bademuttere*) to instruct them, and to be sure that (in particular) they were not baptizing infants before they were completely born.¹¹¹ Emergency baptism thus became a topic of particular interest for the Lutheran reformers, and to press their reforms deep into German popular culture they encouraged systematic preaching and the retraining of

¹⁰⁹ "Sie sollen es auch so ordentlich und ernstlich thun, das sie darnach dem pfarherrn grüntlichen bericht geben können, wie alles zugangen sey." (They should also do [the baptism] so orderly and earnestly, that they can give the pastor a thorough report, that is accessible to all.) *Ibid.*, p. 799.

¹¹⁰ "Der almechtig Gott und Vater unsers Herrn Jhesu Christi, der dich durchs wasser und den heiligen Geist anderweit geboren und dir alle deine sünde vergeben hat, der sterke dich mit seiner gnad zum ewigen leben. Amen." *Ibid.* (For this prayer's placement in Luther's 1526 baptismal liturgy, see LW 53:109.)

¹¹¹ "Auch sollen die bademuttere durch die pastores freuntlich unterweiset werden, kein kind, es sey dann gar auf die welt komen und ganz geboren, in der nod zu teufen und allenthalben in diesem falle auf die ordnung zu sehen." (Also, the midwives should frequently be instructed by the pastors that no child, unless it has wholly come into the world and has been entirely born, should be given emergency baptism, and in these matters they should see the [church] order.) Sehling 6/2, p. 867.

midwives. Not only were midwives understood as valuable representatives in the birth room, but they were also important sources of information for pastors about the spiritual well-being of parishioners and the identity of new members in the community.

The next set of church orders published in Lower Saxony were a product of the increasing confessional tensions between Catholics and Lutherans, and they signaled a new concern about the practices of midwives. In 1543, the Protestant Schmalkald League defeated Duke Henry the Younger of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, and replaced the principality's Catholic ritual with a series of church orders that reformed theology and liturgy according to Lutheran standards. As I discussed in Chapter 3, Johannes Bugenhagen and Antonius Corvinus were major contributors to these church orders, and in numerous places they took a stricter and more polemical tone than in earlier constitutions. The first Schmalkald church order was promulgated in 1543 for Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel; this was followed by a 1544 church order for the city (*Stadt*) of Hildesheim, and a 1544 church order for the principality of Grubenhagen. There are numerous textual similarities between these church orders. The 1544 Grubenhagen order is shorter and mostly an addendum to the 1543 Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel order.

In the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel order, the section “Van bademomen und lyvesfrucht” describes the Lutheran theology the reformers wanted midwives to learn. Midwives were encouraged to meet with pregnant women early in their pregnancy, and to caution them against any work or accident that might cause them to lose the baby and thus an eternal soul. To support the idea that children were unique creations of God, the

reformers used a quotation from II Maccabees 7:28: “I beseech you, my child, to look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed. Thus also mankind comes into being.”¹¹² In recognition of this special gift from God, parents were encouraged to recite a special prayer asking for a healthy delivery and baptism as soon as they had determined that the mother was pregnant:

We thank you, heavenly Father, that you have given us the fruit of life. Dear Lord Jesus Christ, we bring you with our prayer this child according to your word, which you spoke: Let the children come to me and forbid them not; such is the kingdom God [Mark 10:14]. Let the child come into our hands, so that we can bring it to your baptism and your commendation.¹¹³

Midwives were also specifically charged to use emergency baptism when necessity demanded it. The instructions in this section were not precisely the same as those from Bugenhagen’s 1528 church order, but they were similar to it:

When a child is born and suddenly becomes sickly, the midwife and other God-fearing women that are nearby shall commend the child to God with the following or similar words: Here Jesus Christ, we bring a child to thee according to your word and command; take it from us and make it a Christian... Then they should baptize the child with water and the following words: I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Sehling 6/1, p. 68.

¹¹³ “Wy danken dy, hemmelsche Vader, dat du uns mit frucht des lyves begavet hast. Leve Here Jhesu Christe, wy bringen dy mit unsem bede dat kindeken up dyn wort, also du gesecht hast: Latet de kinderken tho my kamen und wehret en nicht. Wente sölcker is dat rike Gades. Lat dit kindeken dyn syn, kumpt yd dartho also wy hopen, dat dat kind in unse hende kumpt, so willen wy dy id ock thodreggen tho dyner dōpe na dynem bevehle.” Ibid.

¹¹⁴ “Wenn overst ein kind gebaren is und hastich krank werd, schal de bademome sampt anderen gotfruchtigen frouwen, de darby sind, dat kind Gade bevehelen mit solcken und dergeliken worden: Here Jhesu Christe, dit kind bringe wy tho dy na dynem worde und bidden, du wollest id van uns annemen, ock Christen syn laten... Darup scholen se dat kind dōpen mit watere mit solcken worden: Ick dope dy im namen des Vaters und des Sons und des hilligen Geistes. Amen.” Ibid., p. 69.

As a follow up to the emergency baptism, midwives were told they could name the child, and then bring it to the church so that the priest could confirm (*confirmert*) the baptism and pray over the infant. For the first time, godparents (*vadderen*) were also mentioned in connection with the service at the church following an emergency baptism. As Chapter 5 discusses, the Lutheran reformers became increasingly concerned with the role of godparents as spiritual influences in the lives of the newly baptized, and Lutheran church orders beginning in the 1540s emphasized the spiritual role of godparents in most regulations about baptism.

The church orders for Hildesheim (1544) and Grubenhagen (1544) largely repeat the instruction printed in the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel order.¹¹⁵ Stadt Hildesheim adds an extra detail by specifically rejecting conditional baptism as Luther had in 1531. If the administration of emergency baptism was in doubt, pastors were encouraged to baptize the infant using a complete baptismal service at church, and not the conditional formula.¹¹⁶ A more significant difference, however, was the new attitude toward midwives that the Grubenhagen order presented in its addendum to the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel *Kirchenordnung*. In a section entitled “Von den bademomen, ihrer bestellung, ampt und besoldung”, the Grubenhagen church order admonished midwives with the following words:

Since we also find, that the midwives in these lands are totally clumsy and have used much sorcery, signing, and superstitious prayers, herbs, and

¹¹⁵ For Hildesheim, see Sehling 7/2, pp. 860-61. For Grubenhagen, see Sehling 6/2, p. 1038.

¹¹⁶ “...so schal de prester dat kind döpen frylick unde jo nicht den papentand darto don: Si tu non es baptisatus etc. Wente dat döcht ganz nicht unde maket de sake ungewiss.” (...so shall the priest freely baptize the child and without the condition: If you are not baptized, etc. When that [formula] is used, the status [of the baptized] is completely unknown.) Sehling 7/2, p. 861.

other things at birth for laboring women, all the pastors should have the midwives in their districts come to them and teach them how to behave in respect to God, the child, and the mother—exactly as demanded by the church order. And if one or more do not follow the instruction, or don't list to the pastors (i.e. reject the teachings), the midwives should not be used at that post.¹¹⁷

Until the Grubenhagen church order, midwives in Lower Saxony had largely been regarded as important allies in the gradual reform of baptismal practices in the delivery room. Not only did they administer emergency baptism, but they were encouraged to meet regularly with the pastors, serve the poor, and carry children to the church for an acknowledgement of their christening by the community. What now made them guilty of clumsiness—and more importantly—the subversive acts of sorcery, signing, and superstition in the eyes of some Lutheran reformers? In other words, what made the discourses of baptism and emergency baptism suddenly intersect with contemporary discussions about magic, superstition, and witchcraft?

Magic, Superstition, and Witchcraft: Sorting Out the Conflicting Discourses of Childbirth

The Protestant Reformation was in one respect a profound attack on what the reformers saw as the corrupt and 'superstitious' practices of the Catholic Church.

Protestant theologians were largely united in their opposition to rituals that seemed

¹¹⁷ "Nachdem sichs auch befindet, das die bademomen in diessem lande ganz ungeschickt sein und vielerley zauberey, segnerey, aberglauben mit betten, krüttern und anderen wessen bey der gebort in notthen der geberenden frauen gebraucht haben, so sollen alle und ein ider parner die bademomen, so in ihren dorfern whonen, vor sich erfordern und sie Iheren, wie sie sich in nhotten neben ihrer kunst und arbeit jegen Gott, das kind und die mutter halten sollen, alles nach laut der kirchenordnung. Und so ein oder mher wheren, so sich nach solcher unterweissung nicht halten würden oder die Iher von dem parner annemen wolten, die soll zu solchen ampte eine bademomen nicht gebraucht werden." Sehling 6/2, p. 1038.

remote from biblical models and which had become corrupt under the control of a distant Catholic hierarchy. Yet as Chapters 1-3 have demonstrated, different Protestant confessions used different criteria for reforming ecclesiastical rituals, and this was especially true for the sacrament of baptism. For Lutherans and Calvinists, the concept of *adiaphora* became crucial in the debate. For example, the Lutherans choose to retain liturgical rubrics like the exorcism of the devil at baptism, and the Reformed church choose to reject these same rubrics as remaining papal ‘superstitions’ that did not honor God. Although the words sorcery (*zauberey*), signing (*segnerey*), and superstition (*aberglauben*) appeared in the discourse of emergency baptism for the first time, they were part of the terminology that Protestants had used since the early days of the Reformation to discuss the reform of ritual. Protestants used these words to attack Catholics in the early 1520s, and Calvinists used these words to attack Lutherans in the decades that followed. In 1544, the same terms were used to reprimand Lutheran midwives who had been viewed, up to that point, as valued collaborators in the reform of baptismal practices. This criticism was not based solely on gender or occupation; in 1580, for example, Duke August of Saxony criticized Lutheran sextons (the male helpers of the pastors) for selling baptismal water for use in sorcery (*zauberey*) and other superstitious practices.¹¹⁸ Accusing with the words sorcery, signing, and superstition was, therefore, a mode of speaking which attempted to establish authority and enforce orthodoxy, but it also was a discourse that communicated fear, anxiety, and danger.

¹¹⁸ Sehling I, p. 530

Early modern midwife manuals and medical books contained a good deal of information that crossed the fluid and loosely-defined boundary between orthodox medical advice and traditional folk medicine judged superstitious by theologians. What was prudent, useful, and ‘Christian’ in the treatment of patients was the subject of much conjecture and ultimately decided in local contexts after gradual and incomplete consultation with secular and ecclesiastical authorities. Eucharius Rösslin’s *Der Swangern Frawen und Hebammen Roszgarten*, for example, prescribed medicines such as Laudanum (tincture of opium) to laboring women, which he derived from classical sources and his own work as an apothecary.¹¹⁹ These herbal remedies were considered orthodox, and in many cases they were probably quite effective at relieving pain, reducing the risk of infection, arresting bleeding, and treating other complications or conditions. Yet there were other manuals that featured remedies for laboring women that relied on sympathetic medicine or non-physical sources for their efficacy; these were considered orthodox by some but dangerous or ‘superstitious’ by others. For example, *Ein Newer Albertus Magnus Von Weibern und Geburten der Kinder*, a mid-16th century German compendium of information about pregnancy and childbirth from the writings of Albertus Magnus and other medieval or classical authors, contained the following recipe for reducing blood loss during childbirth or menstruation:

Isadorus says that the ashes of a large frog, whether carried or worn in the belt, will stop a woman from bleeding, and if you bind the ashes around the neck of a chicken, or any other animal, it won’t bleed when you kill it.

¹¹⁹ Laudanum and many other herbs designated for pregnancy and delivery are listed in an appendix to Rösslin’s book, which demonstrates powerfully how many remedies were potentially available to early modern midwives and physicians. See Rösslin, *The Rose Garden*, pp. 121-27.

And if you mix the ashes with water and put it on a cut, you won't get a scar.¹²⁰

This treatment, attributed to St. Isidore (d. 636), did not require that the ashes of a large frog come in direct contact with the patient to stop the bleeding—the ashes could just as well be carried in a belt or inserted into an amulet, which might be worn around the neck until the cure had taken effect. Another midwife manual, Johannes Hiltprand's "Useful Instruction for Midwives and Pregnant Women", described two techniques for easing pain and promoting childbirth, an amulet made of a black viper's tooth, and a magnet held in the right hand:

A viper skin (which the viper dropped by itself) will help promote childbirth if the mother wears it. A magnet is believed to ease birth if the pregnant woman holds it in her right hand during labor.¹²¹

The baptismal order for Grubenhagen criticizes amulets (*krüttern*) specifically; these talismans were diamond-shaped pendants that might contain herbal medicine, written notes, or other charms.¹²² During the 16th century, the Catholic Church tried to

¹²⁰ "Isidorus saget / das die äsche eins grossen froschs ob ihm getragen / oder am gürtel / behelt fast den fluß der frawen / und stillt in. Und zu einer bewerung binde es an den Halß den Hennen / unnd tödt sie / so gehet kein blut von ihr / oder sonst auch von einem anderen Thier. So man die vermengt mit Wasser / unnd damit jemand bestrichen wirdt / So wechset fürter kein Nar [Narbe]." *Ein Newer Albertus Magnus. Von Weibern / und geburten der kinder / samt ihren Arzneien. Auch von tugenten etlicher furnemer Kreuter. Und von krafft der Edlen Gestein. Von Urr unnd Natur etlicher Their. Mit samt einem bewerten Regiment fur die pestilenz. Alles auff new begessert/ Durch/ Appollina* (1560), p. xxxiii; HAB Mr 201 (2).

¹²¹ "Der Nattern Balck (welchen die Nattern von sich selbst abstreffen und weg legen) wann er von der gebärenden Frawen umbgürtet wirdt, hilfft die Geburt befürdern. Den Magnet helt man dafür, daß er die Geburt leichter machen soll, wann er von der Schwangeren zu Geburtszeit in der rechten Hand gehalten wirdt." Johannes Hiltprand, *Nutzliche Underweisung Für die Hebammen und Schwangeren Frawen...* (Ingolstadt, 1601), p. 137.

¹²² See Richard Andree, *Braunschweiger Volkskunde: mit 12 Tafeln und 174 Abbildungen, Plaenen und Karten* (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1901), p. 286; Dieter Harmening, *Superstitio: Überlieferungs- und theoriegeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur kirchlich-theologischen Aberglaubensliteratur des Mittelalters* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1979), pp. 226-29; R. W.

regulate the orthodox use of such ecclesiastical medicine by redirecting popular attempts at independent access to the supernatural into orthodox channels, such as blessing herbs for amulets on particular feast days (such as Assumption Day).¹²³ The Lutheran reformers rejected papal ‘superstition’ early in the Reformation period, but only singled out amulets as a particular problem as the forces of confessionalization and social discipline took hold. Instead of these ‘superstitious’ remedies, Lutherans increasingly recommended prayer and trust in God’s providence for help and assurance. This is the reason that the baptismal reformers placed so much emphasis on prayer for families and midwives during pregnancy and delivery.

Yet although the Lutheran reformers prohibited access to remedies that seemed magical or superstitious to them, they did not imagine the birth room to be free from the influence of the devil or other demonic forces. The Brandenburg-Nuremberg church order of 1533 thus warned that Satan might visit women during delivery, but that people should consider it an attack more on the estate of marriage than on childbirth *per se*.¹²⁴ In this way, baptism and childbirth merged with another important discourse in early modern Germany, the discussion about how the devil assaulted the birth room, and whether demonic beings could be born to human mothers. Martin Luther suggested in a tantalizing *Table Talk* episode that it was probably possible for the devil to implant a

Scribner, “Ritual and Popular Religion in Catholic Germany at the Time of the Reformation”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984), pp. 62-63; Flügge, *Hebammen und Heilkundige Frauen*, pp. 348-352; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribners, 1971), pp. 275-76.

¹²³ Mary R. O’Neil, “Sacerdote ovvero strione: Ecclesiastical and Superstitious Remedies in 16th Century Italy”, in *Understanding Popular Culture*, edited by Steven L. Kaplan (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1984), p. 53; Scribner, “Ritual and Popular Religion”, p. 71 fn 103.

¹²⁴ Sehling 11, p. 177. For an English translation, see Fisher, *Christian Initiation: The Reformation Period*, pp. 135-36.

demonic fetus in the womb of an unsuspecting mother, and that there was probably some credibility to the stories he had heard about these changelings growing quickly after delivery and devouring their nurses. Luther concluded by suggesting that all babies should be baptized regardless of their potential status as changelings—it simply wasn't possible to know if infants were humans or demonic beings.¹²⁵ An exception might be made, however, for a monstrous birth that looked more animal than human—in such cases, the creature should not be baptized because only humans were to be baptized; the conditional baptism of medieval Catholicism was to be avoided in such matters.¹²⁶ Monstrous births in Lutheran tradition could be the result of satanic or divine intervention. For example, in 1523 Luther and Melancthon published a short pamphlet entitled *Deutung der czwo grewlichen Figuren, Bapstesels czu Rom und Munchkalbs zu Freijberg ijnn Meijsszen funden*, which described two monsters (a 'monk-calf' and a 'poppe-ass') that were supposedly prodigies prophesying the corruption and imminent ruin of the Roman church.¹²⁷ In this case, the Lutherans described the monsters as messages from God, but the popular opinion was that such monsters could also be the result of demonic intervention or the failings of the mother or father.

The academic discussion about how monsters or demonic beings might be conceived filled numerous treatises in the late Reformation period, and included the work

¹²⁵ For the English belief in changelings, see Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 612-13.

¹²⁶ See Luther's Table Talk comments recorded by Veit Dietrich in 1532: "When somebody asked whether monstrosities of this kind [animal] ought to be baptized he replied, 'No, because I hold that they are only animal life.'" LW 54:45.

¹²⁷ WA 11:370-85. See also Katherine Park and Lorraine J. Daston, "Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century France and England", *Past and Present* 92 (1981), pp. 25-27.

of famous theoreticians such as Theophrastus Paracelsus, Johann Weyer, Jean Bodin, Johann Fischart (the German translator of Bodin), Ambroise Paré, and Johannes Praetorius.¹²⁸ But less well-known pastors and theologians also pondered such questions to resolve their own concerns about baptismal controversies and the potential influence of Satan on daily life. During the late Reformation period in Germany, Lutheran pastors both accepted and rejected the idea that the devil could produce children in unsuspecting mothers, and their polemics were often deeply intertwined with the confessional controversies discussed in Chapter 3.¹²⁹ Even if the drama of birth had been successfully negotiated, many believed that lying-in women and newborn babies were susceptible to the attacks of witches and other demonic agents.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ See Theophrastus Paracelsus, *Theophrastus Paracelsus*, ed. Will-Erich Peuckert, 5 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990); Wierus, Johannes, *De lamiis liber* (Basil, 1577); Jean Bodin, *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (Paris, 1580; reprinted Hiedesheim-Zürich-New York: Olms, 1588); Jean Bodin, *Vom aussgelasnen wütigen Teuffelsheer*, trans. Johann Fischart (1591; reprinted Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1973); Ambroise Paré, *Des monstres et prodiges* (Paris, 1573), ed. Jean Céard (Geneva, 1971). For an introduction to these materials, see Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (New York: Basic Books, 1975); H. C. Erik Midelfort, *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany, 1562-1684: The Social and Intellectual Foundations* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972); Gerhild Scholz Williams, *Defining Dominion: The Discourses of Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern France and Germany* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

¹²⁹ For the opinion that the devil could become corporeal flesh (*leibhaftige teuffel*), which made baptismal exorcism even more important, see Adamum Cratonem, *Pfarherrn zu Calbe, Rettung Des Christlichen Tauffbuchleins Herrn D. Martini Lutheri...* (Wittenberg, 1590), pp. 1-10; HAB A: 464.4 Theol. (6). For the view that God would not allow such an assault on the sacred office of childbirth, see Cyriacus Spangenburg, *Antwort, M. Cyriaci Spangenburgs, auff die schreckliche, grewliche, zuor unerhoerte, offentliche Lanluegen... Der Teuffel sey ein schoepffer: Schwangere Weiber tragen leibhaftige Teuffel* (Eisleben, 1572), B1; HAB S: Alv.: V 425(6). For a compilation of ideas about the devil's assaults, including his ability to steal children from their cradles (which brought an additional urgency to baptism), see Sigmund Feyerabend, *Theatrum Diablorum...* (Frankfurt, 1575), pp. 191-92 and 479-80; HAB S: Alv.: Ga 14a 20.

¹³⁰ Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women and Female Power*, pp. 247-250. See also Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London:

German demonologists often pondered the influence of witches at childbirth and baptism, and theologians who had read the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486) closely were exposed to the idea that midwives could be prime targets of the devil because of the control midwives had over life and death in the birth room.¹³¹ More significantly, perhaps, theologians were concerned about the witch pact with the devil as a type of inverse baptism that violated the First Commandment and was potentially irrevocable.¹³² Some demonologists imagined ceremonies in which there were actual inverted baptismal rituals—in these initiations the devil or an assistant baptized the candidate with urine and some perversion of the Trinity—or the inverse baptism might be implied and understood as a rite of passage, achieved through the ritual anus kiss of the devil and the imagined sexual relations that followed. What all these texts show is that in an increasingly confessional context, orthodox ritual was crucial for the definition of Christian community. Emergency baptism was one of these essential rituals, and contemporary speculation fueled the concern that demonic agents might try to assault baptism or demean it in sacrilegious ways.

Were German midwives widely viewed as potential agents of the devil after the baptismal regulations of Grubenhagen and other principalities in the 1540s? David Harley has convincingly argued that while modern historians have had a propensity to view midwives as routinely persecuted individuals during the late Reformation period,

Routledge, 1994), esp. Chapter 9 “Witchcraft and Fantasy in Early Modern Germany”, pp. 199-225.

¹³¹ Jakob Sprenger and Heinrich Institoris, *The Malleus Maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger*, ed. and trans. Montague Summers (1928; reprint New York: Dover Publications, 1971).

¹³² Sydney Angelo, ed., *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), pp. 61, 161, and 191.

they were not frequently accused of witchcraft or prosecuted as witches in the 16th century.¹³³ Although the *Malleus Maleficarum* warned churchmen about the danger of the midwife-witch, and lying-in maids were sometimes accused of bewitching mothers and infants during the late Reformation period,¹³⁴ most German midwives continued to enjoy some measure of respect as obstetric specialists and public agents into the 17th century.¹³⁵ What the Lutheran Reformation produced, however, was a new way of talking about baptism that associated midwives very closely with the evangelical platform. Midwives were rarely accused as witches by the reformers, but they were held increasingly accountable for their actions, and this meant midwives would need to stay clear of superstition in the birth room. As Sibylla Flügge has observed, the importance of the Lower Saxon church orders for midwives was that the orders created a comprehensive body of law that could be used to evaluate the performance of midwives in the future.¹³⁶ This regulating theology shared a semantic relationship with the discourses of superstition, magic, and witchcraft, and became increasingly sensitive as the process of confessionalization divided and enflamed Germany.

133 “Midwives were not accused [of witchcraft] in significant numbers because they were the wrong kind of women, respected and influential members of their local communities, more likely to be guilty of a strong will and a sharp tongue than the evil eye.” David Harley, “Historians as Demonologists: The Myth of the Midwife-witch”, *Society for the Social History of Medicine* (1990), p. 25.

134 In 1669, Anna Ebeler was accused of murdering a mother and several children in Augsburg for whom she had served as a lying-in maid. See Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, p. 199.

135 “The early modern midwife was not viewed by her contemporaries as an anachronistic relic, holding to old techniques out of ignorance and fear, but as a woman on whose skills and knowledge they depended.” Wiesner, “Early Modern Midwifery: A Case Study”, p. 110.

136 Flügge, *Hebammen und Heilkundige Frauen*, p. 358.

Reforms in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel

In 1569, the principality of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel promulgated a church order that comprehensively regulated the largest of the former Welf territories in Lower Saxony. In this order, Martin Chemnitz carefully regulated baptism and many of the associated practices. The traditional lying-in period of women who had just given birth was now to be considered a time of rest and recovery; after the six-week sequestration period for newly delivered women had passed, new mothers were encouraged to come to church for a short ceremony which offered public thanksgiving (*Dancksagung*) for their recovery and the successful birth of the child.¹³⁷ If it happened that the child died before this six-week service, the woman would still be welcomed, but a slightly different liturgy might be read.¹³⁸

According to the official teaching of the Lutheran church, women were no longer to be considered polluted or sinful simply as a result of the childbearing process; pregnancy was a holy office given from God and was even viewed as a possible mechanism for salvation.¹³⁹ The Lutheran churching service was therefore no longer

¹³⁷ See Sehling 6/1, pp. 163-64. For a chronicle description of the reforms, see Philip Julius Rhetmeyer, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Incytae Urbis Brunsvigae*, Chapter 8, p. 380.

¹³⁸ If printed prayers were not available for such situations, Lutheran pastors might write their own. For a surviving example of handwritten prayers for mothers who had lost a child, see the *Kirchenordnung* for Verden, a Stift west of Lüneburg, published in 1606, which survives as a printed book in the Herzog August Bibliothek. The unattributed pastor's notes provide German prayers for baptized and unbaptized children (the later were commended to God according to Lutheran tradition). These notes demonstrate that the church orders themselves were often used as liturgical handbooks, and they were supplemented on occasion by innovative pastors. See "Von der Sechswochinnen" in *Kirchenordnung, Wie es mit Christlicher Lehr und Ceremonien... im Stiff Verden... gehalten werden soll* (Lemgo: Groth, 1606), p. 79; HAB Gn. 5989 (1).

¹³⁹ To support the efficacy of childbearing the reformers quoted I Timothy: "But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continued in faith, love and holiness with propriety." I Timothy 2:15 NIV.

dominated by the language of sin and purification, but emphasized public thanksgiving and marked an important cultural transition from pregnancy and female culture to motherhood and full membership in the Christian community.¹⁴⁰ As they had with emergency baptism, several Lutheran pastors now printed sermons and treatises that described what the proper lay attitude toward churching and lying-in periods should be, and the authorities printed edicts that regulated churching along with other public activities involving the church such as marriages and funerals.¹⁴¹ The fact that churching regulations were often printed together with baptismal regulations shows that churching shared a close conceptual relationship with baptism and childbirth, and it was an aspect of popular culture that the Lutheran clergy wanted to reform along with other popular rituals and practices.

Regarding midwives, the 1569 Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel order warned that numerous misuses (*mißbrauchs*) were influencing how emergency baptism was being administered, and as a result midwives from every city and village in the principality needed to meet regularly with the pastors to receive instruction and correction. The accusation leveled in Grubenhagen twenty-five years earlier was also repeated:

It is also to be ordained that midwives assisting women use no sorcery, signs, or magic, like was often the case, but alone they should look to God

¹⁴⁰ Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Ritual*, pp. 72-90, esp. pp. 86-87. See also Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, pp. 197-229.

¹⁴¹ For some examples during the late Reformation, see Johannes Mathesius, *Eine Christliche und troestliche Predigt: Von den Kindelbetterinnen und Hebammen* (Lemgo, 1605), HAB Gn 5989 4o (2); Balthasar Meisnerus, *Christliche erinnerung und trost, für sterbende Sechswocherin...Frawen Anna von Karlwitzin* (Dresden, 1587); Friederich Ulrich, *...Ordnung... bey Hochzeit, Kindtauff, und Begrabnissen....* (Wolfenbüttel, 1623), HAB A: 57.8 Pol. (44); Friedrich Wilhelm Brandenburg, *...Constitutio und Beordnung Wie es in dero Fürstenthumb Halberstadt bey den Hochzeiten, Kindtauffen, Gevatterschafften, Frawen Kirchgängen, und Begräbnissen....* (Halberstadt, 1651), HAB A: 49.7 Jur. (6).

for help and use Christian means. They should further be obligated to be diligent, willing, and true to the poor as to the rich.¹⁴²

Two years later the Braunschweig *Ministerium* made an allowance for the payment of midwives, so that poorer clients would not become an undue burden. Wealthier families were still expected to pay midwives for their services, but this basic fee would insure that midwives didn't ignore poorer clients who needed their skills (including emergency baptism). Similar annual payments were made to midwives in other large German cities in the early modern period.¹⁴³

One unique aspect of this compensation in Braunschweig was that the payment was to be made once a year in the presence of the consistory and community, and in addition to receiving 20 Florins from the common chest, the midwives were asked to take an oath of service and listen to an address by Martin Chemnitz and other officials about the obligations of being a midwife in the city.¹⁴⁴ This happened for the first time on September 12, 1571 in Braunschweig, and the event was attended by representatives of the town council, the medical community (*Medicorum*), two midwives from each district of the city, pastors, and General Superintendent Martin Chemnitz.¹⁴⁵ It was further

¹⁴² “Es sollen auch solche verordente hebammen sich verpflichten, in der noth bey den frauen keine abgötterey, segnerey oder zauberey zu gebrauchen, wie oftermals gespüret, sondern allenthalben allein bey Gott durchs christliche gebet hülff zu suchen und verordente christliche mittel zu gebrauchen, deßgleichen auch verpflichtet sein, bey dem armen so vleissig, willig und getreu zu sein als bey dem reichen, wie denn billich.” Sehling, 6/1, p. 160.

¹⁴³ Wiesner, *Working Women in Renaissance Germany*, p. 55.

¹⁴⁴ Philip Julius Rhetmeyer, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Incytae Urbis Brunsvigae*, Chapter 8, p. 380.

¹⁴⁵ “Und sind sie den 12. Septembr. 1571 auf die Münße gefordert worden / in Beyseyne eines Ausschusses aus dem Raht / von den Kasten-Herzn / der prediger und medicorum, und hat Chemnitius im Ramen des Ministerii, was mit ihnen zu reden / in etlich Artickul gefasset / desgleichen auch die Medici gethan. Wie solches ihnen fürgelesen und erklaret / sind sie darauf beeydet / und der Eyd von Rahtswegen ihnen für gelesen worden.” (And on the 12th of

decreed that each town and village in the principality meet annually to hold such a ceremony, and that the pastors there should take personal responsibility for the instruction of midwives. As new midwives were appointed, they were to be shown the 1569 church order and given the oath according to the same manner. In this way, the church order for Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel became the basis for an annual civic ceremony that funded midwives and instructed them about their duties. The precise details of obstetric procedure and delivery were not the focus of the event, however—that was a discourse too immodest for public ceremony, and a topic about which the assembled medical men were probably only marginally familiar. Instead, the meaning was negotiated through a potent mixture of religion, politics, and economics: midwives were told to act as respected agents of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, warned to avoid superstition and ‘ungodly’ practices, and authorized to perform emergency baptisms. These skilled women were to be paid as obstetric specialists, but in a sense the real service they were performing was to stand in for the Lutheran clergy at a moment when they were unavailable, unskilled, and largely unwelcome. Midwives were, as Johannes Bugenhagen observed in 1528, crucial workers in the godly reform of baptism, the communal rite of passage which influenced forever how a human soul would stand before God.

September, 1571 they were asked to pay these women, in the presence of the council, from the chest of the preachers and doctors, and Chemnitz through his roll as leader spoke to the midwives, as he wrote in the article, and the doctors were also allowed to speak to them. After this was read to them, they took an oath under the eyes of the council.) *Ibid.*, p. 380.

Emergency Baptism in Visitation and Pastoral Literature

As Lutheran pastors conducted visitations in the areas over which they had dominion, they routinely asked questions about midwives and how baptisms were being administered in local parishes. Between 1570 and 1600, the Lutheran clergy conducted regular visitations in the principality of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. The list of questions that the pastors were asked included several questions that have been discussed carefully in this chapter. How long do children lie unbaptized and do some die before baptism? Concerning emergency baptism, are all children baptized by women rebaptized? Does (the pastor) regularly meet with midwives to get information from them?¹⁴⁶ In 1609, the same types of questions were being asked in Grafschaft Oldenburg. How long are parents letting their children lie before baptism? Are emergency baptisms being performed by midwives? Are midwives receiving the proper instruction? Are women being churched at the right time? (Some in the community were apparently going for churching as early as five weeks, others as late as 13 weeks.) Also related to midwives and their duty to inform the pastors about births: Are legitimate and illegitimate children being registered in the parish registers along with their baptismal sponsors?¹⁴⁷ These questions reveal an ongoing effort at reforming popular baptismal practices by the clergy. As I discuss in Chapter 5, these reforms were clearly easier to accomplish in urban areas than rural ones, and they continued to be important for the clergy well into the 17th century. But the fact that these questions were being asked

¹⁴⁶ “Wie lange die kinder ungetauft ligen und ob auch eßliche bisweilen ungetauft hinsterben.” “Von der Nottauf, num omnes baptizatos a mulieribus rebaptizet.” “Ob er auch mit der Hebammen fleißig rede und sie informire.” Wolters, “Die Kirchenvisitationen der Aufbauzeit (1570-1600) in Vormaligen Herzogtum Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel”, p. 84.

¹⁴⁷ Sehling, 7/2, pp. 1179-80.

repeatedly demonstrates the Lutheran clergy's great interest in making the reforms associated with emergency baptism take hold. Periodically, the pastors simply issued theological tracts supporting emergency baptism such as Andreas Schoppius' *Gruende und Ursachen, warumb die Nothtauffe* ("The Foundations and Reasons for Emergency Baptism").¹⁴⁸

In addition to church orders and visitations, many Lower Saxon communities also promulgated specific laws and edicts that regulated emergency baptism and assigned fines for failing to follow the legislated guidelines. In Herrschaft Jever, for example, Johan, the Grave of Oldenburg and Delmenhorst, and the overlord of Jever, levied a 10 gulden penalty on fathers if their children were not promptly baptized (i.e. within eight days).¹⁴⁹ Grave Johan also tried to use the churching ritual to integrate social groups within the community. When it came time for churching, the pastor was to ask 12 rich women (*raychen*), 8 middle class women (*mittelmessigsten*), and 6 poor women (*armen*) to accompany the new mother to church for the thanksgiving service. If they came late, the attending women were to pay fines before they left the church according to their social standing, and the money was to be given to the poor.¹⁵⁰ After the service, the

¹⁴⁸ Andreas Schoppius, *Gruende und Ursachen, warumb die Nothtauffe...* (Magdeburg, 1597); HAB A: 231.39 Theol. (4).

¹⁴⁹ The edict was entitled "Wegen der hochzeit, kindelbiern, kirchgängen, kirchmeßen, gesellschaften und beysm mendenkunften", and is reprinted in Sehling 7/2, pp. 1256-59.

¹⁵⁰ "Eß sollen auch auf den kirchgengen von den raychen zwölf frouwen, von den mittelmessigsten achte und von den armen sechs frauwen gebetten werden... Und so jemant kumbt hernacher, wan daß evangelium abegelesen ist, sol alda von den reichsten den armen zun guetem mit einem haben taler, von den mittelmessigsten ein ort talers und den armen drey schaeff, ehe sie auß der kirchen kommen, nach eines jedenen gelegenheit eine ehrliche malzait geben." (For the churching service, 12 women from the rich, 8 women from the middle class, and 6 women from the poor should be invited... And if someone comes after the Gospel has been read, the rich women should give one-half taler for the good of the poor, the middle class women

mother was encouraged to offer the female representatives of her community a simple meal. In this way, baptismal and churching regulations were combined with laws that controlled how mothers and infants were to be integrated into the community. Such laws were often blunt about social distinctions and the privileges status and money provided wealthier burgers or middling folk in early modern communities.¹⁵¹

Perhaps no better example of the extent to which the Lutheran reformers wanted to modify birth and baptismal practices is the short book that Thomas Guntherus wrote for pregnant women in 1566, *Ein Trostbüchlein für die Schwangeren*. As I described earlier in this chapter, Guntherus was a Lutheran pastor who took seriously his call to educate midwives and women about the sacred task of bearing children in godly communities. Although Guntherus discussed monstrous births and speculated about their origins,¹⁵² he felt that in the end all children were a gift from God who deserved access to the saving gift of holy baptism. Each Christian community (*Gemeyn*) bore a shared responsibility to protect the fetus (*Frucht*) in a pregnant woman's body. Pregnant women were not to be forced to work unduly or to be attacked with words or actions that might cause the fetus to be lost.¹⁵³ There were biblical traditions for such protection, Guntherus argued, but the crucial factor was that each fetus represented an eternal soul that stood on

an ort taler, and the poor 3 schaeff. When they come out of the church, she [the new mother] can offer them a small meal if she is able.) Sehling 7/2, pp. 1257-58.

¹⁵¹ For a more detailed look at rank and sumptuary ordinances in Lutheran reform, see Chapter 5.

¹⁵² Guntherus, *Ein trostbüchlein für die Schwangeren*, f. 83-93.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, f. 47.

the brink of salvation.¹⁵⁴ Since it was the 16th century, Guntherus warned that those who harmed a fetus in the womb would need to answer to God for their sin, not the mother's relatives (as mosaic law permitted).

Although a fetus in the womb was not to be baptized before it had entirely emerged from the mother's body, Guntherus suggested that infants who died in the womb could be considered baptized by the blood of Jesus if the delivering mother was godly and surrounded by a pious midwife and family. Indeed, the pastor's book was dedicated to the well-born and godly women in his region of Germany. This list included noble women (Dorothea von Plawen, Anna von Gleichen, and Anna von Landsperg), and all the pious and god-fearing matrons in the towns of Schonburg, Glauchaw, and Waldenburg.¹⁵⁵ Yet although Guntherus spoke of childbearing as a godly activity, a cross (*Creuz*) that women should bear with fortitude, he criticized those who did not accept it with earnestness and devotion. In particular, he asked delivering women to bear down in their labor as if the infant's eternal soul truly depended on the outcome. There was no excuse for women who did not fight mightily in this crucial moment, even if it meant their early death.¹⁵⁶ Using language reminiscent of Desiderius Erasmus' *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* (1504), Guntherus spoke of childbirth as one of the three great labors a human could attempt in life. But although a war lord might fight mightily

¹⁵⁴ Guntherus used Exodus 21:22 to maintain that the community should protect pregnant women and hold those who harmed them accountable: "If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. But if there is a serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth...." Exodus 21:23 NIV. Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., f. A2.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., f. 51.

on the battlefield, and an orator might work cleverly with his brain and rhetorical skills, the urgent labor of a pregnant mother required the greatest dedication:

When the time comes where the child has matured in the mother's womb, and the birth is at hand, then comes the time when the woman in greatest urgency, and under the high risk of her life, bears the child to the world. It is rightly said, therefore, that among all other labors the following three labors are the greatest and the hardest. First, Labor Militantis, the work of a war lord... The second difficult work is that of an orator, Labor Dicentis, who must think with his head... The third difficult work is that of a life-giving woman, Labor Parturientis, when a woman lies urgently with child... there is angst upon angst, pain upon pain.¹⁵⁷

In passages such as this, Guntherus wrote with clear admiration of what laboring women might accomplish in childbirth for their children and for themselves. He then continued with a description of how baptism would act as a saving water bath (*Wasserbads*) to wash and redeem the newborn infant. This would bring to fruition the joy of motherhood promised in scripture: "A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born in the world."¹⁵⁸

Guntherus also summed up the advice given to midwives in Germany during the late Reformation using seven points in a chapter devoted to midwives and their helpers. First, when labor began and women came into the presence of the delivering mother, they

¹⁵⁷ "Wenn nu das Kindt in Mutter leib vollkommen und zeitig ist / und die Geburt vorhanden / da gehets an die gröste noth / daß das Weib mit höchster gefahr / allein das sie bey dem leben zu bleiben verhofft / das Kindt zur Welt gebüret. Darumb wird auch recht gesaget / das unter allen andern arbeyten / dise drey die grössesten und schweresten sein. Erstlichen / *Labor Militantis*, die arbeyt eines Kreißß Herren... Die Ander schwereste arbeyt ist eines Wolredners / *Labor Dicentis*, Denn da wil es auch vil Kopffs... Die dritte schwerste arbeyt is eins begerenden Weibes / *Labor Parturientis*, Wenn ein Weib in kindes nöten ligt ...das ist angst uber angst / schmerzen uber schmerzen." Ibid., f. 3.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., folios A3 and 50; trans. John 16:21 NIV.

should immediately pray to God on their knees for a safe delivery.¹⁵⁹ This recommendation is shown graphically on the title page for Guntherus' book (Figure 4-3), which shows a helping woman praying on her knees before a window as other attendants care for the laboring woman. Second, midwives were to use legitimate medicine (*Arzney*) and follow Christian practices, but they should avoid superstitious middle practices (*Abgöttische mittelbrauchen*), signing (*segnen*), and other actions that broke the First Commandment (*Erste Gebott*) and failed to give the proper reverence to God.¹⁶⁰ This requirement was a corollary to the first—since midwives had fallen under the suspicion of some clerical authorities as superstitious practitioners, they were warned to give up these ungodly arts in favor of legitimate medicine, prayer, and reliance on God's providence.

Third, midwives were instructed to be ready at all times in the community for assisting in births.¹⁶¹ As the 16th century wore on, many German civic constitutions and church orders would regulate this particular detail, making sure that each district had the proper number of midwives and that money was provided for the delivery of poor women who couldn't afford it. Fourth, midwives were to be friendly (*freundlich*) when they assisted at the birth—no sharp or discouraging words that might endanger the child and thus an immortal soul. Guntherus imagined delivery to be a time of heightened

159 "Sollen sie betten / und sich neben andern Weibern / so dabey fürhanden / nicht schemen auff ihre knie zu fallen / und einsig zu Gott ruffen und schreien / denn es ist ja grosse noth da mit den lieben Weibern / darumb man auch fleissig beten soll / und wo das also gesehehen wirdt / wirdt sie Gott erhören / und inen bey den geberenden Weibern treuwlich beystehen und helffen." (They should pray next to the other women at hand, and not be ashamed to fall on their knees and call and cry out to God, because in this great hardship which the dear women suffer, God will hear the urgent prayer and help the delivering women.) Ibid., f. 72.

160 Ibid., f. 73.

161 Ibid.

emotional sensitivity for the mother, and warned against creating in her a feeling of hopelessness and anxiety (*angst*). Fifth, midwives were to be patient (*gedultig*), because the time of labor was uncertain, and rush or neglect could potentially harm the mother or child.¹⁶² Six, the midwife was to seek baptism for children that were born and appeared to be healthy. This baptism should take place within eight days at the church, and the midwife should be willing to carry the child to the font if others were unwilling or unable. Like other Lutheran churchmen, Guntherus strongly desired this baptism to be a church baptism, but if the child did not appear to be healthy, those around the child should baptize it in the birth room after praying, reciting the Lord's Prayer, and finding suitable water.¹⁶³ Again, Guntherus emphasized proper instruction in emergency baptism, and that the ancient Triune formula be used in the proper manner. Finally, Guntherus asked that midwives give women who had survived the difficult travail of childbirth something to eat and drink so that they might be restored to vigor. The mother should lie down and be kept warm, and was to be carefully watched for signs of illness and weakness (*kranck und schwach*) that might befall her. As this chapter has emphasized, the time after delivery was a dangerous one for both mother and child.

Mothers, in particular, might suffer infection, excessive bleeding, or complications due to

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ "Und wo sie sehen / daß das Kindlein schwach ist / sollen sie es Nottauffen / doch daß sie auch rechten und Christlichen unterricht von der Nottauff haben / daß man zuuor bette / und das Vatter unser spreche / und daß man es Tauffe mit Wasser / nicht mit Bier oder Wein / oder was anderz / und das man es Tauffe nach der form und weise von Christo befohlen / als in dem Namen deß Vatters / deß Sons / und deß heiligen Geistes." (And if they see that the child is in danger, they should baptize it via emergency baptism, but it is important that they receive the proper and right Christian instruction before hand, and that they pray before and say the Lord's Prayer, and then baptize the child with water, not with beer or wine or something else, and they should baptize it according to the form and example of Christ, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.) Ibid., f. 74.

obstetric procedures. After they had completed their Christian duty, they deserved attention and succor.

Thomas Guntherus' pregnancy and delivery book serves as an interesting counter point to the midwife manuals produced by earlier physicians in 16th century Germany. Guntherus' work was basically pastoral in nature; rather than discuss herbal remedies or problems that might arise during delivery, he emphasized the spiritual dimension of childbirth, and in particular the Lutheran idea that childbirth was a crucial moment in the salvation history of both mothers and infants. Medieval Catholics had also believed that childbed required the urgent attention of midwives who knew about emergency baptism; since the 13th century, canon law had required midwives and family members to baptize *in extremis* those infants who were thought unable to survive for a formal church baptism. Lutherans were unique among the Continental Protestant reformers, however, in that they attempted to retain emergency baptism while stripping it of the 'superstitious' Catholic elements they felt they could not accept due to the reforming principles of *sola scriptura* and *adiaphora*. Accordingly, the Lutheran reformers simultaneously argued for the necessity of emergency baptism by training midwives to perform it, while allowing that the sacrament might ultimately be administered by God in an indirect way without human intervention. To develop this later position, Luther accepted the Catholic tradition of the 'baptism of tears', the heartfelt prayer a mother might offer for her unbaptized child, and Chemnitz confidently left the matter of unbaptized children to God's mercy, writing in the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel church order of 1569 that stillborn children could be buried in the parish church yard with other departed Christians (reversing a

long-held position of the Catholic church). Finally, the Lutheran pastor Guntherus allowed that before birth the infants who died might be baptized by Christ's own blood in the womb.

Sibylla Flügge has written that one aspect of Lutheran reform in the delivery room was transforming the woman's universal role model from Mary, the mother of Jesus, to Sara, the mother of Isaac.¹⁶⁴ This reorientation placed the emphasis on God, the provider of lineage and succession, and lessened the influence of Mary and her purification festival (Candlemas, celebrated February 2). For Lutherans, churching rituals were no longer necessary rites of ceremonial purification, but optional services that emphasized thanksgiving and the honored position of childbearing. This position was powerfully summarized by Duke Ernst the Confessor, who reformed the monasteries in Braunschweig-Lüneburg by using these words in 1527: "Those who bear children please God better than all the monks and nuns singing and praying."¹⁶⁵

The crucial agent in most birth-related rituals was the midwife, a trained specialist who acted as an extension of the Lutheran clergy in the delivery room. In the 16th century, both midwife functions—the obstetric function and the ecclesiastical function—came under increasing scrutiny by the Lutheran reformers. Midwives were encouraged to purchase and consult midwife manuals and receive training from male physicians in the community when necessary, and these requirements were often the subject of laws and church orders in larger German cities and towns. Midwives were also given

¹⁶⁴ Flügge, *Hebammen und Heilkundige Frauen*, pp. 336–42.

¹⁶⁵ "dienen sie doch mit Kinder kriegen Gott besser als alle Mönche und Nonnen mit Singen und Beten." Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 339. For the context of the 1527 church order, see Sehling 6/1, p. 492.

doctrinal training by pastors and superintendents, and encouraged to care deeply about the spiritual welfare of their patients during and after childbirth. Midwives were told to learn the difference between monstrous births and human births, to discard Catholic rituals such as 'warming' and the intercession of the saints, and focus instead on when baptism could be administered and how it should be performed. When the cultural discourses of magic, superstition, and witchcraft converged in early modern Germany beginning in the 1540s, midwives were seen by some as potential accomplices of the devil. This development, which roughly paralleled the 'witch panic' of the late Reformation period, and the complex institutional processes of confessionalization, may have had less to do with the midwife's gender than her perceived importance as an agent of ecclesiastical ritual. The fact that so few midwives were tried as witches, despite the unfavorable treatment midwives received in works such as the *Malleus Maleficarum* and *Swangern Frawen und Hebammen Roszgarten*, suggests that these healing women were considered important functionaries in German communities, such as those in Lower Saxony.

16th century visitation reports suggest that in some respects the Lutheran effort to reform popular baptismal practices were not wholly successful. Well into the late Reformation period, the Lutheran reformers considered it necessary to ask rural and urban parishioners and pastors when their children were being baptized, how emergency baptism was being performed, and whether midwives were approaching the delivery room with the proper intentions. This important issue will be considered more fully in Chapter 5, which discusses how the reformers worked to regulate godparents and the

parties that were held when a baptism was celebrated in Lower Saxon communities. However, the work of Bugenhagen, Guntherus, and Chemnitz demonstrates that the Lutheran teaching about emergency baptism was thoughtful, systematic, and often creative. The Lutheran reformers should be recognized as arguing a consistent position about emergency baptism, which successfully defined their position against confessional rivals and made its way into church orders, civic constitutions, and innovative pastoral literature. If the Lutheran reformers were unable to reform the baptismal beliefs of those in the rural areas to their satisfaction in the late Reformation, it was not due to the negligence of Lutheran theologians, pastors, or midwives, who worked together to reform the largely private and obscure experiences of pregnancy and delivery.

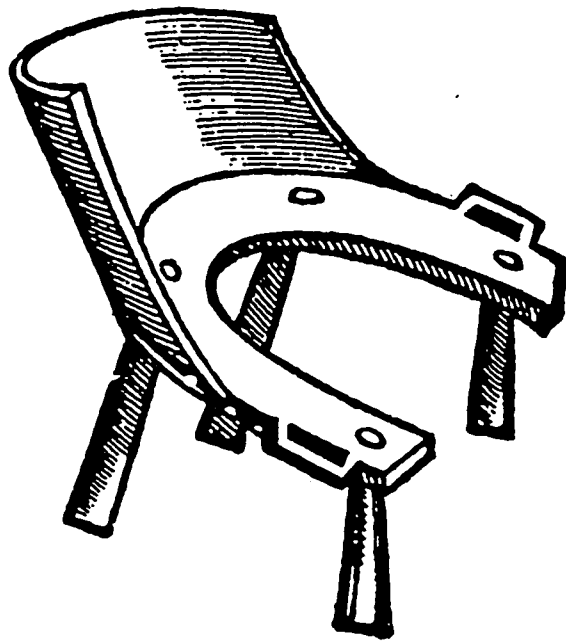


Figure 4-1: Illustration of German birthing chair, Eucharius Rösslin, *Swangern Frawen und Hebammen Roszgarten*, 1513.

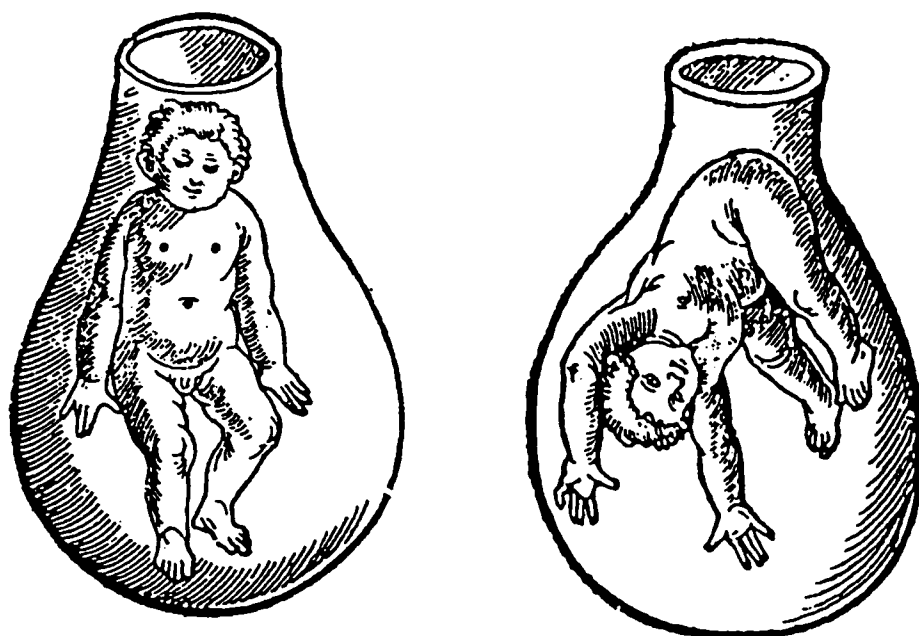


Figure 4-2: "Normal" and bottom first birth orientations, Eucharius Rösslin, *Swangern Frawen und Hebammen Roszgarten*, 1513.

**Ein Trostbüch
lein für die Schwangeren
vnd Geberenden Weiber / wie sich
diese für/in/vnd nach der Geburt/mit Bes-
sen/Dancken vnd andern/Christlich vers
halten sollen/Dergleichen zuvor in
Druck nie außgangen/
Durch
M. THOMAM GVNTHERVM,
Hospredigern zu Glauchaw.**



Figure 4-3: Title page depicting birthing room with woman praying, Thomas Guntherus, *Ein trostbüchlein für die Schwangeren und geberenden Weiber*, 1566.

Chapter 5

Baptism and Social Discipline: The Lutheran Reform of Baptismal Sponsorship and Gift-giving

This chapter analyzes more systematically the social relationships among parents, godparents, and baptized children in Lower Saxony by examining the church orders and morals legislation produced by Lutheran officials to regulate baptismal sponsorship. In the opinion of Lutheran pastors, superintendents, and theologians, baptismal sponsorship had become a travesty in Lower Saxony—the number of godparents had proliferated in such a way that people postponed baptism for long periods of time to get the right mix of godparents. When the baptism finally took place, it initiated a period of excessive gift-giving (*Gevattergeld*) and beer drinking parties known as *Kindelbier*¹ that were detrimental to both public order and spiritual values within the community. This chapter will explain how Lutheran plans for a new social role for godparents came into conflict with traditional ideas about how godparents functioned in society, and how this disjuncture created an ambivalent position for baptismal sponsors and raised doubts about giving baptismal gifts and hosting elaborate christening parties. It will also assess the practical limitations of social discipline and moral legislation in German society in the

¹ The word *Kindelbier* appears most often in Northern German ecclesiastical texts, especially the *Kirchenordnungen* of Bremen, Hoya, Ostfriesland, and Oldenburg. In other parts of Germany, post-baptismal parties were known as *Tauffest* or simply *Kindtauf* celebrations. However, they invariably involved the consumption of generous amounts of beer and food (often over several days), provoking the ire of popular preachers and town magistrates.

late 16th and early 17th centuries, a period when both ecclesiastical and secular courts were still only marginally able to impose their will on the numerous small towns and rural areas that made up the principalities of Lower Saxony.

The regulation of baptismal sponsorship has been little studied in the late Reformation period, in part because Luther himself gave baptismal sponsors a rather ambiguous role for the future.² Godparents were essential participants in Luther's popular *Order of Baptism Newly Revised* (1526), in which they answered interrogative questions on behalf of the infant being baptized, prayed mightily, and rejected the devil.³ However, Luther and his successors charged the parents with the primary task of educating the child as he or she grew; the godparents were only to take part if the parents died before the child reached adulthood.⁴ By translating the baptismal service into clear and comprehensible German, preaching regularly on the subject, and emphasizing baptism in the *Small Catechism*, Luther and his successors hoped to clarify what they saw

² For an introduction to the literature, see William Rauls, "Die Taufe in der Geschichte der Evangelisch-lutherischen Landeskirche in Braunschweig", *JGNK* 73 (1975), pp. 55-81; Reinhold Staudt, *Studien zum Patenbrauch in Hessen* (Ph.D. diss., Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, 1958); Paul Drews, "Taufpaten", in *Realencyklopaedie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 19 (1907), p. 450; Helga Schwarz, *Das Taufgeld* (Graz, 1960); Joseph H. Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986); Derrick S. Bailey, *Sponsors at Baptism and Confirmation: An Historical Introduction to Anglican Practice* (New York, 1951); Susan Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Ritual* (London: Routledge, 1997).

³ In his foreword to the revised ritual (introduced in Chapter 2), Luther instructed sponsors with these words: "See to it, therefore, that you are present in true faith, listen to God's Word, and earnestly join in prayer. For when the priest says, 'Let us pray,' he is exhorting you to unite with him in prayer. And all sponsors and the others present should repeat with him the words of his prayer in their hearts to God...setting themselves against the devil with all their strength on behalf of the child, and showing that they realize this is no joke as far as the devil is concerned." LW 53:102-3. (See also editorial note, p. 106.)

⁴ See note 39 below.

as the important spiritual obligations of parents and godparents to the baptized, and stir the faith and devotion of the assembled congregation.

Beyond the important liturgical and pedagogical challenges addressed by Lutheran reformers, however, baptismal sponsorship included several important social functions in German communities that most reformers either ignored or tried to minimize. In late-medieval Catholicism, the most important of these structures was the spiritual kinship created between the godparents and the family of the baptized child.⁵ Spiritual kinship joined biological kinship as an important consideration when families planned marriages. If the bride and groom were too closely related (if they fell within a prohibited degree of kinship), the marriage would not be allowed.⁶ Luther spoke strongly against these “man-made regulations” in *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* which (in his opinion) needlessly hindered man’s Christian freedom, creating confusion when it came time to marry.⁷ Yet in Germany and elsewhere it seems evident that the bonds of spiritual kinship worked as efficacious social glue—they cemented families together in

⁵ “Godparents testified to a determination to make sure that on the other side of the waters of baptism the child would find itself received by a Christian kindred or gossip (god-sib) adequate to replace the natural kindred from which he had passed by the rites of regeneration, since flesh and blood could not inherit the kingdom of God.” John Bossy, *Christianity in the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 15.

⁶ For a thorough discussion of Catholic marriage limitations in Reformation Germany, see Paula Fichtner, *Protestantism and Primogeniture in Early Modern Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁷ “In the same way that nonsense about *compaternities*, *commaternities*, *confraternities*, *consororities*, and *confilieties* must be completely abolished in the contracting of marriage. What was it but the superstition of men that invented this ‘spiritual affinity’? If one who baptized is not permitted to marry her whom he has baptized or stood sponsor for, what right has any Christian man to marry a Christian woman? Is the relationship that grows out of the external rite or sign of the sacrament more intimate than that which grows out of the blessing of the sacrament itself? ...See then, how Christian liberty has been suppressed through the blindness of human superstition.” LW 36, pp. 99-100.

ways that were similar to formal marriage relationships.⁸ Godparents were generally chosen from local kingroups or family alliances that could insure material well-being for the baptismal candidate and his or her family. In 1403, the Council of Soissons even permitted children to be godparents, provided they were close kindred of the child baptized.⁹ But the resulting limitations on choice of marriage partners were significant—not only was the ‘spiritual parent’ prohibited from marrying his or her godchild, but often their family members were not allowed to exchange nuptials for fear of breaking ecclesiastical incest taboos.¹⁰ The regulations could significantly affect a small community, where often three or more godparents (male *compadres* and female *comadres*) stood as sponsors for an infant at baptism.¹¹ Although the Council of Trent tried to limit

⁸ Andrejs Plakans, *Kinship in the Past: An Anthropology of European Family Life, 1500-1900* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 40-41.

⁹ John Bossy argues that infant godparents are not difficult to understand if one accepts the late-medieval idea that godparents were generally used to intensify social relations between families. See John Bossy, “Blood and Baptism: Kinship, Community, and Christianity in Western Europe from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries”, in *Sanctity and Secularity: The Church and the World, Studies in Church History*, edited by Derek Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), p. 133.

¹⁰ Spiritual incest regulation was an early feature of many Germanic law codes. For example, the Laws of King Liutprand (c. 723) stated that no man should marry his godmother, godchild, or their relatives: “We likewise decree that no one may presume to take to wife his godmother, nor that goddaughter whom he raised from the baptismal font; nor may he presume to take to wife the daughter of that one who received him from the font, because such are known to be spiritual brothers and sisters. He who attempts this evil thing shall lose all his property and the children who are born of the illegal marriage may not be his heirs, but the nearest relatives shall be.” Katherine Fischer Drew, trans., *The Lombard Laws* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1973), p. 161.

¹¹ In addition, godparent relationships could be used to attempt to quell open conflicts between individuals. The most dramatic Lutheran example was Andreas Karlstadt’s choice of Luther as the godfather for his first son Andreas Jr., at the height of their debate over adult baptism in late 1522 or early 1523. Soon after the sponsorship, however, Luther and Karlstadt broke relations completely. See Calvin Pater, *Karlstadt as the Father of the Baptism Movements: The Emergence of Lay Protestantism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 106.

the number of godparents to one or two,¹² the legal implications of spiritual kinship and marriage stood as a significant difference between Lutheran and Catholic godparentage in the early modern period.¹³

Social form was crucial when a parent asked a friend, associate, or relative to become a baptismal sponsor for their child. In most cases, the request was the father's duty, and there were unspoken conventions that governed the request which were nearly as important as the social and theological expectations of sponsorship itself. For example, when Martin Luther's daughter Magdalen was born on May 4th, 1529, Luther wrote a letter the following day to his close friend and fellow reformer Nicholas von Amsdorf, asking that Amsdorf act as his daughter's godparent. The letter was brief but included details about Katherine's three-hour labor, Luther's relief at her safe delivery, and other information written in a comfortable Latin prose familiar to Luther and Amsdorf. When the time came to ask Amsdorf's permission for sponsorship, however, Luther switched to "formal" German so that his request would adhere to the conventions that governed such a request for patronage:

[Latin] What I did not dare to state in your presence, I am putting forward in your absence: [German] Honorable, reverend Sir: God, the Father of all grace, has graciously presented a baby daughter to me and my dear Katie. I am therefore asking Your Honor for God's sake to assume a Christian office, to be the spiritual father of the said little heathen, and to help her to

¹² Bossy, "Blood and Baptism", p. 133.

¹³ "Inter susceptores & baptisatum ipsum, & illius patrem & matrem, nec non inter baptizantes & baptizatum, baptizatique patrem & matrem spiritualis cognatio contrahitur, quae impedimento est matrimonio." Concilium Tridentinum, Ses. 24. Cap. 2. In 1612, Michael Pharetratus suggested in a dialog about godparent obligations that this was a crucial difference between Lutheran and Catholic sponsors. Pharetratus also argued that godparents were an important expression of the adiaphora principle—Lutherans had the freedom to use godparents in creative ways if the sponsors supported baptism. Michael Pharetratus, *Von der Gevatterschafft* (Jena, 1617), B3; HAB A: 280.6 Theol. (16).

the holy Christian faith through the heavenly, precious sacrament of baptism. Thus you would be the catechist of my daughter. Henry Dichlensis, the provost's vicar, will in the meantime stand in your place.¹⁴

Luther had been with Amsdorf in Wittenberg the preceding month for a wedding (April 1529), but didn't mention the sponsorship to him because the baby had not yet been born. According to German custom, lining up baptismal sponsors before a child was successfully delivered was considered bad form and bad luck. But after the birth a happy Luther formally asked his friend to be the spiritual father and "catechist" for his child. It was so important to Luther that he was willing to have a Wittenberg vicar stand in Amsdorf's place—a 'proxy' sponsorship that later Lutheran reformers would discourage.¹⁵ More importantly, this short letter from the Wittenberg reformer provides an excellent example of the formal request for baptismal sponsorship that would have accompanied most successful births and baptisms that took place in literate circles in early modern Germany. Sponsorship, like other acts of patronage, was governed by socially appreciated forms and conventions.

In Germany, godparents were also responsible for a type of direct financial support of the baptized child called the *Taufpfennig*, a monetary gift typically bestowed by each godparent on the christened child and his or her family. *Taufpfennig* (also called *Gevattergeld*, *Patengeld* or *Patentaler*) was an eagerly anticipated gift that paid essential expenses and gave children a start in the world. It provided funds that the parents could draw on for post-baptismal celebrations, and crucially, it established a source of revenue

¹⁴ LW 49:218-219; WA, Briefwechsel 5:61.

¹⁵ Luther's last sentence is ambiguous, however—it could be that Luther was suggesting a replacement for Amsdorf in the town of Magdeburg, where Amsdorf was working as a reformer. See WA, Briefwechsel 6:61, n. 6.

that parents could use to provide urgently-needed nutrition to mother and child in this vital developmental stage. Sometimes, in addition to the *Taufpfennig* (which varied in size based on the social standing of each family), or sometimes as an alternative, godparents often brought gifts of food to the home of the newly baptized child, including eggs, meat, cheese, bread, and (for a special treat) confections flavored with marzipan or other sweets. This period of gift-giving continued through the duration of the mother's stay in childbed (six weeks), and involved other obligations that I discussed in Chapter 4.

Beyond the important liturgical role that godparents performed in both Catholic and Lutheran baptismal rituals, the vital social role of godparents was largely ignored by Lutheran reformers who took up the task of enforcing morals and legislating social discipline in the later Reformation years. Godparents were a traditional way of supplementing the income of young families and bolstering their kinship networks, which crisscrossed many communities.¹⁶ The motivation for godparents was not simple altruism. Like most relationships in pre-modern society baptism and godparentage were reciprocal transactions—in the future, the family of the baptized would be obliged to return support to the godparents, either in kind (as sponsors for their children) or in other ways (labor, political or legal support, oath making, and so forth). Godparents were accorded honor and given a type of spiritual affirmation at the time of the baptism, but also stood to receive important considerations in the future.

Beyond the initial *Taufpfennig* gift, godparents sometimes assisted in paying for the post-baptismal party, although in Northern Germany this feast seems to have been

¹⁶ Karant-Nunn, *Reformation of Ritual*, p. 65.

primarily the responsibility of the child's parents. We can learn something about the scope of these feasts by a careful reading of the evangelical church orders (*Kirchenordnungen*) that were published in Lower Saxony to regulate baptismal practices in the late 16th and early 17th centuries.¹⁷ These regulations (which typically had the backing of princes, magistrates, and the secular courts) identify baptismal parties as a problem of scale—families were spending too much money on these parties, inviting too many people, and the celebrations lasted too long. Accordingly, the new Lutheran baptismal regulations concerned themselves with limiting the excesses at *Kindelbier* feasts, not canceling the party. The magistrates and dukes eventually augmented the standing church orders by imposing specific civic and territorial edicts that meted out strict penalties for violating the baptismal guidelines.¹⁸ Secular laws proved more effective than church orders in regulating behavior—the church orders described what people should believe and how they should behave, but the edicts specified how they would be punished if they disobeyed.

The scope of baptismal parties varied greatly depending on the social standing and resources held by the parents who hosted the celebration. As I point out in Chapter 6, the princely families in Lutheran principalities enjoyed spectacular tournament events at their baptisms, which both demonstrated their influence and largess, and offered important opportunities for diplomacy. For ordinary Germans, the purpose was much different, but many families still sought to impress their friends and neighbors.

¹⁷ *Kirchenordnungen* that specifically mention baptismal feasts in Lower Saxony include Ostfriesland (1535, 1545), Verden (1576), and Bremen (1580). See Sehling 7/1.

¹⁸ In Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, edicts issued to limit post-baptismal celebrations were published in 1563, 1594, 1623, 1629, 1636, and 1649.

Baptismal parties followed the administration of the baptism ritual, which typically took place at the Sunday morning worship service (before the reading of the Gospel) but was technically allowed any day that a sermon was being preached at the parish church and the congregation was present.¹⁹ The party consisted of at least one meal (*essen*) and several courses (*gerichten*), including cake, cheese, bread, fruit, marzipan, and (for those with greater resources) meat. Poorer families made do with bread and gruel served in wooden bowls, as they did at other traditional rural celebrations, including engagement parties, weddings, and funerals. There is also some evidence that the poorest people in the community were sometimes invited to community celebrations as a simple form of poor relief. In Speyer, for example, contributions for the poor were sometimes gathered during marriage celebrations through the circulation of a poor relief chest at the beginning of the feast.²⁰ In any case, a standard feature of virtually all German baptismal festivals was liberal beer drinking, and the parish visitation records of Lower Saxony tell us that even families with relatively modest means persisted in enjoying large quantities of the drink well after Lutheran ordinances had required them to limit consumption.²¹

Baptism was closely linked to childbirth, a moment of tremendous danger, but (when the delivery went well) the cause for considerable celebration. Baptismal parties welcomed a young child into the Christian community, and also rewarded friends,

¹⁹ For more information about the time of baptism and baptism's placement in the service, see the 1564 Lüneburg church order in Sehling 6/1, p. 554.

²⁰ Joel Harrington, *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 212.

²¹ For example, the 1577 Visitations in Seesen (a town west of Goslar and the seat of a Special Superintendent for Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel) says that people drank two, three, or more kegs of beer in as many days at baptismal parties. See P. Wolters, "Die Kirchensitationen der Aufbauzeit (1570-1600) in Vormaligen Herzogtum Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel", *JGNK* 44 (1939), p. 77.

relatives, godparents, midwife, and pastor for standing by the family in this period of uncertainty. As a result, the guest list for the occasion must have grown to meet the social expectations required by the family of the baptized, becoming a major focus of clerical attacks on *Kindelbier* excess. Since the early 15th century, in fact, Catholic leaders had been concerned about the increasing number of guests at marriages, baptisms, and funeral feasts, and the number of meals served to the gathered crowd.²² In the eyes of pastors and magistrates before and after the Reformation, this excessive partying was a moral problem that threatened to destabilize society—it induced the young to lewd and lascivious behavior, endangered the finances of the host family, and distracted all involved from the holy nature of the sacrament being celebrated that (in their eyes) should have been the centerpiece of the event.²³

In this sense, both late-medieval Catholic authorities and their evangelical successors were of the same mind about baptismal parties and other popular celebrations: they were seen as potentially dangerous gatherings that did more harm than good. The fundamental difference between Catholic and Lutheran authorities in the 16th century was not that they had different abilities to enforce social discipline in their communities (a point I will take up later in the chapter) but that both Lutheran pastors and magistrates

²² See Karant-Nunn, *Reformation of Ritual*, p. 64, and Harrington, *Reordering Marriage* pp. 123-24. Herzog Heinrich the Younger introduced the last Catholic “morals” ordinance regulating celebrations in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel in 1563, five years before the introduction of the Reformation. See Rauls, *Die Taufe*, pp. 60-1. For medieval legislation that limited wedding and funeral guests in the Italian Renaissance, see Diane Owen Hughes, “Sumptuary Law and Social Relations in Renaissance Italy”, in *Disputes and Settlements*, edited by John Bossy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

²³ For a Lutheran pastor who complained that wedding parties in his village attracted youths who drank, shouted, played games, sang bawdy songs, and then withdrew to neighboring barns for illicit sex, see Thomas Robisheaux, *Rural Society and the Search for Order in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 107.

gradually began to expect different things from the baptismal sponsors in their territories. Lutheran godparents were increasingly asked by the clergy to fulfill significant spiritual roles in the development of their godchildren, but they were not asked to continue the traditional networking and peacemaking tasks that often figured in Catholic spiritual kinship.²⁴ Beyond their liturgical duties at baptism, Lutheran godparents were expected to live upright lives as witnesses for Christ in the community, and this extended not only to educating children about the promises made on their behalf at baptism, but also continuing to support godchildren in their personal spiritual journeys until they reached the age of confirmation (typically 12-14 years of age).²⁵ Catholic confirmation did not include this requirement for godparents, and was in any case not designed as a creedal test that would demonstrate faith to the community; instead, it emphasized the authority and power of the local bishop and brought, through anointing, the precious gifts of the Holy Spirit.²⁶ Although neither Luther, Melancthon, nor Bugenhagen stressed the

²⁴ In many communities, Catholic godparents were often expected to take godchildren as apprentices and to provide other training and assistance. See Bossy, "Blood and Baptism", p. 134.

²⁵ Thus the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel church order (1569) specifically asks godparents to participate in the education of their godchildren and stand by them symbolically when the time comes for the confirmation rite. "Deßgleichen die gevattern auch aufgemündert, ihrem versprechen, so sie bey der heiligen taufe gethan, mit mehrem vleiß in underweisung der kinder, so sie aus der taufe gehoben, nachzusetzen, deßgleichen die kinder merklichen nutzen dardurch empfangen, das sie in dieser handlung des bundes erinnert, den Gott mit ihnen und sie mit Gott aufgericht, und also in ihrem glauben gesterket und versichert... Die kinder, aber, so dem superintendenten fürgestellt, sollen sampt ihren eltern und derselben gevattern an einemb ort, als vor dem fördersten altar stehen, da sie von menniglichen gesehen werden mögen." Sehling 6/1, p. 165.

²⁶ See Bjarne Hareide, *Die Konfirmation in der Reformationzeit: Eine Untersuchung der lutherischen Konfirmation in Deutschland, 1520-1585* (Göttingen, 1966); R. L. DeMolen, "Childhood and the Sacraments in the Sixteenth Century", *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 66 (1975), pp. 59-63.

educational role of godparents in their early thinking on baptism,²⁷ this function developed gradually in Lutheran church orders during the 16th century as confessional rivalries brought urgency to pedagogical issues.²⁸ This responsibility was also highly stressed by Calvin and Bucer, and came to influence Reformed church orders in Germany, France, and England.²⁹

Most popular Catholic treatises about baptism after the Council of Trent chose a different focus, stressing the vital one-time activity that baptism performed in the life of the child, and asking parents and godparents to prepare fully for it. A useful example of this in Lower Saxony is Andrea Proles' short instruction book for parents, pastors, and godparents who were preparing for baptism, published in 1585.³⁰ Proles began his handbook by counseling women to be especially careful during their pregnancies, because they carried unbaptized children in their wombs in need of the life-giving sacrament of baptism for their salvation. He then directed parents to move quickly to the font for baptism after the birth, and instructed priests how to handle the baptism service. In his words for godparents, it is striking how much Proles emphasized planning before the christening, and the relatively small role he assigned parents in subsequent instruction. Before the baptism, godparents were to carefully evaluate each request for

²⁷ Rauls, *Die Taufe*, p. 57.

²⁸ For an early example, see the Brandenburg-Nuremberg Order of Baptism (1533), which asked instructed godparents to teach godchildren the Ten Commandments (to learn God's will), the Apostle's Creed (so that they may receive grace), and the Lord's Prayer (so that they may call upon God for aid). See Aston, *England's Iconoclasts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 346-47 and Ian Green, *The Christian's ABC* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 279.

²⁹ Baptismal sponsors were specifically charged to instruct their godchildren in the Straßburg order of 1540. In Ostfriesland, the Reformed *Microns Ordinancien* (1565) repeats this directive. See Sehling 7/1, p. 614.

³⁰ Andreas Proles, *Ein Christliche Instruction und Underweysung, wess sich Vatter unnd Mutter, Prieser und Gevatter, bey der heyligen Tauff* (Straubing, 1585); HAB A: 117.3 Theol. (1).

sponsorship, agreeing to act as godparent only when the parents seemed truly Christian and energetic in their beliefs. Godparents should also have a good understanding of what baptism accomplished and ‘believe’ that the service is efficacious. In addition, Godparents should demonstrate their respect by picking out proper clothing for the service, as they did when they dressed for the Baptism of Christ or other important church festivals. During the service, godparents were to participate in the exorcism and the responsive acts of the baptism. After the service, Proles asked godparents to teach children the Christian Faith and how to do good works, but he only required this if the parents had lapsed in their duties or died. Unlike contemporary Lutheran treatises, Proles talked about the appropriateness of giving gifts at baptism (he asked godparents to remember the baptism annually), but stressed the spiritual gifts that God has given, rather than the temporal ones. The Three Kings initiated gift-giving when they visited Christ after his birth, and in this tradition the Trinity continues to provide the most valuable gifts at baptism: power, wisdom, and will. The Catholic position on sponsorship was thus well articulated in Lower Saxony during the intensely confessional period of the late Reformation. But there was to be no confusion with Lutheran teaching—Lutheran divines sought an increasingly pedagogical role for sponsors and tried to limit gift-giving that established ‘coercive’ bonds among families.

Kirchenordnungen, Liturgy, and Popular Practice

In Lower Saxony, the church orders that regulated the activities of Lutheran godparents begin with the principality of Braunschweig-Lüneburg in July, 1527. Here

Duke Ernst “the Confessor” introduced the Reformation in his territory by producing a wide-ranging *Artikelbuch* that defined evangelical doctrine and dictated how evangelical ceremonies should be administered in his principality. Luther’s *Revised Order of Baptism* (1526) was apparently too recent for inclusion in the *Artikelbuch*, but the order does ask that all baptisms now be administered “in the German language”, which (as we have seen) was the primary marker of Lutheran baptismal orthodoxy in the early years of the Reformation.³¹ In this section of the article book, godparents were referenced specifically and asked to continue their traditional role as spokesperson for the child in the liturgical responses. These activities included, as they had in the late-medieval church, the liturgical renunciation of Satan, reciting the Apostle’s Creed, holding the child before the font, and announcing the child’s name. The only novelty here was that in Lüneburg the answers were now to be in “guder düdescher sprake”, so both pastors and godparents needed to learn the appropriate vernacular responses to the baptism liturgy.³²

Later that same year, the pressure for evangelical reform became acute in the city of Braunschweig, and a small group of reformers introduced Lutheran theology and preaching at St. Magnus. Here Johann Oldendorp, Heinrich Lampe, and Autor Sander spread evangelical ideas and persuaded the town magistrates to formally introduce Lutheran practices within the city, a religious and political agenda that culminated with

³¹ Sehling 6/1, p. 520. In this case, the “German language” meant a Lüneburg dialect of Low German, which is still preserved in Sehling’s copy. (Thus “döpe” is used instead of “taufe” and “vadderen” instead of “paten”.) For more information about the role of the German vernacular in baptism, see Chapters 1 and 2.

³² “Dewyle denne dyt sacramente so merklick unde hoch ys, ock eyn ytlick vadder thor antwort van des kyndes wegen, ock de ummestendigen tho gemenem kreftigem gebede mede gefördert werden, moth jo solckes nicht anders wen yn guder düdescher sprake by uns vorhandelt werden.” Sehling 6/2, p. 520.

the council's approval of evangelical teaching and the call of Johannes Bugenhagen in 1528 as theologian and reformer.³³ To announce that the time was right for a break with Catholic traditions, the Braunschweig reformers administered two public 'evangelical' baptisms in Advent 1527. The first baptism was administered by pastor Johann Oldendorp at St. Magnus and the reformer Autor Sander stood as godfather for an infant named Autor Kammaker.³⁴ Immediately afterwards, Lampe, the other pastor of St. Magnus, baptized a little girl named Catharina Meyers in a similar vernacular ritual.

This double-christening is significant not only because the reformers chose baptism as the liturgical marker that signaled Lutheran ascendancy, but also because it demonstrates what the Braunschweig divines understood as the proper role for godparents in the early years of the Reformation. Rather than selecting an influential council member or prosperous burger as godparent, the reformers chose Autor Sander, an important religious figure who had studied theology at Leipzig and (it is thought) Wittenberg. Rehtmeyer's chronicle is certainly aware of Sander's prestige—he was a vital figure in the final introduction of the Reformation in Braunschweig and later went on to influence reform movements in Hildesheim and Hanover.³⁵ By using Sander as godparent, the reformers were strongly suggesting baptismal sponsors should perform a spiritual function—not only for the child, but also as witnesses of orthodoxy for the

³³ Gottschalck Kruse introduced evangelical teaching in Braunschweig in 1521. For the history of early Lutheran preaching in Braunschweig, see Philip Julius Rhetmeyer, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Incytae Urbis Brunsvigae, Pars III / Oder: Der berühmten stadt Braunschweig Kirken-Historie / Dritter Theil / Darrin Die Reformations-Historie...* (Braunschweig, 1710), pp. 1-54. For an accessible summary in English, see OER, "Braunschweig", pp. 210-12.

³⁴ See Chapter 3.

³⁵ Rhetmeyer, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, pp. 44, 79, 83-5, 129.

community. By baptizing infants, of course, the reformers also implicitly rejected the competing adult rituals of the Anabaptists.

In 1528, Bugenhagen assisted in the publication of a comprehensive church constitution (*Kirchenordnung*) that regulated baptismal practices in the city of Braunschweig, and in this document he recommended that pastors use Luther's *Revised Order of Baptism* liturgy (1526), which soon spread throughout Germany as an occasional service and found its way into many editions of Luther's *Small Catechism*.³⁶ Beyond a passionate defense of infant baptism and detailed instructions for midwives (see Chapter 4), Bugenhagen spent little effort defining a specific role for evangelical godparents, apparently relying implicitly on the instructions his friend Luther had provided in the baptismal order itself. Outside the walls of Braunschweig, however, the surrounding principality of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel continued under the Catholic leadership of Duke Heinrich the Younger (r. 1514-1568), the so-called "Monster of Braunschweig" so dramatically featured in Luther's famous polemical tract *Against Hanswurst*.³⁷ In 1542, the tables turned for Heinrich the Younger and the Schmalkaldic League attacked and defeated his forces. As part of the resulting religious settlement, the Schmalkaldic League imposed the 1543 *Kirchenordnung* on the principality of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, and this order remained in force until 1547. Bugenhagen again oversaw the composition of the order, and wrote this time about the specific duties of godparents.

³⁶ Sehling 6/1, p. 360. For Braunschweig's regulations about baptism, see Rehtmeyer, p. 47.

³⁷ Martin Luther, *Against Hanswurst* (1541), WA 41:179.

Bugenhagen's particular contribution to the Lutheran dialog about baptismal sponsorship seems to be in relation to emergency baptisms, which (as I described in Chapter 4) took place at home under the supervision of midwives and others at hand during the birth. After the abbreviated ceremony, Lutheran parents were encouraged to take the newly baptized infant to the pastor for a discussion about what had happened. At this time, the pastor made a determination about whether the proper formula was used for the emergency baptism ritual or not. In 1543, Bugenhagen suggested that it was also necessary in this process to include godparents in their traditional role as witness and spiritual guide for the child. Even when children were christened with emergency baptism, the parents were still to ask their godly friends to stand as baptismal sponsors and to announce the name of the child in the community.³⁸ As the child grew up, the baptismal sponsors were also to bear some responsibility for the child's spiritual development, although Bugenhagen was always reluctant to have godparents replace parents as the primary spiritual councilors.³⁹ Although this order lapsed in 1547 with the re-catholization of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, it was re-issued in Grubenhagen (1544)

³⁸ "Wo denn vor groter yle dem kinde nen name gegeben werd, so mach men em hernamals einen namen geven. Id schal, so yd levendich blyfft, alleine thor kercken gebracht werden, dat syne döpe in bywesende der vadderren [godparents], de darma dartho gebeden werden, vam prester confirmert und bevestiget werden, also thovorne gesecht is." Sehling 6/2, p. 69.

³⁹ According to Bugenhagen, who agreed largely with Luther and Melancthon on this issue, godparents only bore spiritual responsibility for their godchildren if their parents died. "Thom lasten schal he vormanen de vadderren, dat se solcker döpe tüchnisse geven willen und so yd geschege, dat de olderen [parents] des kindes dodes halven vorwillen, dat alsdenne de vaddern willichlick umme Gades willen uth christliker leve (so se dar thor steden syn werden) sick des kindes in synen unvorstendliken jaren annemen willen, dat yd den catechismum lere und by Christo blyve.", Ibid, p. 64. See also Bugenhagen's 1529 sermon about baptism and the responsibilities of parents and godparents: Bugenhagen, *Eyn Sermon...der Taufe* (1529); HAB A: 135 Theol. (7)

and Hildesheim (1544), and continued to influence evangelical teaching in Lower Saxony throughout the 16th century.⁴⁰

In the neighboring principality of Calenberg, duchess Elisabeth (widow of Duke Herzog Erich I and daughter of Kurfürsten Joachim I of Brandenburg), introduced Lutheran theology and practice in 1542 by issuing a church order with roots in Brandenburg, her home territory. With the help of Lutheran reformer Antonius Corvinus, Elisabeth republished the Brandenburg *Kirchenordnung* from 1540 in Calenberg-Göttingen. The 1542 Calenberg church order also supported the idea that godparents should be responsible for the spiritual development of godchildren should their parents die unexpectedly or prove unsuitable (*ungeschickt*). However, the Calenberg order also introduced an important elaboration from central Germany: Lutheran godparents should provide their godchildren with spiritual food in preparation for future confirmation, and (when possible) they should stand with their godchildren during the confirmation rite.⁴¹ The spiritual responsibilities of godparents were thus amplified, and Antonius Corvinus emphasized this point in 1545 when he instructed pastors and those in charge of church discipline in Calenberg to disqualify godparents who were not properly educated in the Christian faith or who showed insufficient enthusiasm for their spiritual responsibilities.

⁴⁰ For Grubenhagen 1544, see Sehling 6/2, p. 1023; for Hildesheim 1544, see Sehling 7/2, p. 860-1.

⁴¹ “Von dem catechismo und der confirmation oder firmung: Wenn die getauften kindlein erwachsen und zum verstand komen, sol man sie die zehen gebot, den glauben, das Vater unser und was zum catechismo gehört sampt der auslegung aufs treulichst leren oder leren lassen, und wo hie die elteren gestorben oder so ungeschickt weren, das sie selbs ihre kinder verseumen wölten, so sol der pfarherr mit bitten, flehen und ermanen anhalten, das verseumnis in diesem fall verhut bleibe. Über das sollen die paten [godparents] dazu thun, auf das sie ihrer zusagung, dem priester bey der tauf geschehen, gnug thun und nachkomen.” Sehling 6/2, p. 804.

In 1561, the territorial bishopric (*Stift*) of Hildesheim argued that Luther's Catechism should be used intensively in Peine, Steuerwald, and the surrounding communities to evangelize the laity of this traditionally Catholic stronghold newly converted to Lutheranism.⁴² Specifically, Lutheran pastors were required to withhold the sacraments and other rites of the church from those who could not articulate proper evangelical doctrines; the same people were prohibited from the increasingly crucial position of godparent.⁴³ This ordinance underlined the important spiritual function of godparents in the community, and also suggested indirectly that godparents continued to enjoy popular esteem. The ban on baptismal sponsorship would only be significant if this were a role to which status and respect accrued.

The Braunschweig-Lüneburg *Kirchenordnung* of 1564 provides the first comprehensive treatment of godparent obligations and privileges in Lower Saxony. This church order is significant not only for its information about baptismal sponsorship, but also for its exhaustive coverage of many vital theological and liturgical currents in the mature Lutheran tradition.⁴⁴ The Braunschweig-Lüneburg church order identified

⁴² The Stift Hildesheim church order was authorized by the Lutheran duke Adolf von Schleswig-Holstein, Grave of Oldenburg and Delmenhorst, and was edited by Lutheran reformer Joachim Mörlin (1514-1571), who had studied in Wittenberg and worked as the Lutheran Superintendent of Arnstadt, Göttingen, and Braunschweig. Mörlin published his own catechism in 1547 (reissued 1560), and some of his material appears in the Stift Hildesheim church order. For the text of the 1561 order, see Sehling 7/2, pp. 767-91.

⁴³ "Wer alsdan grob und ungeschickt erfunden wirt und sich gar zu Gottes wort nicht schicken wil, dem wirt der pfarher vormüge seines von Gott auferlegten ampts kain sacrament reichen, als ainen ungleubigen haiden, bey kainer tauf lassen under der christlichen gemain zu gevattern stehen, nicht gestatten, das er aineb braut zu kirchen lait oder füre, und entlich, wo er daruber also stirbet, nicht lassen auf den kirchoff under die Christen begraben werden, dan das haist einen fur ainen haiden halten.", Sehling 7/2, p. 784.

⁴⁴ As I mentioned in Chapter 3, the 1564 Braunschweig-Lüneburg church order became the model for the 1569 Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel order, which spread rapidly throughout Lower

Luther's Revised Baptismal Order as the primary liturgical source for Lutheran baptisms, and spelled out the liturgical and pedagogical obligations of the godparents in baptism. Godparents were to be knowledgeable Christians in good standing, and were asked to assist their godchildren in the rudiments of the Christian faith and evangelical belief. In a dramatic strengthening of the exorcism rubric that began the Lutheran baptismal service, the Braunschweig-Lüneburg church order required that any child baptized at home be brought to the church for conditional baptism, so that the godparents could reject Satan and demonstrate their Lutheran orthodoxy.⁴⁵ Thus, the 1564 order reflects the growing tension between Lutheran and Reformed groups about the position of exorcism as an adiaphron in baptism, and the intense interest by Protestant groups in the precise wording of the competing baptismal liturgies.⁴⁶

A side-effect of the confessional controversies was that parents in one confession were not allowed to select baptismal sponsors that were members of another faith or confession. This was true for Lutherans, Calvinists, Catholics, and the more radical Protestant sects (who typically rejected godparents altogether).⁴⁷ In particular, Lutheran

Saxony. The 1564 Braunschweig-Lüneburg church order includes ideas from earlier sources in Lüneburg and Lower Saxony, as well as the 1552 Mecklenburger church order. See Sehling 5, p. 204.

⁴⁵ "Und wenn man die gebet sampt den exorcismis gesprochen und die kinder durch die paten [godparents] dem teufel entsagen und des glaubens bekentnis hat thun lassen, alsdenn teufe der pfarherr die kinder on alle condition in namen des Vaters und des Sons und des heiligen Geistes." Sehling 6/1, p. 560.

⁴⁶ Lutheran godparents without completely "orthodox" understandings of baptism might thus be rejected on theological or pedagogical grounds. For example, in 1560 a pastor at the University of Jena was denied the opportunity to be a baptismal sponsor because he had a "Flavian" understanding of the catechism. He was later removed from the University. I thank Robert Kolb for bringing this episode to my attention at the Herzog August Bibliothek.

⁴⁷ Princes often made exceptions to these guidelines for diplomatic and strategic reasons, as I discuss in Chapter 6.

theologians believed that godparents from other confessions would teach the catechism incorrectly, if at all—a problem that would be accentuated if the children’s parents were to die. Tilemann Heshusius (1527-1588), a Lutheran preacher who was no stranger to theological controversy, described this problem in a book published while he was teaching at the University of Jena in 1573.⁴⁸ Heshusius introduced his discussion about godparents by commenting on Jesus’ instructions in Matthew that “pearls should not be thrown before the swine”⁴⁹ and Paul’s words in II Corinthians 6 that “the godly should separate themselves from the ungodly.”⁵⁰ With these principles in mind, he advised pastors to enforce church discipline by refusing baptism to parents who were “godless” or persisted in erroneous beliefs, and by rejecting godparents who were members of competing religious groups:

How can a true pastor allow a godless enemy of Christ to stand as a godfather at holy baptism? Pastors and ministers should not allow people known to be godless, Papists, Calvinists, Anabaptists, or people who have committed grievous sins, to stand as godparents at Holy Baptism.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Tilemannus Heshusius, *Ursach und Grundt ein trewer Pfarrher...als Gotteslesterer, halsstarrigen Papisten, uberueten Calvinisten...bey der Hei. Tauffe nicht solle Gevatter stehen lassen...* (Jhena, 1573); HAB A: 125.10 Quod. (2).

⁴⁹ Matthew 7:6.

⁵⁰ “Als erstlich bestelhet der heilige geist durch den Apostel Paulum / das man offentliche Feinde Gottes von der Gemeine Christi sol absondern. 2. Corinth. 6. Ziehet nicht am frembden Joch / mit den ungleubigen / denn was hat die Gerechtigkeit fur genies mit der Ungerechtigkeit. Was hat das Liecht fur gemeinschaftt mit der Finsternis...” (First, the Holy Ghost appointed through the Apostle Paul, that the godly should separate themselves from the ungodly, 2nd Corinthians 6[:14]. Do not be yoked together with unbelievers, for what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? What does the light have in common with the darkness...?) Ibid., B2-B3.

⁵¹ “Wie kan denn ein trewer Pfarrherr einen Gottlosen Feind Christi / bey der heiligen Tauff Gevatter stehen lassen...? [...] Es kan auch niemand verneinen / das der Pfarrher oder Seelsorger / so wissentlich einen Gotteslesterer / Papisten / Calvinisten oder Wiederteuffer / oder sonst einen halsstarrigen unbusfertigen groben Sünder ohne Busse bey der heiligen Tauffe Gevatter stehen lesset...”, Ibid., B4.

The 1569 *Kirchenordnung* for Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel continued in the tradition of the 1564 Braunschweig-Lüneburg order (repeating much of the original material about baptism) but also added a few additional requirements for godparents in other sections of the ordinance. The compilation of the 1569 Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel order was completed under the direction of Superintendent Martin Chemnitz for Duke Julius of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, who rapidly introduced Lutheran reforms in his territory after the death of his father, Duke Heinrich the Younger, in 1568. In addition to the 1564 regulation about using godparents and the exorcism rubric at conditional baptisms, Chemnitz included a specific statement in the instructions for confirmation that godparents were to stand with the godchildren and their parents at the future confirmation rite, to demonstrate their joint participation in the education of the children.⁵² At this point, we see the full participation of godparents in the spiritual development of their godchildren—an idea introduced in Lower Saxony by Antonius Corvinus and fully systematized by Martin Chemnitz.

The 1569 Order has stronger language than the previous orders about the spiritual suitability of those surrounding the font at baptism,⁵³ and this is supported by a letter from Martin Chemnitz to pastors in the principality regarding church discipline—people in the territory who were currently subject to church discipline or excommunication could

⁵² “Die kinder aber, so dem superintendenten fürgestellt, sollen sampt ihren eltern und derselben gevattern [godparents] an einem ort, als vor dem fördersten altar stehen, da sie von menniglichen gesehen werden mögen.” Sehling 6/1, p. 165.

⁵³ “Es sollen auch nicht unverstendige kinder, leichtfertige personen oder gottlose leute zu gefattern bey der taufe zu stehen gestattet werden.” Sehling 6/1, p. 126.

not bring children to the font for baptism or participate in other rites of the church.⁵⁴ Since this regulation applied to both parents and godparents, it created the potential for children of the excommunicated to remain unbaptized and therefore outside the Christian community—the sins of recalcitrant fathers thus being visited on their children. With the full introduction of the Lutheran Reformation in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel in 1568-69, the principality experienced the first systematic attempts to regulate baptism via the mechanisms of church discipline, an idea specifically repeated in the Lower Saxon orders of Stadt Lüneburg (1575) and Hoya (1581). Furthermore, the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel order asked parents to register all baptisms in parish registers with the names of the appointed godparents—there was now to be an official record of sacramental transactions in the community that allowed pastors and superintendents to monitor the progress of children, parents, and sponsors in their baptismal vows.⁵⁵ As a “performance test” the Oldenburg *Kirchenordnung* (1573) asked pastors to check the parish register when children returned for confirmation, to see which godparents looked after the spiritual development of their godchildren.⁵⁶

Duke Julius did not always follow the rules about carefully screening godparents for his own children, however. In a fascinating episode analyzed recently by Tara Nummedal, Duke Julius selected a mysterious alchemist and courtier named Count Carl

⁵⁴ “Item, daß man solche personen zur taufe nich laße stehen, die braut fuhren oder bei andern christlichen werken sein, so in der gemeine Gottes öffentlich verrichtet werden.” *Bestallungsordnung für Chemnitz* (1567), in Sehling 6/1, p. 465.

⁵⁵ Godparents promised to This rubric was repeated in Grafschaft Oldenburg (1573) and Marienhafter (1593). See Mechthild Wiswe, *Geburt und Taufe im Volksleben der Vergangenheit* (Braunschweig: Veröffentlichungen des Braunschweigischen Landesmuseums, 1982), p. 13; Sehling 7/1, p. 709; Sehling 7/2, p. 1101.

⁵⁶ “Die gevatter in gewisser gedechtnis als zeugen der empfangenen tauf gehalten.” Sehling 7/2, p. 1101.

von Oettingen as the godparent for his son Joachim Karl, born April 29, 1573— even before Julius met the man.⁵⁷ (Figure 5-1 shows Duke Julius, his wife Dutchess Hedwig, and their 11 children.)⁵⁸ The absent alchemist was apparently the close confidant and lover of Anna Maria Zieglerin (c. 1550-1575), who had recently become attached to Julius' court. Zieglerin convinced Julius that her lover would come to Wolfenbüttel soon and unlock many alchemical secrets for the duke, including how to make and use the elusive 'Philosopher's Stone'. It was a considerable shock to all when Zieglerin confessed to fabricating the story of her imagined lover (who didn't actually exist) so that she could gain standing and prestige in the Wolfenbüttel court. In 1574, Anna Zieglerin and two of her accomplices were accused of sorcery, murdering a courier, the attempted poisoning of Duchess Hedwig, and copying keys to the Duke's chambers with intent to steal private documents. In addition, the three were accused of failing to complete their promised alchemical works and of fabricating numerous lies about the fictitious Count Carl von Oettingen, including that he was the illegitimate son of Paracelsus and that he had turned down a marriage proposal from Queen Elizabeth of England because of his love for Anna Zieglerin.⁵⁹ In February 1575, the three alchemists were publicly executed for their crimes in Wolfenbüttel. Julius' son Joachim Karl (d. 1615) eventually became the provost of a Lutheran cathedral in Strasbourg, where he furthered his father's interests

⁵⁷ Tara E. Nummedal, *Gender, Authority and the Alchemical Career of Anna Maria Zieglerin (c. 1550-1575)*, unpublished paper presented Nov. 4, 2000 at the Vancouver B.C. History of Science Society conference. [0] (I thank Tara Nummedal for providing me a copy of her paper and discussing the details of her work.) See also A. Rhamm, *Die betrüglichen Goldmacher am Hofe des Herzogs Julius von Braunschweig: Nach den Processakten* (Wolfenbüttel: Julius Zwißler, 1883).

⁵⁸ The two girls wearing white gowns in this picture died in childhood.

⁵⁹ Nummedal, *Gender, Authority and the Alchemical Career of Anna Maria Zieglerin*, p. 1.

in Lutheran reform.⁶⁰ In addition to demonstrating how a creative woman used alchemy and deception to gain influence at an important German court and mitigate the tensions there, this episode highlights some of the dangers of selecting baptismal sponsors without properly investigating the candidate's background—the godparent might turn out to be dangerous, politically problematic, or an outright fabrication.

Martin Chemnitz and Duke Julius were eager to regulate many other aspects of Lutheran practice in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, but they took little interest in controlling the number of godparents allowed in Lutheran baptisms—a popular “abuse” that many contemporary reformers and magistrates criticized in their communities.⁶¹ In the Ostfriesland *Polizeiordnung* of 1545, the rubric “Van de kyndelberen” already suggested that the maximum number of godparents permitted at a baptism should be two or three, and this directive was repeated in East Friesland in 1573 and 1593.⁶² A few neighboring principalities in Lower Saxony repeated directives about the number of baptismal sponsors in the 16th century—Hoya (1573/74), Vöder (1582, but with a maximum of five), and Marienhafer (1593)—but in general precise limitations were avoided by the former Guelf principalities of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, Braunschweig-Lüneburg, Calenberg, and Grubenhagen until secular edicts challenging baptismal “abuses” surfaced in the early 17th century. Martin Chemnitz himself

⁶⁰ Wilhelm Karl von Isenburg, ed., *Europäische Stammtafeln*, Neue Folge, Band 1: Die Deutschen Staaten (Marburg, 1980), Table 63B.

⁶¹ To provide a scriptural basis for limiting the number of godparents, some Lutherans used Deuteronomy 19:15 [NIV]: “One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” See Sehling 6/2, p. 1182.

⁶² “Wanneer de kinder gedopet werden, schal nemant mer dan twe eder dre gefadderen upt hogeste darto vorderen.” Sehling 7/1, p. 410

emphasized the spiritual characteristics of baptismal sponsors, but was apparently less concerned with altering the more traditional social obligations associated with baptismal sponsorship. So, although he “led by example” by standing with two other godparents in his most famous use of baptismal sponsorship, he didn’t insist on a specific number or gender mix, and was also little concerned with the proliferation of gift-giving “abuses” for which baptismal sponsors would later be held accountable in the decades preceding the Thirty Years War.⁶³

The year 1569 marks a watershed, then, in the establishment of church orders that regulated baptismal sponsorship in Lower Saxony, a collection of principalities that, for the most part, accepted Lutheran teaching later than other German territories and was influenced significantly by confessional controversies. Yet the major responsibilities of Lutheran godparents were now fully established. Godparents were to be selected from Christians in good standing in the community, and were to perform their required interrogative roles in the standard Lutheran baptismal liturgy. Should the parents die, the sponsors were to take over educational, and perhaps also physical, responsibility for the child’s well-being. As confessional controversies heightened, the Lutheran reformers insisted on regular support from the godparents in religious education, including teaching the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostle’s Creed, the catechism, and standing by their godchildren at confirmation. Godparents were to be registered with their godchildren in the parish records, and in many places a specific limitation of three godparents was insisted upon. Finally, if children were baptized outside of the church in an emergency situation, the

⁶³ For my discussion of Chemnitz’s influential role as godparent for Princess Anna Ursula in 1572 at the court of Duke Wilhelm of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, see Chapter 6.

godparents were to bring the children to the church for an interview with the pastor and a conditional baptism service that emphasized the exorcism rubric in the liturgy, a vital marker of orthodox Lutheran beliefs in the middle decades of the 16th century. After 1569, most of the church orders in Lower Saxony followed these major themes or played slight variations on them. In Hoya, for example, more godparents were allowed to illegitimate (*unehelichen*) children in 1581, because it was thought that these “unwanted” infants were especially vulnerable and needed extra spiritual support to establish them squarely in the community.⁶⁴ But the simple establishment of *Kirchenordnungen* did not equate with effective discipline and enforcement—far from it. As I shall argue later in this chapter, godparent reform required stricter secular edicts to establish an effective system of deterrents, and even with the support of the developing “early modern state”, most secular morals courts could establish only limited control over the diverse towns and villages in their domain.

***Kindelbier* and Godparents Gifts**

In 1617, Michael Pharetratus, a Lutheran theologian in Jena, wrote that the gravest dangers facing the blessed sacrament of baptism were irresponsible godparents who either ignored their godparent responsibilities altogether or simply spent their time passing out gifts and drinking at the baptismal banquet. These practices were, Pharetratus argued, impoverishing the fragile finances of families, encouraging lascivious activity, and making godchildren and their families beholden to the baptismal sponsors

⁶⁴ Pastors were told to encourage biological fathers to adopt these children and bring them to the font, except in suspected cases of incest, when the matter should be brought to the local superintendent for consultation. See Sehling 6/2, pp. 1182-84.

(who often continued their gift-giving for many years).⁶⁵ Pharetratus' advice for godparents, which is organized as a dialog between a teacher and common man, was not simply an isolated theologian's outburst against baptismal abuses. Several contemporary pastors and magistrates found baptismal parties and gift-giving particularly loathsome, and worked systematically to suppress them in sermons, treatises, church orders, and sumptuary laws, a process that intensified as Protestant legal reforms swept through the larger German territories.⁶⁶ That this attack on the social obligations of godparents did not happen in the early years of the Reformation is perhaps a testimony to the ambiguous position that godparents had in Lutheran theology and ritual. Godparents were considered important witnesses at the baptism, but their role was not clearly defined in the life of their godchildren afterwards. But after the mature development of Lutheran church orders and the conciliatory Formula of Concord (1577), leaders in Lower Saxony busied themselves not with the further development of Lutheran orthodoxy, but with the formulation of legal statutes and mechanisms that could enforce the now dominant practices of the Reformers. This included the idea that Lutheran godparents should perform roles that were spiritually oriented and less concerned with secular obligations than had traditionally been the case.

⁶⁵ Pharetratus, *Von der Gevatterschafft*, B3.

⁶⁶ For other contemporary and later discussions about godparents and their influence, see Georgius Grabow, *Aller Gevattern Schuldige Pflicht / so wol bey / als nach der Tauffe / beschrieben / und mit Consens und Approbation der hochlöbl. Theol. Facult. Zu Leipzig* (Leipzig, 1683), HAB Yj 32 Helmst. (2) 12°; Ioanne Godoft. Krausius, *Pecuniam Lustriam oder Gevatter-Geld* (Wittenberg, 1728), HAB Li 4600. For a catholic view of parent and godparent responsibilities, see Andreas Proles, *Ein Christliche Instruction und Underweysung, wess sich Vatter unnd Mutter, Prieser und Gevatter, bey der heyligen Tauff* (Straubing, 1585), HAB A: 117.3 Theol. (1).

The first *Kirchenordnung* to address the problem of post-baptismal *Kindelbier* parties appeared in 1535 in the Lutheran Grafschaft of Ostfriesland in a rubric discussing excesses at marriage parties and other celebrations. Here the parents of the bride and the baptized child were told to limit their celebrations in accordance with an Imperial statute issued in 1530 by Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.⁶⁷ The Reformers thus supported the soundness of late-medieval sumptuary legislation stretching back to the early 15th century in Lower Saxony—excess partying was not to be tolerated, since it generally challenged the order and financial wellbeing of German communities. In 1545, however, a second “Police Order” (*Polizeiordnung*) in Ostfriesland provided more specific details about how *Kindelbier* parties should be regulated. In this law code, the rich (*ryken und egenarveden*) were allowed at most two meals and the middling folk (*myddelmetigen*) one meal, with at most five or six courses. Importantly, the celebration of all *Kindelbier* parties (*Kinnelbeergeven*, in the local dialect) was to last only one day, curbing the popular custom that extended the festivities upwards of two or three days and might feature many kegs of beer.⁶⁸ The penalty for breaking one of these laws was a fine of 10

⁶⁷ Sehling 7/1, p. 392. The 1530 Imperial sumptuary statute was highly credible and many evangelical communities chose to reissue it. For example, when the magistrates of the Imperial city of Lübeck chose to re-issue an edict that regulated weddings and baptismal feasts in 1612, it described the direct line of descent for the edict from the 1530 Imperial decree and its intermediaries published in 1548, 1577, and 1605. See *Ordnung Eines Erbaren Rathes der Käyserlichen Freyen unnd des heiligen Reichs Statt Lubeck / Darnach sich hinführo dieser Statt Bürgere unnd Einwohner bey Verlöbnussen / Hochzeiten / in Kleydungen / Kindbetten / Gevatterschafften / Begräbnussen.../ verhalten sollen* (Lübeck, 1612), A2-A3; HAB Gm 2819. See also the 1587 Vörder *Polizeiordnung*, Sehling 7/1, p. 26.

⁶⁸ “Wanneer de kinder gedopet werden, schal nemant mer dan twe eder dre gefaddern upt hogeste darto vorderen, daerto de ryken und egenarveden nycht mer ore frunde, dan up dat hogeste bi twe verkante discke sitten mogen, und de myddelmetigen yn steden, flecken und dorperen nicht mer als bi enen disck und nicht mer als 5 eder 6 gerichte [courses].” Sehling 7/1, p. 410.

gold Gulden (*Goltgulden*), which would be collected and enforced by the local ecclesiastical court.⁶⁹

In Erzstift Bremen, a 1580 church order repeated these regulations, but in this instance there was a specific limit placed on the number of people that could attend the *Kindelbier*—the parents could invite a maximum of 10 or 12 people to the parents' house after the baptism, and this group should be limited to close friends and the baptismal sponsors. Christians were told to place their faith in the “great work that God has done” and not try to impress the entire community with an excessive public feast.⁷⁰ Two years later, in Herrschaft Jever, the comprehensive police ordinance “Wegen der hochzeit, kindelbiern, kirchgängen, kirchmeßen, gesellschaften und beysammendenkunften” was issued by Johan, Lord of Jever, Grave of Oldenburg and Delmenhorst, to enforce the 1573 Jever *Kirchenordnung*. In addition to a 10 Gulden penalty levied on the father if his children were not baptized promptly, there were specific regulations for *Kindelbier* feasts levied by social class. The rich (*riekisten*) were allowed to invite 30 people, the middle class (*mittelmessigsten*) 20 people, and the poor (*armen*) 12 people, with respective penalties of 30, 20, and 12 Gulden for exceeding the limit. Since Jever was a northern Herrschaft with long periods of summer daylight, specific regulations were given for the duration of the party, which could only last one day: In the summer, the *Kindelbier* could

⁶⁹ “Men schal ock de geselschup nicht lenger als den enen dach to gaste noegen noch holden, und den yd mogelick to reysen, den avent ein yder weder yn sine behusynghe sick geve, bi pena 10 goltgulden, als hirvor gerort is.” Ibid. The ordinance was reissued in 1573 and 1593.

⁷⁰ “Der kindelbiere halben solten die eltern, wan ein kind getauft wirt, Gott vor seine gabe und grosse woltat danken und ihme das kind befelen. So dan jemand kindelbier halten wolte, der solte es messig machen und allein die gevattern und etliche negste oder guete freunde, nicht uber zehen oder zwolf personen, pitten und nicht mehr alß ein malzeit geben.” Sehling 7/1, p. 24.

last until sunset, and in the winter, until 8:00 p.m.⁷¹ In addition, a specific limitation of four courses was permitted, and this limitation could not be supplemented by bread, butter, or cheese unless these items were considered courses in the meal.

To impress upon communities the importance of obedience to the established *Kirchenordnung* rubrics, or to establish appropriate regulations if the church orders did not regulate gift-giving and *Kindelbier* traditions (as in the principality of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel), princes and town magistrates began to systematically introduce secular legislation to enforce baptismal regulations that would have no ambiguity in the ecclesiastical courts of Lower Saxony. (The bodies that typically handled cases related to public morality and sumptuary matters.) The city of Braunschweig had ordered that baptisms should be administered using godparents and a German or Latin liturgy as early as 1528,⁷² but the first baptismal edict by a Lutheran prince in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel was not issued until Duke Julius ordered in 1570 that parents must baptize their children within 3 days of birth or be assessed a fine of 1 Braunschweig Mark.⁷³ Chemnitz and Duke Julius produced no further legislation against *Kindelbier* excess (as I

⁷¹ “Eß sollen auch die kindelbier nur den einen tagk über gehalten werden, und sollen die riekisten nur dreissig, die mittelmessigsten zweynzig und die armen nur zwolf personen darzu fürdern bey derselben peen, und sol die gesellschaft in sommertägen mit der sonnen undergank und den winter zu act schlegen am abende aufgehoben und das bier zugeschlossen oder zugeschlagen werden bey derselbigen peen.” (The child beer should only take one day, and the rich people should invite only 30 people, the middle class only 20 people, and the poor only 12 people, or be assigned the same penalty. And the community should stop in the evening when the sun sets in the summer or at 8 p.m. in the winter, and the beer should be closed then, or the same penalty.) Sehling 7/2, p. 1257.

⁷² “Das Sacrament der Heil. Tauffe / als das erste zeichen der Einführung Christlicher Gemeine / soll von den Predigern Worten / wie es die Eltern des Kindes begehren / gebraucht werden / auf daß die Gevattern mit den beystehen den hören und vernehmen mögen / was sie dar vor das kind glauben und geloben.” Rehtmeyer, *Kirchen-Historie, Dritter Theil*, p. 47.

⁷³ LKAB, V. 448.

have suggested, this was not their priority), but in 1594, perhaps due to concerns in neighboring territories, Duke Julius's son Duke Heinrich Julius issued a comprehensive edict in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel regulating the content of baptismal festivals, down to the types of food that could be served and the number of guests that could be invited. The scope of each baptismal party was determined by the social standing of the parents who were baptizing a child, and the edict was especially concerned with rural groups that were presumably out of the reach of the more powerful urban consistories. For an established farmer or *Vollspänner*, not more than 18 guests could be invited; for a less-successful *Halbspänner*, not more than 15 guests could be invited; for a *Köter* (cur) or unemployed person (*Häusling*), not more than 12 guests were permitted at the baptismal party. In addition, the edict was clear that these totals included the midwife, sponsors, pastor, and other close friends who were mandatory guests at the baptism. And not more than one meal and one round of alcohol was to be served to the group. For each person over the limit, a penalty of 10 Mariengroschen would be levied by the secular authorities.⁷⁴

In 1576, Stiftes Verden (Bremen), an ecclesiastical district under the secular and spiritual control of Bishop Eberhard, published an ordinance against excessive celebrations at weddings, baptisms, *Fastnacht* parties, and other events where conspicuous consumption threatened drunkenness and community stability. In this edict there were specific attacks on beer drinking by magistrates in the community, and orders following in 1578 and 1584 specifically prohibited selling beer in the Verden whenever

⁷⁴ NSLHAW, Abt. Sammlung 40, Nr. 933 and Nr. 944.

worship services were being held.⁷⁵ In this way beer drinking itself grew more loathsome in the eyes of certain evangelical leaders, and the trend continued in neighboring Oldenburg in 1606 when a police ordinance was issued that regulated the amount of beer that could be consumed at post-baptismal *Kindelbier* parties. The Oldenburg order said that at most 10 people could be invited to the celebration (this stood for all social classes), and the party participants could consume no more than two kegs (*tun*) of beer [!] during the day long party. A penalty of twenty gold Gulden was established for those who exceeded this limit.⁷⁶

In addition to regulating baptismal celebrations, secular edicts attempted to clamp down on excessive gift giving by baptismal sponsors. Godparent gifts were connected to baptismal parties and economic considerations; those godparents who gave larger gifts expected more significant parties and future consideration from families. Giving lavishly was a source of prestige for godparents and the community, but the size of gift was naturally related to the social position of godparent and the baptized child's family. The traditional *Taufpfennig* was a monetary gift donated soon after the baptism, varying in size from one or two silver coins to a *Reichsthaler* or more.⁷⁷ However, godparents also typically brought practical gifts of food to the home, including bread, cheese, meat, and

⁷⁵ Sehling 7/1, p. 141.

⁷⁶ "...darzu noch aus zehen heußern man und frau zu einer erlichen gastunge am tage der kindertaufe eingeladen, mit denselben nur ein tag in fröligkeit volnbracht, auch dabey zum hochsten uber zwen tun bier nicht augetrunken werden, alles bey poen zwanzig goltgulden." *Policeyordnung Wegen der Hochzeiten, Kindtaufen, Begrabnissen, Kirchgäng und Kirchmessen de ao.1616*, Sehling 7/2, p. 1173.

⁷⁷ In the late 17th century, wealthier godparents in Lower Saxony also began giving their godchildren baptismal certificates (*Patenbriefes*) and special commemorative coins called *Tauftalers*, which bore pictures of Christ being baptized in the Jordan river and short bible passages. See Wiswe, *Geburt und Taufe im Volksleben*, pp. 7-14.

sweet confections. These gifts were designated primarily for the mother and infant, but were distributed also to children, maids, the midwife, and others in the home if the godparents wanted to emphasize their generosity.⁷⁸ Later baptismal edicts also mention that numerous “abuses” had arisen among godparents because they persisted in giving gifts year after year to their godchildren, and parents often sent their children to their godparents at Christmas time for a special gift.⁷⁹ Accordingly, gifts from godparents were not considered one time acts, but sources of occasional support that could last into adulthood. In households with many children and several supporting godparents, the income from this system of benevolence could be significant, and it is no wonder that parents continually sought out the most affluent godparent connections and sought to increase the overall number and influence of baptismal sponsors.

The largess of godparents depended less on their gender than on their financial standing in the community.⁸⁰ In Braunschweig, for example, a *Bürgertochter* named

⁷⁸ The practice was also popular outside of Lower Saxony. For a Nuremberg edict that regulates such behavior, see *Kindtauff Ordnung / Welchermassen es inn der Statt Nürnberg ...* (Nürnberg, 1612), A4-B1; HAB A: 61.5 Pol. (12).

⁷⁹ This practice is described in a 1649 edict published by the Braunschweig city magistrates and several books about godparents and their obligations. See *Eines E. Rahts Stadt Braunschweig*, NSLHAW, Abt. Sammlung. 40, Nr. 2277. For prohibitions of annual godparent gifts in Brandenburg, see *Des Durchleuchtigsten Fürsten und Herrn / Herrn Friederich Wilhelms / Marggraffen zu Brandenburg... / Constitutio und Verordnung / ... / bey den Hochzeiten / Kindtauffen / Gefatterschafften / Frawenkirchgängen / und Begräbnissen...* (Halberstadt, 1651), pp. B1-B2; HAB A: 49.7 Jur. (6).

⁸⁰ There was one important sponsorship issue related to gender, however. Reformers generally suggested that an equal number of male and female godparents be selected as godparents, and husband and wife pairs were often chosen. However, because church orders typically set the number of sponsors at an unequal three or five, an exact balance was not possible, and the ‘extra’ godparent was often selected to match the sex of the child. Thus Friedrich Wilhelm’s Brandenburg edict of 1651 commanded that if the child was a boy, there should be two or three men and one or two women selected as sponsors, and if the child were a girl, there should be one or two men and two or three women selected as sponsors. *Herrn Friederich Wilhelms / ... Kindtauffen / Gefatterschafften ...*, B1.

Margarete Tottenrodt acted as godmother for several families in the surrounding community between 1629 and 1641, and paid many of the traditional baptismal expenses. In Lehdorf in 1629, for example, Tottenrodt gave the midwife four *Gute Groschen* for delivering the baby and caring for the mother afterwards, and her total expenses for the christening (including gifts for the infant and staples for the house and baptismal party) amounted to 27 *Gute Groschen*.⁸¹ In 1630, Tottenrodt paid a midwife in Leiferde bei Gifhorn three *Gute Groschen* for her services, and in 1637 Tottenrodt spent one *Reichstaler* and nine *Gute Groschen* to support a family at baptism.⁸² Margarete Tottenrodt was a citizen of means who could afford to assist several families with their childbirth and baptismal expenses, and it is important to see how comprehensive that support was on many occasions. Despite the efforts of the Lutheran reformers, godparents continued to support their godchildren through baptismal gifts.

Social Discipline and the Thirty Years' War

In the 17th century, the principality of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, which had been rather slow to embrace strict regulations about baptismal excess, demonstrated its considerable anxiety about all forms of celebration by passing several strongly-worded edicts for the principality. The cause of this consternation is probably less related to theological developments in the Lutheran church than to the tremendous anxiety all governing bodies felt about public order during the tense years of the Thirty Years War

⁸¹ A *Groschen* is a coin worth 10 *Pfennig*.

⁸² For the archival sources describing Margarete Tottenrodt's activities, see Stadtarchiv Braunschweig: H V Nr. 35. The role of the midwife at birth and in post-partum activities is intimately connected with baptism and churching rituals, and is discussed in Chapter 4.

(1618-1648). This conflict was the confessional struggle *par excellence*, and it was fought largely in the crucial principality of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel during the years 1622 to 1630. The political and military fortunes of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel during these years were marked increasingly by incompetence, frustration, and failure.⁸³ Duke Frederick Ulrich (r. 1591-1634) was both at the mercy of the great Catholic powers, the ambiguous policies of his uncle, King Christian IV of Denmark, and quarrels with his brother Christian the Younger (1599-1626), a reckless Protestant military commander who fought independently and drew combatants to Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel despite the protests of his brother and uncle. In 1622, Christian was defeated soundly by the Catholic League near Höchst in Hesse and by Spanish troops at Fleurus, Belgium. He then marched with his troops into North Germany and established a fighting position in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, where he and other Protestant forces fought the Catholic League until 1629.

It is probably no coincidence that in January 1623, at precisely the time that the focus of the war shifted to Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, a strict order against public celebration was passed by Duke Frederick Ulrich to maintain order in the principality. This edict, which exists today in the Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv Wolfenbüttel, clamps down hard on private celebrations, including weddings, baptisms, and funerals, which (in the minds of authorities) were at best morally ambiguous and financially draining, and at

⁸³ For a useful summary of events in English, see Werner Arnold, "Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and the Thirty Years War", in *A Treasure House of Books: The Library of Duke August of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel* (Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek, 1998), pp. 29-42. For general accounts, see Georges Pagès, *The Thirty Years War, 1618-1648*, trans. David Maland and John Hooper (New York, 1970), and C. V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years' War* (London: Routledge, 1989).

worst seedbeds of unrest and rebellion. In terms of baptismal festivals, the edict states that it was strictly forbidden (*abgeschafft*) to invite *any* guests to the house before or after the baptism—only the family and godparents could attend the party.⁸⁴ This applied to commemorative meals and the mother’s churching ceremony as well (see Chapter 4). The punishment for inviting guests was set at a startling 100 Talars, and if the host could not pay he would be imprisoned and fed only bread and water. The stated motivation for the edict was to maintain the prosperity of the community, which could only be achieved through “pure religion and a good police order”.⁸⁵ The concerns of Duke Frederick Ulrich were not unjustified; according to statements drawn up by the baliwicks (*Ämter*) and village communes, the war years between 1625 and 1627 in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel inflicted damages totaling 873,934 Reichsthalers.⁸⁶ The experience took a hard financial and mental toll on the population; in Wolfenbüttel, the capital itself was seized and made a garrison for Danish troops.

Duke Herzog August the Younger (1579-1666) began his reign over Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel in 1635, and began the long process of rebuilding the principality. Although the focus of the Thirty Years War had moved elsewhere, Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel was still occupied by foreign troops and much of the principality lay devastated. In 1636, he published his own edict about wedding, baptism,

84 “Das hinfürters nicht allein allhie bey unserm Hofflager / sondern auch im ganzen Lande / alle Gästerey vor un nach gehaltenem Kindtauff abgeschafft.” *Des Durchleuchtigen.../ Herrn Friederich Ulrich Hertzog zu Braunschweig und Lueneburg, etc. Christ: und ernstliche Ordnung, wie es in Staedten, Flecken und Doerffern, dieses gantzen Fuerstenthumbs Braunschweig, bey Hochzeit, Kindtauff und Begraebnissen hinfuero gehalten werden sol* (Braunschweig, 1623). NSLHAW, Abt. Sammlung 40, Nr. 1567; also HAB A: 57.8 Pol. (44).

85 “So nur im rechten Wesen verbleiben und prosperirn sollen / mit wahrer reiner Religion und guter Pollicey Ordnung müssen gefasset seyn...” Ibid.

86 Arnold, *Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel*, p. 33; NSLHAW, 1 Alt 11, Nr. 18-19.

and funeral celebrations, which made specific reference to the 1623 edict and suggested the soundness of limiting baptismal celebrations. Babies were to be baptized within 6 days at the penalty of 15 Reichsthalers, a maximum of three godparents were allowed, and the sponsors were not allowed to give any baptismal gifts (*gevatterngelde*).

Regarding the post-baptismal feast, one meal of three or four courses was permitted, but there were to be no confections or other costly items. Again, the penalty for non-compliance was harsh—for holding a bigger feast, a fine of 100 Reichsthalers would be assessed; those who could not pay would again be imprisoned with bread and water.

Duke August's main political task in the late 1630s and early 1640s was to secure a position of neutrality between the Swedish and Imperial forces so that the principality would not become the focus of continued military conflicts between the Emperor and Sweden. In this regard, he sought to keep as tight control as possible over public morality and excess. As a result, any attempt to analyze the later development of public celebrations and sumptuary legislation without including an understanding of the political situation on the ground would be missing the larger context within which the need (or perceived need) for these regulations evolved.

The same concern about excessive (*übermäßig*) celebration can be found elsewhere in Lower Saxony during the Thirty Years War. In the principality of Braunschweig-Calenberg, Duke George produced an edict (*Constitutio*) regulating marriage, baptism, and funeral banquets in September 1638. At baptismal parties, the duke allowed a maximum of twelve guests at the evening meal and a maximum of six courses during the next day's celebration. The penalty for exceeding these limits was set

at three *Reichsthalers* per person and two *Reichsthalers* per course. Families that used more than three godparents were also to be punished ten *Reichsthalers* per sponsor exceeding the limit.⁸⁷ In short, it is clear that throughout the confessional period, Lower Saxon divines and magistrates were associating godparents and parties with social tension and sought to limit their influence.

How successful were magistrates and princes in imposing their moral reform program on the diverse towns and rural areas of Lower Saxony? As Thomas Robisheaux has noted, historians cannot evaluate the campaigns for social discipline simply from above, as a relentless campaign to suppress popular culture.⁸⁸ Instead, the complex nature of late-Reformation German society requires that historians also evaluate individual communities on their own terms, and determine to what extent they participated in the moral campaigns devised by the Reformers. The evangelical agenda called for greater control over public morality in an effort to create a godly society based on biblical principles. But for church orders and edicts to succeed, advocates for reform and social discipline were needed throughout Lower Saxony, not simply in the courts and

⁸⁷ “So seßen / ordnen und wollen Wir hiemit... mit und nebenst den Gefättern über zwölf Personen zum Abendessen nicht behalten / weiniger dieselbe mit Confect und süßen Getranck tractiret, noch folgendes tags Gasteren zugelassen werden / auch die Fürnemsten mehr nicht / als auffß höchste sechs Essen auffleßen lassen sollen / Würde der ein oder ander darwider handeln / sölle der oder dieselbe für jede / über angeregte Zahl gebetene Person drey: und für jedes Essen zweene Reichsthaler Straff zu geben verbunden... So sol niemand / er sey auch wer er wolle / eingereuniet und zugelassen werden / mehr als auffß höchste drey Gefättern zu bitten / würde aber jemens so fürwizig seyn / und die gesezte anzahl über gehen / sol der oder die für jede ubereinzige Person und Gefättern zehen Reichsthaler zu geben gehalten seyn / auch der Pfarrhern so mehr Personen / als obsteht / zulassen wird / mit willführlicher Straffe belegt werden.” *Des Durchleuchtigen Hochgebornen Fürsten und Herrn / Hern Georgen / Herzogen zu Braunschweig und Lüneburg / Constitutio und Verordnung /.../ bey Hochzeit / Kindtauff / Begräbniß / und Gastereyen hinfüro gehalten werden soll* ([Hildesheim], 1638), A3-A4; HAB Gn 3744.

⁸⁸ Robisheaux, *Rural Society*, p. 105.

larger town councils that played such an important role in the construction and transmission of the evangelical message. A crucial aspect of this development became a local administrative system that could propagate and enforce territory-wide ordinances and edicts issued by powerful princes like Duke Julius and Duke Heinrich Ulrich.

The goal of the reformers was to place a special superintendent in each *Amtsstadt* who reported to a general superintendent in each region (*Gerichtsgrenze*). After the introduction of the Reformation in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, for example, there were five general superintendents located in Wolfenbüttel, Gandersheim, Alfeld, Bockenem, and Helmstedt. Each of these general superintendents controlled between three and six special superintendents, who in turn had jurisdiction over between ten and forty individual parishes.⁸⁹ General superintendents reported to the prince (*Kurfürst*), who also created consistories that were responsible for church doctrine, training pastors, and special examinations. Through this and other mechanisms, Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel was able to develop an extensive ecclesiastical network with a moderate ability to enforce church discipline, but it relied crucially on hundreds of local representatives to interact with individual communities and various secular authorities to assist with meting out justice.⁹⁰ Such a system would always have gaps and was most successful in the larger towns and cities with pre-existing moral legislation and active tribunals.

⁸⁹ Gudrun Pischke, *Geschichtlicher Handatlas von Niedersachsen* (Neumuenster: Wachholtz, 1989), p. 33.

⁹⁰ Local representatives were also given considerable autonomy. Thus, a 1542 ordinance for the city of Braunschweig asks pastors to refer matters to the Superintendent only when they seemed especially difficult or important. See Jörg Müller-Volbehr, *Die geistliche Gerichte in den Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttelschen Landen*, Göttinger Studien zur Rechtsgeschichte, 3 (Göttingen, 1973), p. 251.

In periods of confessional conflict, local nobles sometimes ignored the directives of the new churches and refused to accept social discipline from the agents of distant princely authorities. For example, in 1639 a Calvinist pastor in the town of Reichensachsen in Hessen-Kassel fined a local nobleman named Reinhard von Eschwege 2 gulden for baptizing a child in the font of a Reformed church according to the Lutheran rite. (As we have seen, the baptismal font, as well as the baptismal ritual, was an important marker of confessional identity for Catholics and Protestants.) Von Eschwege was a Lutheran and challenged the ability of the new Calvinist pastor to discipline a nobleman so far out in the country. In court he rejected the fine saying “this may be how things are done in the princely villages [i.e. the locations in which the landgrave is the sole *Grundherr*], but otherwise the church does not have the right to meet out such punishment.”⁹¹ In other words, some noblemen felt that the princes could only really control ritual and religion in the towns in where they actually lived and passed edicts. In the rural areas, nobles were traditionally left to their own devices, especially during times of confessional tension.

A practical tool for evangelical discipline at the local level was the parish visitation, which featured the systematic questioning of local people and pastors to see to how individual communities were internalizing the message of the Reformers and were using evangelical rituals and ideas to express their Christian spirituality. Lutheran visitations were used regularly in Reformation Germany to locate troublesome territories and districts, identify ineffective pastors and flagrant abuses, and (when appropriate) to

⁹¹ Quoted in John C. Theibault, *German Villages in Crisis* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1995), pp. 36-40.

punish those who flagrantly disobeyed established church orders and edicts. In Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, the general superintendents conducted regular parish visitations between 1570 and 1600, and these investigations usually included pointed questions about godparents and common baptismal practices. Each visitation directive naturally reflected the specific concerns of the territorial prince and the superintendents, so it is not surprising that the list of questions recommended by Martin Chemnitz included a prompting to ask if all godparents were accepted as sponsors without differentiation by the local pastors.⁹² As we have seen, Chemnitz was quite concerned about the spiritual/educational role of godparents, and he wanted this requirement tested in local parishes. Pastors who did not interview godparents before the baptism should begin doing so, as other Lutheran divines had started doing in Lutheran communities.⁹³

In the 1577 visitation for Seesen, the seat of a special superintendent in southern Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (west of Goslar), the investigators found that people were still waiting “eight, nine, fourteen, or more days to baptize their children,” even though the recent *Kirchenordnung* from Duke Julius required that they be baptized three days after birth.⁹⁴ In addition, the investigators observed that rural families were serving two, three, or four meals at the baptismal feast instead of one, which (the local pastor noted)

⁹² “Ob er alle ohne Unterschied lasse Gevattern stehen.” The questions are reprinted in Wolters, *Die Kirchenvisitationen*, p. 84.

⁹³ In Strasbourg, for example, Lutheran pastors often met with fathers before the baptismal service, and took the opportunity to review the family’s choice of godparents and reject candidates who seemed spiritually unsuitable. See Lorna Jane Abray, “The Laity’s Religion: Lutheranism in Sixteenth-Century Strasbourg”, in *The German People and the Reformation*, edited by R. Po-Chia Hsia (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 219.

⁹⁴ “Weiter haben die Pastores geklagt, daß etliche Leut ihre kinder dieser vergangener zeit haben ungetauft etliche 8 etliche 9 etliche 14 Tage liegen lassen wider alle christliche Gewohnheit, Kirchenordnung und fürstliches publiciertes Mandat.” *Ibid.*, p. 77.

was inducing financial hardship and disturbed the peace. These celebrations also continued the *Kindelbier* tradition (still technically permitted in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel but discouraged by the magistrates) and featured the drinking of “two, three, or more kegs of beer in as many days.”⁹⁵

Visitation evidence from Strasbourg has been used by James Kittleson to demonstrate that when the surrounding communities were disciplined for hosting wedding and baptism parties that were too costly and disruptive, these celebrations eventually became less irksome and not so expensively produced.⁹⁶ In this way, visitations were able to reform popular practice when preaching alone could not achieve it. Accordingly, Kittleson argued, the Reformation must be considered at least marginally ‘successful’, because it penetrated deeply into the general population and was capable of creating real social change. Yet visitation evidence in Lower Saxony appears less persuasive. There is no positive trend toward general compliance in the visitation records of territories that sought to regulate the behavior of parents or godparents through church orders, secular edicts, or visitations. In 1609, the visitation articles for Grafschaft Oldenburg complained that up to 30 godparents were still being asked to serve as baptismal sponsors for each child, and some pastors were allowing sextons to baptize

⁹⁵ “Dan auch gemeine Bauersleut Kindtauf halten, da bei man zwei drei vier Tische Gäste seßet und 2 oder drei Faß Bier trinkt, drei oder vier Tage bei leide, welches alles die Leut arm macht und die unvermügsamen nicht ertragen können; welches wir ad Magistratum wollen geschoben haben und gebeten, daß es der Armut zu gute moge gelinderi werden.” Ibid.

⁹⁶ The first visitation was conducted by Lutheran pastor Johann Marbach in 1555. In 1561, Marbach returned and noted that celebrations were more moderate and accordance with Lutheran teaching. See James M. Kittleson, “Success and Failures in the German Reformation: The Report from Strasbourg”, *Archive für Reformationsgeschichte* 73 (Gutersloh, Germany: Gutersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1982), p. 160.

children on their behalf.⁹⁷ In other words, the most basic activities related to baptism—that the service be performed by an ordained pastor and that a reasonable number of godparents perform their spiritual obligations—were often being ignored. Between 1609 and 1611, the dismissal instructions for the Bardenfleth visitations (a town in Oldenburg) reported that baptismal sponsors there persisted in giving *Gevatterngelt* gifts rather than attending the christening of their godchildren, and that occasionally children under the age of fourteen were serving as godparents for socially expedient reasons.⁹⁸ In 1634, a visitation in Vorsfelde (near Wolfsburg in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel) discovered a baptismal party with at least 15 godparents in attendance and a lavish baptismal feast that greatly concerned the local authorities.⁹⁹ A few years later in Schöningen (a town southeast of Braunschweig), a 1640 visitation revealed that large and raucous baptismal feasts were still being held by the laity, and they typically continued well into the next day.¹⁰⁰ In Grafschaft Blankenburg in 1639, a baptismal party was reported that lasted two days and featured at least 12 courses of food.¹⁰¹ Despite persistent preaching, legislation, visitations, and fines, parents in Lower Saxony continued to use more than the allotted number of godparents at their baptisms, and they rewarded sponsors and friends with christening parties that enhanced their own prestige *and* celebrated a new Christian infant in their midst.

⁹⁷ *Visitationsartikel Grafschaft Oldenburg* (1609), in Sehling 7/2, pp. 1179-80, 1193.

⁹⁸ The visitations were administered by Waltherum Hixen, pastor of Bardenfleth from 1585 to 1627, and approved by Anthon Günther, Graff of Oldenburg and Delmenhorst. For a copy of the visitation instructions, see Sehling 7/2, p. 1200.

⁹⁹ The episode is described in Rauls, *Die Taufe*, p. 62.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ LKAB, V. 709.

In this respect, the program to reform popular baptismal practices did not 'fail' in late Reformation Germany, but the entrenched social value of godparents and gift-giving meant that the desired pedagogical function of Lutheran godparents would need to 'grow around' the traditional supporting behavior that Northern Germans required in their godparents. This evidence suggests that the success of moral reforms in Lower Saxony is not as clear-cut as it may have seemed, and that in some ways positing the 'success' or 'failure' of the Reformation as a social movement might really be focusing on a question that is framed in overly confessional terms.

This chapter has explored the social interaction between parents, godparents, and baptized children, and how Lutheran authorities sought to regulate practices connected to this relationship. As Susan Karant-Nunn has observed, parents continued to use baptism after the Reformation to consolidate a kinship network and improve their and their children's material outlook.¹⁰² The father's responsibility in this transaction included planning the ritual and hosting a baptismal party, at which time he could demonstrate his generosity and repay those in the community who had helped his family in this important time. The Lutheran reformers were not strangers to these social obligations, since they lived in the same communities and acted as parents and godparents themselves. But as confessional tensions mounted in the second half of the 16th century, the Reformers looked increasingly for godparents to play an educational role in the development of their godchildren, and they emphasized the spiritual roles of godparents over the traditional social obligations. Although a proliferation of church orders communicated these ideas

¹⁰² Karant-Nunn, *Reformation of Ritual*, p. 65.

and established a liturgical and “parish-driven” orientation for them, the increasingly desperate and harsh tone of the orders makes it clear that Germans were persisting in the behaviors that had served them so well in the past.

As the Reformation became an institutional force in Lower Saxony, a process that happened much later than in some of the southern German territories, many of the church orders were codified as laws and edicts which imposed penalties and brought the full authority of the consistory and secular courts to bear on popular “abuses” among Germans. This trend toward “social discipline”, which has been studied in considerable detail by historians such as R. Po-Chia Hsia, shows the evangelical interest in creating a ‘godly society’ based more fully on Lutheran ideas and what the Reformers saw as biblical models.¹⁰³ The Reformation was also a period of great anxiety for princes and magistrates, and most responded to rapid social change by demanding order, stability, and a return to traditional values. In both pamphlet literature and public discourse, one theme stood out above all others: the fear of social, political, and religious disorder, the perception that the underpinnings of the whole social order were dangerously unstable, uncertain, continually in flux.¹⁰⁴ A network of local authorities, both secular and ecclesiastical, responded to this anxiety through the enforcement of moral ordinances like those controlling celebrations at weddings, baptisms, funerals, and popular festivals. As the 16th century wore on, state officials worked closely with church superintendents, inspectors, and local pastors to mete out social discipline, and eventually secular

¹⁰³ R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe, 1550-1750* (London: Routledge, 1989). See also David Warren Sabean, *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

¹⁰⁴ Robisheaux, *Rural Society*, p. 95.

enforcement proved more effective than the designs of Lutheran theologians. Fear of disorder was not the principle motive behind the efforts to limit baptismal celebrations and godparentage, but it was a contributing factor, and the Lutheran clergy was able to use this concern to support their campaign to make baptism a more godly affair.

Yet even the combined authority of ecclesiastical and secular authorities was limited in the early modern period. Lower Saxon authorities simply did not have the strength to fully implement their will in legal matters, and this limitation applied especially to the rural areas where most Germans continued to respect local sources of power.¹⁰⁵ However, it is unlikely that parents and godparents could simply ignore the edicts and threats of punishment. As Joel Harrington has observed, when local authorities threatened to fine fathers for lengthy guest lists at marriage parties, the parents may have simply considered the fine part of the cost of hosting the party.¹⁰⁶ In this regard, it is perhaps significant that parish visitation records are full of reports of excess parties, but surviving court records rarely show fines being imposed on godparents or parents for violating baptismal and wedding rubrics. Morals (*Sitten*) legislation dealing with luxurious clothing, swearing, excessive drinking, wedding ordinances, baptisms, and so forth continued to be enforced by traditional means in intensely local settings. Time and again magistrates and princes attempt to control the behavior of those in the country

¹⁰⁵ For an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, and general characteristics of the “State” in Reformation Germany, see Gerald Strauss, *Law, Resistance, and the State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), esp. pp. 120-24 and 268-71.

¹⁰⁶ Harrington, *Reordering Marriage*, p. 213. For specific examples of fines being levied for violations, see p. 213, ff.

with their morals legislation, a goal that constantly outstretched their grasp.¹⁰⁷ The specter of the Thirty Years War made the search for order more urgent, but paradoxically, made political and administrative control harder to achieve.¹⁰⁸

Postscript

In 1649, the city council of Braunschweig issued another morals edict regulating godparents and their excesses—the first comprehensive ordinance in Lower Saxony after the devastating Thirty Years War.¹⁰⁹ In this document, the magistrates rehearse the same well-known themes about baptismal abuses: the parties were too large, godparents were too involved with the life and finances of individual families, the traditional period of gift-giving had grown from a one-time baptismal gift to annual gifts each year at Christmas, and baptismal gift-giving was now extending to maids and other children in the house at the time of birth and laying-in period. Families were becoming beholden to godparents; as the Leipzig theologian Georgius Grabow would later warn parents: “dona

¹⁰⁷ The bureaucratic requirements for the use of coercive power not only unavailable to smaller territorial governments, they were unpredictable. “Power never flowed simply from the top down; and it did not rest solely on violence or coercion... State power did not simply expand in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; it was very often drawn into the village by villagers themselves. State power was also checked, frustrated, and often turned to purposes no ruler completely controlled.” Robisheaux, *Rural Society*, p. 258.

¹⁰⁸ The political and economic crisis that culminated in the Thirty Years War has been well studied. For an introduction to the idea of crisis and the relevant literature, see Theodore K. Rabb, *The Struggle for Stability in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). Other helpful works include Trevor Aston, ed., *Crisis in Europe 1560-1660* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967); Geoffrey Parker, *Europe in Crisis 1598-1648* (London: Harvester Press, 1979), and J. V. Polišenský, *The Thirty Years' War*, trans. Robert Evans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

¹⁰⁹ *Eines E. Rahts dero stadt Braunschweig Edictum das Gevattern-Brodt, Kaesse, Fleisch... wie auch die in den heiligen Christ-Feyertagen bis lang beschehene umschickung der kinder betreffend* (Braunschweig, 1649); HAB H: 294.40 Helmst. (5). See also handwritten original in NSLHAW, Abt., Sammlung 40, Nr. 2277.

fiunt debita”—gifts meant debts.¹¹⁰ The Braunschweig magistrates severely denounced these practices and established a fine of three Gulden for subsequent abuses—the “post war” period was to be one of financial caution and not largess, and the end result was a deep ambivalence towards the social role of godparents in German Baroque culture. But this statement in itself is perhaps too one-sided, because by mid-century both divines and magistrates still implicitly realized that an important cultural function was being provided by godparents; they were not simply spiritual guides, but part of the glue that held baptism and community together in Reformation Germany.

In 1650, the resilient social function of godparents was demonstrated by an interesting correspondence that still survives in the Niedersächsische Staatsarchiv in Wolfenbüttel. The letter is a request for baptismal sponsorship composed by Herman Olivandas, an educated and apparently successful Braunschweig burger, to the magistrate Justus Georg Schottelius (1612-76), asking that Schottelius remember his past connections with the family and act as godfather for the young child just born to the Braunschweig couple.¹¹¹ Schottelius clearly inhabited a higher social position than Olivandas—he was a noted councilor, philologist, and playwright in Braunschweig—among other accomplishments he had served as the personal tutor for Duke August’s children and would soon be one of his councilors in Wolfenbüttel. The letter itself is a masterful request for patronage; using glowing prose, numerous compliments, and

¹¹⁰ Grabow’s ruminations appear in a fascinating pocket-sized book for parents and godparents designed to teach Christians how to raise their children. The book was organized and sized to be carried regularly and consulted on a daily basis. Grabow, *Aller Gevattern Schuldige Pflicht* (Leipzig, 1683), p. 52; HAB Yj 32 Helmst. 12° (2).

¹¹¹ The latter is dated November 11, 1650. NSLHAW, Alt Findbuch “Gevattern (Schottelius, 1650)”, unnumbered letter.

elegant handwriting, it implores a great man to support a family in need. But the text is also quite to the point—it speaks urgently about the need for Christian baptism (“the baby is currently wrapped in sin and needs to be taken to the font”) and suggests that a closer, mutually beneficial bond would develop between these two men should they be united in baptism.¹¹² Of course, Schottelius would be well aware of the spiritual and legal urgency of the matter, since he was intimately involved with the council’s business, and they had just passed the 1649 edict admonishing baptismal excess and requiring the rite within eight days of birth. The letter of invitation was thus hurriedly composed, and Olivandas needed to be cautious less he violate the urgency of the law or prepare too elaborate a feast for this politically connected sponsor.

Expediency itself is a fascinating outgrowth of baptismal regulation. By demanding expedient baptisms, the Lutheran reformers and magistrates forced parents and godparents to move quickly in their requests for sponsorship. Yet, to make formal arrangements before the successful birth of the child was considered poor form and bad luck, so invitations needed to be composed quickly in the hours that followed a successful delivery. For poorer or illiterate people, this meant a personal invitation or a trusted messenger, for burgers like Olivandas, it meant a rapidly composed letter with specific details about the baptism. To plan against sickness or travel delays, several godparents would need to be invited, and the details would often have to be sorted out on the actual day of the ritual. For this reason, the letter from Olivandas to Schottelius named the time and place of the baptism and simply asked Schottelius to attend if he was

¹¹² Ibid.

able—the matter was urgent, and if Schottelius were otherwise disposed, the christening would go on without him. Practical matters and timing thus influenced this important life-long decision for parents and godparents, an important fact to keep in mind as historians chart the patterns of baptismal sponsorship in bustling towns and communities.¹¹³ The curious fact that an important singular figure was unable to serve as godparent may simply be due to the fact that he was currently out of town on business or otherwise detained.¹¹⁴

In the case of Schottelius, we do not know if he accepted or rejected his colleague's request for sponsorship—there is no return letter in the archive, and the parish records are silent about this particular baptism. What remains of the transaction is simply a fragment of the complicated planning process that figured in many early modern rituals. It is perhaps significant, however, that the invitation promises social benefits but leaves the teaching role of the new godparent largely undefined. By 1650, the demand that baptismal sponsors play exclusively catechetical roles in support of their godchildren had been implicitly rejected by many Lutherans, in favor of the more expansive traditional version of their functions.

¹¹³ David Cressy has observed that in Early Modern England parents who delayed baptism waiting for sponsors were cited or charged by the ecclesiastical authorities. See David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 103-04.

¹¹⁴ Martin Luther wrote occasionally of such a regret, such as in his letter to John Agricola in 1521, when he said he could not attend the baptism, but sent along one gulden for the newborn and one gulden for the mother for wine and milk. See LW 48:221-22.

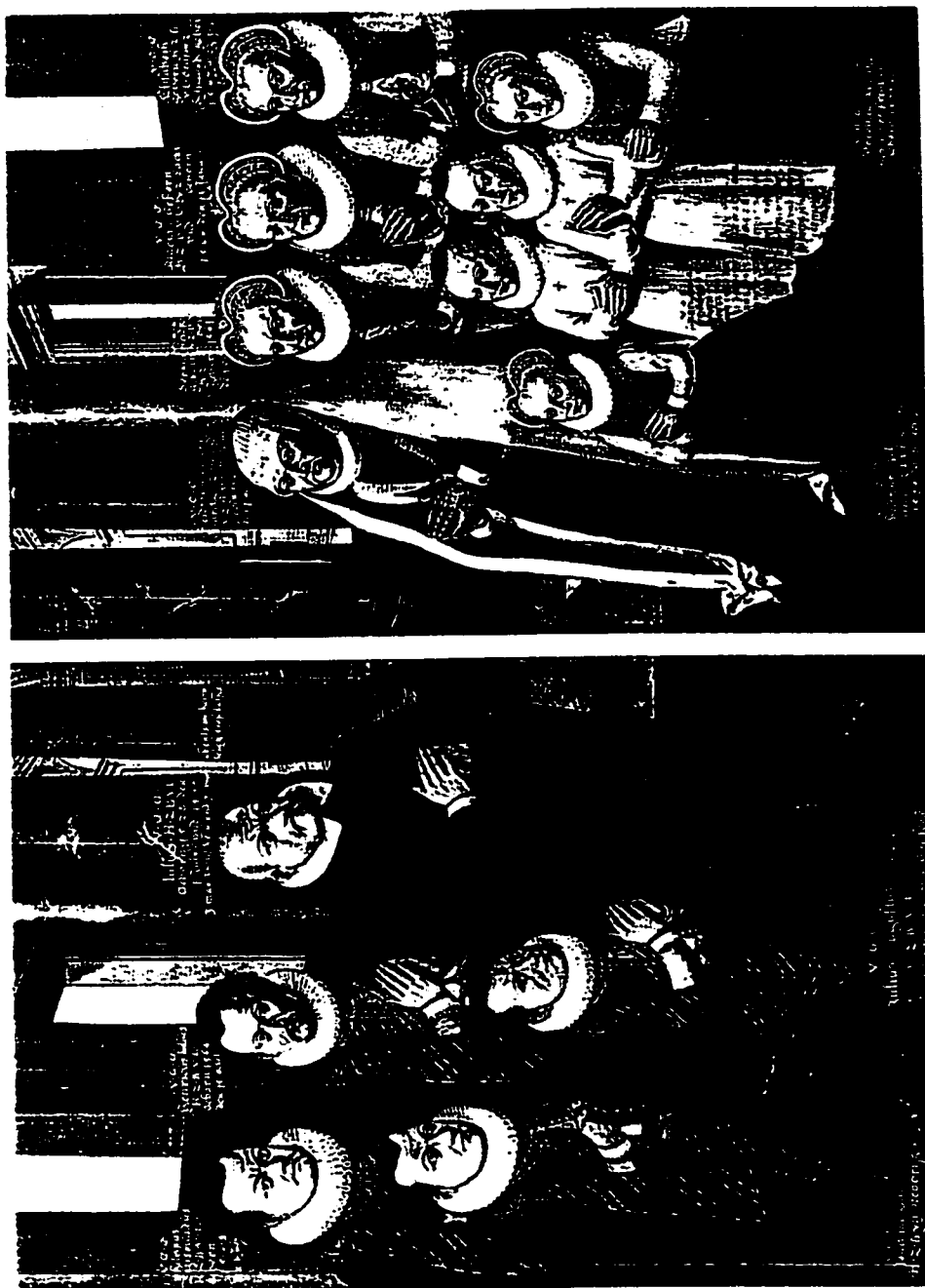


Figure 5-1: Hans Vredemann de Vries, *Duke Julius and his Family*, 1590 (Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel). Joachim Karl, born 1573, is in the lower left corner of the painting, kneeling with his brother. Duke Julius chose the mysterious alchemist Count Carl von Oettingen as the godfather for Joachim Karl. Later he learned that the Count was a fictitious invention of Anna Maria Zieglerin.

Chapter 6

Baptism and Court Culture: Christening Practices in German Protestant Courts on the Eve of the Thirty Years' War

Chapter 5 described in detail the efforts of the Lutheran Reformers to regulate baptismal sponsorship, gift giving, and the parties that were traditionally given after German baptisms and related events. To a large extent, the Reformers failed in their goals to fully regulate these baptismal practices, and regulations against undue largess and patronage continued to be pronounced until the late 17th century. In this chapter, I'll extend my analysis of godparent relationships and *Taufest* into the highest echelons of German society—the courts of the Protestant dukes, electors, and landgraves in Germany in the years leading to the Thirty Years' War. This evidence will show that, despite mild protests from a few Reformers, the leading princes of Germany continued to use christening celebrations and baptismal sponsorship as a valuable tool in social and diplomatic relations, and greatly increased their use in the years leading to the Thirty Years' War. The pageantry of these baptisms is not only a fascinating departure from the christening rituals of the greater population, but it demonstrates the rich cultural associations baptism could establish when it was applied as a language of princely discourse. Accordingly, christening festivals form an important piece of the social context of Lutheran baptism and a vital aspect of German court culture.

German court culture (*hofkultur*) is a lively area of research in Reformation and Baroque historiography, and is informed by a number of detailed local monographs and theoretical studies concerning power, patronage, cultural production, and display in the early modern period.¹ In France, England, and Spain, patronage and administrative activity became increasingly centralized in the decades leading to the Thirty Years' War, as these national monarchies consolidated and increased their bureaucratic and diplomatic sophistication. This national trend was not the case in Germany, where dozens of dukes, landgraves, counts, electors, and bishops anxiously maneuvered for influence in fragmented confederations of principalities and territories, each hoping to increase or at the very least consolidate their holdings. Such was the case in the former Guelf territories of Lower Saxony, for example, where some twenty-five political entities maneuvered for power and administrative control in a tense confessional struggle among Lutherans, Catholics, Calvinists, and Anabaptists.² In this type of environment, each sovereign found it essential to maintain intimate social and diplomatic contacts with his or her neighbors, and worked hard to involve the most powerful families and institutions in important business and diplomatic activities. Ceremony, display, and largess were valuable tools in establishing patronage relationships and political alliances, and they demonstrated power and legitimacy for those inside and outside the principality.

¹ See S. Wilentz, ed., *Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics since the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985).

² Within these local contexts, there were powerful centralizing forces at work, including the revival of Roman Law as a mechanism for the princely assertion of power. The Peace of Augsburg (1555) accelerated this process by putting religion in the hands of each prince. See Gerald Strauss, *Law, Resistance, and the State: The Opposition to Roman Law in Reformation Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).

Historians of court culture have been quick to point out the dense network of relationships visible in late-Reformation and early-Baroque Germany, and the various mechanisms of contact and patronage among these competing princes or *Fürsten*.³ In this regard, strong familial bonds were of continuing importance and strategic religious affiliations (whether Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, or simply “Protestant”) were paramount. Like the rulers of other European courts, princes in Lower Saxony employed the well-known mechanisms of cultural production and display to strengthen their position in society and demonstrate their importance among their peers. These cultural expressions included princely residences and expansive building projects, refined artwork and artistry, specially commissioned music, poetry, and epic literature, all manner of fashionable clothing and princely apparel, and ceremonial events such as festivals and tournaments, which ritually marked key events in the life of the prince’s family and the surrounding principality. Budgetary considerations were always important, and some German princes could only afford pale imitations of the elaborate celebrations that graced the Imperial court or the residences of richer Italian or French princes. However, since the grandest European courts often publicized their most notable celebrations with booklets and special engraved illustrations, even the most remote German princes became familiar with late-Renaissance cultural forms and sought in some manner to emulate them.

Among the special events celebrated in German courts, the most significant cultural and political rituals were festivities related to baptisms, weddings, funerals, and

³ David Cannadine and S. Price, *Rituals of Royalty. Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

coronations. These elaborate rituals provided German princes and their well-born associates the opportunities to forge new alliances and talk over important business or political matters, to display the general prosperity of their families, and to judge prospects for extending the dynasty.⁴ Funerals were perhaps the least festive princely ceremonies, for they were by nature more somber events (at least for those with warm feelings towards the recently deceased), but even these rituals were also carefully planned public encounters which both honored the departed prince or family member and forged new diplomatic links with allies and neighbors. In this sense, honoring a dynasty at the death of one of its members began the transfer of loyalties to a new sovereign, which would be marked ritually in the future with public coronation, marriage, and (when appropriate) baptism ceremonies.

Court records often do not provide specific details about how baptisms were celebrated at the princely residences, but certain events were fairly typical. The baptism itself was usually celebrated formally and publicly—it acted in some respects as a “coming out” party for the young prince or princess, announcing to the world that the child had survived the travails of birth and was now to be counted among the ruling dynasty and treated respectfully. In some cases, the baptism might initiate the establishment of a separate household for the child in a different part of the princely residence (since babies were rarely nursed and cared for by their high-born mothers), and

⁴ See Bryan Holme, *Princely Feasts and Festivals: Five Centuries of Pageantry and Spectacle* (London, 1988); Karl Manfred Fischer and Eckehardt Nölle, *Barockes Fest Barockes Spiel* (Schwäbisch Hall, 1973); Jörg Jochen Berns, “Die Festkultur der deutschen Höfe zwischen 1580 and 1730. Ein Problemskizze in typologischer Absicht”, in *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 65 (1984), pp. 295-311.

the beginning of marriage negotiations with neighboring principalities.⁵ In any event, the baptism itself would typically be followed by the traditional baptismal feast, which featured the godparents and other important guests, and concluded with a period of gift giving. If the court were in or near a major town, the baptismal celebration might also include the community at large, and could feature such pleasantries as a day off work and a period of free beer drinking.

To fully appreciate the importance of baptism to the Protestant courts of Germany in the late Reformation period, it is essential to expand the geographic focus of this chapter to regions of Germany beyond the borders of Lower Saxony (the nominal subject of this dissertation). This is because one of the chief goals of princely christenings was to forge alliances among political and military allies in the larger European community, especially as Catholic and Protestant forces drew up sides before the devastating Thirty Years' War. In this regard, I am especially interested in the baptismal christenings that Lutheran dukes, landgraves, and electors used to forge relationships with their peers and neighbors in Northern Germany, and the extent to which the Lutheran Reformers sponsored or criticized these events. A close reading of four important christening events will show that they pre-figured in large part the diplomatic efforts that produced the Protestant Union of 1609, which formed a key Protestant alliance in the years leading to the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). This analysis will also show that princes stood largely aloof from the limitations that the Lutheran reformers placed on godparents and

⁵ Nursing was believed to inhibit conception, so it was often left to wet nurses. For information about the establishment of new households for infants in England, see Antonia Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), p. 206.

festivities at baptism, and that the Reformers were generally supportive of different baptismal regulations depending on social class and standing.

Indeed, a significant aspect of the baptismal celebrations at the courts of Kassel (1596 and 1600) and Stuttgart (1616) were elaborate tournaments that featured costumed groups, formal processions, jousting, and a wide range of military exercises designed to demonstrate the largess of the hosts and to practice real military skills.⁶ Lutheran ecclesiastical leaders were careful not to spurn these elaborate christening celebrations, but participated actively both as administrators during the baptism rituals and through the publication of their own baptismal sermons celebrating the initiation of a high-born infant and the general happiness of the gathering.⁷ As a result, baptisms at court provide the historian with yet another angle on popular baptismal practices that varied greatly depending on the social level and standing of the person about to be baptized. In the late Reformation and early Baroque periods, baptism was a vital part of German court culture that expressed openly an important understanding of Lutheran dogma and ritual.

Orthodoxy on Display: The Baptism of Anna Ursula (1572)

Our story begins in the court of Duke Wilhelm the Younger (1535-1592) of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, an important Lutheran prince in central Lower Saxony who

⁶ These tournaments, and especially their equestrian and military relevance to the art of warfare in Early Modern Germany, have been analyzed carefully in Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, *Triumphall Shews: Tournaments at German-speaking Courts in their European Context 1560-1730* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1992).

⁷ Martin Chemnitz preached an important baptismal sermon for the christening of duchess Anna Ursulae, daughter of Duke Julius of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, on April 22, 1572, and Superintendent Gregory Schönfeld baptized Elizabeth, daughter of Duke Moritz of Hessen-Kassel on August 24, 1596. Both cases will be discussed below.

was determined to continue the Evangelical cause in his portion of the old Guelf territories.⁸ A strong line of dukes interested in Lutheran reform had ruled Braunschweig-Lüneburg since the early years of the Reformation, and Wilhelm sought to continue the trend by enlisting the support of Martin Chemnitz and other Lutheran divines from neighboring Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. The Lutheran Reformation had been largely successful in Braunschweig-Lüneburg: Duke Ernst the Confessor (1497-1546) introduced evangelical belief to Braunschweig-Lüneburg in the late 1520s, and with the assistance of Urbanus Rhegius and other men they had reformed ritual and practice along Lutheran lines in many cities. Wilhelm the Younger came to power in 1559 as co-ruler with his brother Heinrich, and together the two men sought to continue this earlier work. In 1569, Wilhelm and Heinrich officially divided the kingdom, and Heinrich assumed direct control of the northern principality of Dannenberg, leaving Wilhelm as the sole Braunschweig-Lüneburg duke in Celle, the established princely residence on the Aller river.

Duke Wilhelm began his rule by commissioning Martin Chemnitz to write a definitive statement of orthodoxy for the principality in 1569, a work that would be published as the *Corpus Wilhelminum* in 1576 and reissued with revisions in 1583, 1621, and 1643.⁹ These doctrinal statements were vital for the German territories in the years leading up to the Formula of Concord (1577), as confessional conflicts broke out

⁸ Wilhelm was a popular family name among Braunschweig-Lüneburg dukes, so there is potential for confusion here. For example, an earlier prince, Wilhelm der Jüngere (1425-1503), also ruled parts of Lüneburg and Calenberg under the same name. See *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 42, Duncker und Humblot (Leipzig, 1897), pp. 738-41.

⁹ For an account of the commissioning of the *Corpus Wilhelminum*, see Philippus Julius Rehtmeyer, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Inclytae Urbis Brunsvigae, Pars III* (Braunschweig, 1710), pp. 365-6. For the text, see Sehling 6/1, pp. 487-88.

regularly not only between Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics, but also among Lutherans themselves.¹⁰ Wilhelm established his position prudently enough by stating his own Lutheran orthodoxy in religious matters, and requiring those in his principality to follow suit. Later edicts would continue this trend, as Wilhelm worked with the Lutheran divines to reform or close monastic houses and enforce belief and practice.

In the years before the Formula of Concord, Martin Chemnitz had also been busy with the evangelical cause. Since 1568, Chemnitz had worked intimately with Duke Julius in the neighboring principality of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel to introduce Lutheran ritual and discipline (see Chapter 3). In 1569, Chemnitz helped to prepare the well-known *Kirchenordnung* for Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel that settled theology, ritual, and evangelical discipline in the territory. Along with these efforts, Chemnitz worked steadily with divines such as Nicholas Selnecker and Jacob Andreae to reform numerous cities and duchies in Northern Germany; his name became identified with Lutheran credibility and orthodoxy at the highest levels, and his presence at important occasions was highly sought after.

In the midst of this activity, Martin Chemnitz and Nicholas Selnecker were invited to the court of Duke Wilhelm of Braunschweig-Lüneburg—early Spring 1572. The occasion was a happy one: the baptism of the duke's new daughter, Anna Ursula, who had been born about eight o'clock in the morning on March 22, 1572.¹¹ Anna Ursula was the eighth child born to Duke Wilhelm and his wife Dorothea (the daughter of

¹⁰ The conflict between Philippists and Gnesio-Lutherans is introduced in Chapter 3.

¹¹ Some basic details about the birth and baptism of Anna Ursula are provided in M. Heincum Bunting, *Neue Bolstendige Braunschweigische und Luneburgische Chronica* (Magdeburg, 1620), p. 458. I thank Dr. Heiko Droste for sharing this reference with me at the Herzog August Bibliothek.

Christian III of Denmark). Although successful births were always celebrated at court, Anna Ursula had limited political value to the dynasty, as German princesses could not rule as sovereigns and the family already had four daughters.¹² Instead, Anna Ursula's significance lay in her timing—she was born at a critical time in the Reformation of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, in just the period that Chemnitz was busying himself with the formulation of the *Corpus Wilhelminum* and Nicholas Selnecker was assisting Chemnitz and Duke Wilhelm with the restoration of worship to select churches in Celle and the surrounding principality.¹³ Her baptism provided Duke Wilhelm with an important opportunity to display his Lutheran orthodoxy and influence, something with which the local reformers were also eager to assist.

Three important reformers were invited to serve as godparents in the christening: Martin Chemnitz, the influential Lutheran Superintendent from Braunschweig who had reformed many cities in Lower Saxony, Nicholas Selnecker, an active Reformer in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel and co-formulator of the Book of Concord, and Christopher Fisher, a magistrate in Lüneburg and Lutheran Superintendent of Celle. To celebrate the baptism, each gave a sermon on one of the sacraments, so that there would be three consecutive sermons on the complete Lutheran sacramental system. (Interestingly, absolution was included in the list because it involved a return to original baptismal

¹² Three princes had been born earlier to Dorothea and Wilhelm: Ernst in 1564, Christian in 1566, and August in 1568. In all, Dorothea gave birth to a remarkable fifteen children (eight girls and seven boys), all of whom survived to become adults. Anna Ursula, the fifth daughter, died in Kriecheim on February 3, 1601. She was 29 and apparently still single.

¹³ Chemnitz and Selnecker were approached in 1571 as consultants to help introduce Lutheran worship in Celle, a task they were currently performing throughout Northern Germany. See Rehtmeyer, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, vol. 3, p. 383.

promises, though it was technically no longer a sacrament in the Lutheran system.)¹⁴ The combined collection was then published the following month in Heinrichstadt, with an introduction that proclaimed the princely christening and the theological underpinnings of the Lutheran sacramental system.¹⁵

This high-born christening was unlike the elaborate festivals that I will investigate later in the chapter; the tone was more humble and subdued, and the sponsors were doctors of theology, not dukes or Imperial electors. Unlike the later baptisms at Kassel and Stuttgart, there was no grandiose tournament held to celebrate the event and demonstrate the court's assimilation of classical pageantry and forms.¹⁶ Instead, we are provided only the most basic details about how the actual baptism was performed—the service is solidly Lutheran in construction and apparently used Luther's 1526 *Order of Baptism Newly Revised*.¹⁷ Martin Chemnitz himself preached the first baptismal sermon at the ducal chapel in Celle on April 22, 1572. His presence was significant, of course; it announced that the court of Braunschweig-Lüneburg court was connected to Lutheran

¹⁴ In *Babylonian Captivity of the Christian Church* (1520), Luther rejected penance as a sacrament because it lacked a visible sign appointed by God. However, he continued to believe that confession was essential to consolation and therefore to forgiveness of sin itself because "personal absolution confirmed what might otherwise be doubtful to the penitent." For this reason, Luther's *Small Catechism* (1529) included a discussion of confession. See OER "Confession" and LW 36:124-25.

¹⁵ This collection was published as Martin Chemnitz, *Drey Predigten: Die Erste von der heiligen Tauffe...* (Heinrichstadt, 1572); HAB 127.17 Th (15). Chemnitz preached the first sermon on baptism (Tuesday, April 22nd), followed by Nicholas Selnecker on absolution (Wednesday, April 23rd), and Christopher Fisher, on communion (Thursday, April 24th). The sermons each reference each other internally and were designed to proclaim the harmony of the sacraments and the importance of baptism to each ritual.

¹⁶ However, elaborate tournaments were not unknown at the Braunschweig-Lüneburg court. For a description of earlier festival events, see Alheidis von Rohr, "Ein Turnierbuch Herzog Heinrichs des Mittleren zu Braunschweig-Lüneburg (um 1500)", *Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch* 55 (1983), pp. 181-205.

¹⁷ For notes about the baptism, see Chemnitz, *Drey Predigten*, A3.

orthodoxy at the highest levels, and that there was to be no misunderstanding about the theology or ritual that was being introduced in Celle. The participation of Chemnitz and the others as godparents and preachers also suggested that Duke Wilhelm was an important Lutheran prince in his own right, a sentiment that Chemnitz, Selnecker, and Fisher fully endorsed in their glowing introduction to the sermon collection:

Gracious princess and wife, and also shining, highborn prince and lord, Wilhelm the Younger, Duke of Braunschweig and Lüneburg..., our gracious prince and lord, who despised the world for your God, to call for Christian works... has asked us to help carry this [child] to holy baptism in our loving Lord Christ.¹⁸

For the baptismal sermon, Chemnitz chose Titus Chapter 3 as the preaching text, a standard Pauline epistle containing language about water regeneration and renewal through the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ In terms of organization and context, Chemnitz's sermon was a model of Lutheran orthodoxy, returning to the three important questions or talking points that helped to define Lutheran baptism during the confessional controversies. He confirmed that baptism was a joining of water and the word, that the efficacy of baptism was the forgiveness of sins, and that baptism was a rejection of death and the devil. Each

¹⁸ Gnedige Fürstin und Fraw / Nach dem der auch Durchlechtig / hochgeborne Fürst und Herr / Herr Wilhelm der Jünger / herzog zu Braunschweig und Lüneburg / etc. E. F. G. herzallerliebster Herr und Gemahel / unser Gnediger Fürst und Herr / uns arme / und für der Welt verachtete Diener Gottes / zu dem Christlichem Werck erfordert / das E. F. G. Frewlein / wir neben denen dazu begetenen Fürsten und Herrn / Fürstinnen und Frawen / unsern gnedigen Fürsten und Herrn / gnedigen Fürstin und Frawen / unserm lieben Herrn Christo / in der heiligen Tauffe zutragen helffen solten. Ibid., A2.

¹⁹ Du aber erschien die freundlichkeit / und Leutseligkeit Gottes unsers heilandes nicht umb der Werck willen der Gerechtigkeit / die wirb gethan hatten / Sondern nachb seiner barmherzigkeit / machet er uns selig / durch das Bad der Wiedergeburt und erneuerung des heiligen Geistes / welchen er aufs gegossen hat uber uns reichlich / durch Jhesum Christum unsern heiland / auff das wir durch desselbigen Gnade gerecht und Erben sein des Ewigen lebens nach der hoffnung / das ist je gewisslich wahr. Ibid., B1.

of these positions was supported by the “teaching concerning baptism in our old Lutheran Catechism, which is founded in the Word of God.”²⁰

Chemnitz didn't mince words when discussing the essential paradox of human life, even for this new princess. He thanked God for the blessed birth, yet quickly moved on to condemn the “sinful” nature of Anna Ursula's fleshly origins and her inevitable need for the regenerative gift of baptism:

Because from gracious God, the shining high-born princess and wife Dorothea from the royal stock of Denmark, duchess of Lüneburg and Braunschweig, has been able to deliver this happy burden, a young girl, she is [nonetheless] born and delivered in sin, and is therefore a child of wrath, who must be enlivened through the holy baptism of our Lord Christ, and saved from the power of darkness, and into light, life, and (as a child of God) eternal salvation...²¹

This deficiency could only be met by Lutheran baptism, because, as Chemnitz explained, the baptism of Papists, Anabaptists, and others in error was theologically and ceremonially inadequate—these rituals included man-made additions and neglected God's Word.²² He likewise rejected the view of the Sacramentarians, that children born of Christian parents did not need baptism, but would be saved through the beliefs of their

²⁰ ...wie die Lehre von der heiligen Tauffe in unserm Alten Lutherischen Catechismo / aus Gottes Wort gefasset ist. Ibid., B2.

²¹ Weil der frome gnedige Gott / die Durchleuchtige hochgeborne Fürstin und Fraw / Fraw Dorotheen / geborne auß königlichem Stamm zu Dennemarck / horzogin zu Braunschweig und Lüneburg / etc. ihrer Frewlichen burden mit gnaden entbunden / und mit einem jungen Frewlein begabet / welches weil es inb Sünden empfangen und beboren / und daher von Natur ein kind des zorns ist / jeßund sol durch die heilige Tauffe dem herrn Christo eingeleibet werden / auff das es aus der gebwalt der Finsternis errettet / und in das Reich der Gnaden / des Liechtes und Lebens verseßet / und also ein kind Gottes / und erbe der weigen Seligkeit werben.... Ibid., p. B2.

²² Denn die eusserliche handlung der Tauff / ist und scheint für der vernunft schlecht und einfeltig / daher der Papst / mit andern Menschlichen zufessen / und prechtigen Ceremonien / der Tauff auch für der welt ein statlich ansehen zumachen sich unterstanden / Aber dadurch sein die Leute von Gottes Wort / welches das beste kleinot in der Tauff / und das rechte heilig thumb ist / abgefüret worden. Ibid., B1.

elders.²³ Instead, Chemnitz encouraged people to emulate the present example—the highborn princess of Braunschweig-Lüneburg who, through her parents and the faithful around her, was now being baptized according to God’s plan and would soon see the world through spiritual eyes.²⁴

As proof texts for their sermons, the three Reformers drew continuously on three ecclesiastical sources: scripture, the writings of the Church Fathers and later theologians, and Luther’s Small Catechism. The scriptural references were naturally the most thorough; Chemnitz, Selnecker, and Fisher supported each of their arguments with liberal exegetical notes and marginal entries, and most of the standard proof texts used to support a Lutheran understanding of the sacraments were cited from the Old and New Testaments. Citations from the Fathers and later theologians were rarer but also evident. For example, Chemnitz quoted liberally from Gerson’s Latin works when discussing the role of baptism in the forgiveness of sin,²⁵ Selnecker used St. John Chrysostom and St.

²³ Chemnitz rejects the Sacramentarians by appealing to Ephesians 2, which states that all men are born in a fallen state. “Die Sacramentierer sagen / Das die kinder / so von Gleubigen Eltern geboren werden / Erben seind des Ewigen lebens / ohne und ausserhalb der Tauffe / weil ihnen das Reich Gottes von Gleubigen Eltern /gleich als angeerbet wird. Aber Paulus saget außdrücklich und klerlich / Eph. 2. Wir / so von beschnitten Eltern geboren / waren von Nautu kinder des zorns / eben so wol / als die von heidnischen eltern geboren werden.” Ibid., p. C4-5.

²⁴ Derhalben das wir die Tauffe / so jezundt dem hochgeborenen Frewlein / etc. nach Gottes Ordnung und befehlsol gereicht werden / mit Geistlichen Augen des Glaubens recht ansehen. Ibid., B2.

²⁵ Iste mihi titulus, haec spes mihi sola salutis, Spes mea tu IESVS es, gratia non opera. Baptismus genuit Christo, nec erant meritorum Vestimenta mihi, gratia pulchra dedit. Ibid., C3.

Augustine when discussing sin and confession,²⁶ and Superintendent Fisher used Chrysostom again when discussing how Christ's body and blood cleansed man's soul.²⁷

However, the most remarkable proof text was the repeated use of Luther's *Small Catechism*, which was called on again and again to reinforce important points or provide a direct connection with Luther's teaching and work. Chemnitz set up his sermon in part as a commentary on the *Small Catechism*, and moved later in the meditation to direct use of Luther's interrogative text and formatting:

Here follows another question: What is the benefit and work of Baptism? And to this our old Lutheran Catechism gives the answer: Baptism works the forgiveness of sins, frees from death and the devil, and gives eternal life.²⁸

Eventually, Chemnitz simply called Luther's booklet "the Catechism" or "our Catechism", linking his message (and by connection, the orthodox agenda in Braunschweig-Lüneburg) to Luther's established teaching on baptism.

More directly, Nicholas Selnecker liberally incorporated catechetical material of his own into his sermon on absolution, which was clearly based on Luther's *Small Catechism*. The sermon itself used 1 John 1 as its preaching text, which suggested that if Christians remembered and confessed their sins, God, who is faithful and just, would

²⁶ Darumb Chrysostomus sagt / Nil adeo placatum facit DEUM, ac confessio. Bekentniß der Sünden erweicht Gott das herz / und wer von Gott fliehen wil / der flihe zu ime mit einem demütigem bekentniß / spricht Augustinus. Selnecker in Ibid., E3-4

²⁷ Und Diuus Chrysostomus saget / Wir sollen unsere Seelen gülden und rein machen / wenn wir den Leib und Blut Christi nehmen wöllen. Fisher in Ibid., K4.

²⁸ Hierauff und hierauß volget nu die ander Frage / Was denn die Tauffe nütze und wircke. Und hierauff gibt unser alter Lutherischer Catechismus diese antword / die Tauffe wircket vergebung der Sünden / erlöset vom Todt und Teuffel / und gibt die Ewige Seeligkeit etc. Notice here the subtle use of "alter" to describe the long-orthodox Catechism of Luther. Ibid., B6.

forgive them.²⁹ Although absolution was not technically a sacrament in the thinking of Lutheran theologians, it was nevertheless considered an important corporate or personal rite of the Church, and Selnecker included a proposed prayer for individual confession and absolution at the end of his sermon.³⁰ It is obvious that with this material, which also included the Ten Commandments, the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the orthodox teaching on the sacraments of baptism and communion, that Selnecker was attempting to add his own "spiritual food" to the teaching that was being presented to Anna Ursula, her princely parents, and those assembled at the celebration of her baptism. Though it is not unusual to see catechetical material placed directly in printed sermon collections throughout the Reformation years, it demonstrates more clearly than in most cases the experience and "packaging" that the three veteran Lutheran Reformers had planned for this day. By preaching on the sacraments, praising the first family, and supporting their work with the orthodox catechism, they were providing essential

²⁹ So wir unsere Sünde dekennen / so ist Gott trew (nicht ein strenger Richter / noch Stockmeister / sondern ein trewer gnediger Vater) and gerecht (der uns gerecht machet durch den Glauben an seinen Sohn) uns die Sünde zuuergeben. Note that Selnecker added the parenthetical remarks into the 1 John text. Ibid., E4.

³⁰ Wie sich eins der heiligen Absolution trösten sol.

Wir dancken dir / O trewer Gott /
 Das du uns hilffst aus Sünden not /
 Vergibst uns alle schuld und feel /
 Hilffst uns an Leib und an der Seel /
 Durchs Priesters mund sprichstu / mein kindb /
 Dir alle Sünd vergeben sind /
 Geh hin im fried / sündig nicht mehr / etc.
 Dir sey lob / danck / rhumb /preis / und her.
 Für solch dein gnedig Vatersb herz /
 Der du selbs heilest allen schmerz /
 Durch tewre Blut des Herren Christi /
 Welchs für all Sünd vergossen ist /
 Gib uns dein Geist / gib fried und frawd /
 Von nun an bis in weigkeit / AMEN.
 Ibid., G1.

materials for the duchy of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, in support of Duke Wilhelm's most recent foray into orthodoxy. All gathered hoped that this would send a clear message that Celle was tightly in the hands of a wise and prudent Lutheran prince.

The significance of this event was noted by contemporaries and was placed conspicuously in an early 17th century chronicle of the Braunschweig-Lüneburg principality. When discussing the children of Duke Wilhelm and Duchess Dorothea, the chronicler Heinrich Bunting recorded the christening of only one of the princely couple's fifteen children: the baptism of Anna Ursula, who through this event was linked to the famous reformers and demonstrated her father's Christian commitment:

In 1572, on the 22nd of March, around 8 AM, Anna Ursula was born, the fifth daughter of Prince Wilhelm of Lüneburg. At the girl's Christian Baptism were gathered many people of high standing, who had been asked to appear as godparents at the request of prince Wilhelm: Doctor Martin Chemnitz, from the city of Braunschweig, Doctor Nicholas [Selnecker], from the principality of Braunschweig (the Wolfenbüttel part), and Magistrate Christopher Fisher, from the principality of Lüneburg (who has been ordained as Superintendent). With this the godly and pious Prince gave recognition of his affection for the Holy Ministry and his faithfulness to Christ and the Word of God.³¹

Like all baptisms, the christening of Anna Ursula brought forward a number of hopes and expectations. Anna's parents probably placed their trust in the spiritual efficacy of baptism; the sacrament initiated Anna into the greater Christian community,

³¹ Im 1572. Jahr / den 22. Martii umb 4. Uhr vor Mittag / ward geboren / Frewlein Anna Ursula / Herzog Wilhelms zu Lüneburg fünffte Tochter. Bey dieses Frewleins Christlicher Tauffe / sind neben andern hohes Stands Personen / auff gnedig erforderen Herzog Wilhelms zu Lüneburg / als Susceptoren und Gevattern erschienen / Doctor Martinus Chemnitius / der Stadt Braunschweig / Doct. Nicolaus / deß Fürstenthumbs Braunschweig / Wolfenbüttelischen Theils / Magister Christopherus Ficher / deß Landes Lüneburg / verordnete Superintendenten. Hiermit hat der Gottselige fromme Fürst zu erkennen geben wollen / seine gnedige affecten gegen das heilige Ministerium und getrewe Diener Christi am Wort Gottes. Bunting, *Braunschweigische und Lüneburgische Chronica*, p. 458.

and it anticipated the future salvation of Anna and her reunion with Christ and her family in the heavenly bliss to come. The baptism was also a clear expression of Lutheran orthodoxy at a high point of confessional tension among Christian groups in Reformation Germany. To bolster this aspect of the ritual, three important Lutheran theologians acted as baptismal sponsors and lent their status to the ceremony, controlling how the event would be perceived later by preaching a comprehensive set of baptismal sermons and arranging for them to be printed as a collection. The sermons and chronicle entries, in particular, allowed this orthodox ritual to be presented again and again for the people in a formulation that perpetuated the event for years to come. As the confessional tensions in Northern Germany persisted, there were additional princely baptisms that worked to emphasize the Lutheran character of the ritual over all other meanings. For example, between 1613 and 1615, a Lutheran preacher named Matthiasen Hoë von Hoenegg baptized three of Duke Johannis Georgen's children in Saxony, and used the occasion to specifically attack John Calvin and Theodore Beza for their "erroneous" views.³²

Diplomacy, Pageantry, and Spectacle in German Princely Baptisms

After the Formula of Concord and the gradual solidification of confessional boundaries and theologies, princely baptisms in many of the larger German courts began to reflect new styles and cultural forms, and some of the Protestant dukes who baptized their children used the event to further diplomatic connections with houses that they had

³² See D. Matthiae Hoë, *Vier Christliche Tauff und Glückwüntschungs Predigten* (Leipzig, 1616); HAB Gm 4044. For additional baptismal sermons preached at the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel court, see Sigismundus Scherertzius, *Zwey Tauffpredigten* (1634); HAB M: Gn Kapsel 15(6).

strongly criticized in the past. The leaders in this trend were the German courts with connections to Italy and France, and in particular those who had witnessed the pageantry and drama of the late-Renaissance courts of the Gonzaga, Este, and Medici.³³ These influential dynasties introduced neoclassical and Italianate models in the early 16th century, and court celebrations such as marriages, baptisms, and coronations became the cultural showcases for these styles. The larger events were characterized by elaborate processions, decorated floats, scenes from classical mythology, fireworks, and extended military tournaments that evoked both antique chivalric forms and modern battlefield tactics. In Germany, the influential courts of Hessen-Kassel, Saxony, and Württemberg adopted many of these forms, and by the end of the 16th century Italianate styles played an important role in many princely baptisms. Although the Lutheran and Calvinist princes in these courts were concerned with the confessional issues that divided them, they also found it appealing to offer lavish festivities to their guests—despite the call for short, godly baptismal ceremonies by the leading Protestant reformers.

In the following sections, I will describe the christening festivals that took place at several Protestant courts, including two important baptisms at the court of Landgrave Moritz the Learned in Kassel (1596 and 1600) and an elaborate baptism that took place in Stuttgart in 1617 at the court of Duke Johann Friedrich of Württemberg.³⁴ These

³³ Christiane Engelbrecht, "Ritterspiele am Hofe des Landgrafen Moritz von Hessen (1592-1629)," *Hessian Landesarchiv* (1959), p. 76.

³⁴ The first-hand accounts for these christenings are Wilhelm Dilich, *Beschreibung und Abriss dero Ritterspiel/ so der durchleuchtige... Moritz/ Landgraff zu Hesseen/ ...auff die Fürstl. Kindtauffen Frewlein Elisabethen/ und dann auch Herrn Moritzen des andern ... zu Cassel angeordnet und halten lassen* (Cassel, 1601), HAB Gm 4° 411; Georg Rudolf Weckherlin, *Kurtze Beschreibung/ Dess zu Stutgarten/ bey den Fürstlichen Kindtauf und Hochzeit/ jüngstgehaltenen Frewden-Fests/ verförtiget Durch Georg-Rodolfen Weckherlin* (Tübingen, 1618), HAB 36.17.4

christenings span the introduction of the Italianate style in Germany to the beginning of the Thirty Years' War, which drastically reduced the scale of baptismal christenings until mid-century. The celebrations themselves were often recorded in special festival books, which were written by court secretaries, military specialists, and cultural enthusiasts interested in costuming, mythology, and dramatic presentation. Although these christenings were celebrated outside of the Lower Saxony territories, where the new Italianate style was slower to develop, the Lower Saxon dukes were often included in the celebrations and were requested as godparents, so they participated fully in the general embellishment of baptismal practices in Germany and specifically in the Lower Saxony territories.³⁵ These princely christenings are vital for our understanding of baptism in Germany because they provide the historian an opportunity to see what was on the mind of the duke and his subjects. A gradual change was at work: in the years before the Formula of Concord, baptisms at court typically expressed confessional loyalties and the importance of theology and church discipline. As the Thirty Years' War approached, princely baptisms were seized as opportunities for lavish cultural display. In addition, baptisms were sometimes used to build valuable military and diplomatic alliances.

Geom. 2^o; and Esais von Hulsen, *Aigentliche Wahrhafft Delineatio unnd Abbildung aller Fürstlichen Auffzüg und Rütterspieln. Bey dess Durchleüchtigen Hochgebornen Fürsten ...Johann Friderichen Hertzogen zu Württemberg ... Fürstlichen Kindtauff: und dann bey Hochemelt ... Bruders ... Ludwigen Friderichen ... mit ... Magdalena Elisabeth auss Hessen Beylager und hochzeitlichem Frewdenfest celebrirt und gehalten, in Stuttgart den 13.14.15.16 und 17. July anno 1617* (Stuttgart, 1617), HAB 36.17.4 Geom. 2^o.

³⁵ Eventually, christenings became lavish in the principality of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel too. For example, Duke August the Younger (1579-1666) and especially his wife Sophie Elisabeth (1613-76), considered baptisms to be among the most important cultural activities at the Wolfenbüttel court. See Jill Bepler, "Cultural Life at the Wolfenbüttel Court, 1635-1666", in *A Treasure House of Books: The Library of Duke August of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel* (Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek, 1998), pp. 131-46.

Landgrave Moritz “the Learned” of Hessen-Kassel (1572-1627) is a fascinating figure in the late-Reformation period, only in part because he established a court at Kassel known for its scholarship, artistic patronage, and the renowned *Collegium Mauritianum*.³⁶ Moritz is also interesting as a personal partisan in the confessional struggle between Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics in the decades before the Thirty Years’ War—like many others, he switched his own confessional position during the conflict, and later sought to reconcile Protestant groups. Moritz grew up in the care of his father, Wilhelm IV “The Wise”, a solid supporter of Lutheran theology and reform, and Moritz continued as a Lutheran prince in the early years of his own rule in Hessen-Kassel,³⁷ to which he succeeded as Landgrave in 1592.³⁸ However, Moritz gradually made a transition to Reformed belief and practice, a position he formalized in 1605 with the full introduction of Calvinism in his lands, and participation in the predominantly-Calvinist Protestant Union (1609). This sea-change makes Moritz the Learned an intriguing figure for historians who study confessional conflicts and the so-called “Second Reformation” in early modern Germany.³⁹

³⁶ Moritz was an active scholar and made contributions to the developing fields of philology, mathematics, and biology. He also composed liturgical music, wrote plays in German and Latin, and introduced Italian literature and classical forms to his court, all of which become apparent in his christening festivals.

³⁷ Hessen-Kassel is located directly south of Lower Saxony, and shared a border with Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel in the early modern period.

³⁸ For a contemporary discussion of Moritz’s early reign that places him in the context of all Hessian history, see Wilhelm Dilich, *Hessische Chronica zusammen getragen und verfertiget durch Wilhelm Scheffern genandt Dilich* (Cassel, 1605); HAB Alvensleben Li 194.

³⁹ The term “Second Reformation” has been used by historians to describe the late 16th century reform of Lutheran lands according to Calvinist principles. For the Second Reformation in Hessen-Kassel, see G. Menk, ‘Absolutistisches Wollen und verfremdete Wirklichkeit—der calvinistische Sonderweg Hessen-Kassels’ in *Territorialstaat und Calvinismus*, edited by M.

Moritz the Learned was born in 1572, the same year as Anna Ursula of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, and his birth was celebrated with a baptismal festival or *tauffest* that included feasting, jousting, and military exercises. In his correspondence about the pending christening, Moritz's uncle, Landgrave Philipp, promised that he would bring his knights to the event and "break a lance with King Laurin",⁴⁰ a reference to the traditional jousting exercises that marked the courtly festivals of German nobles and their supporters. Knightly tournaments were not exclusive to christenings, of course, but were a traditional pastime at many celebrations and milestones, including baptisms, weddings, coronations, and funerals. These tournaments had a long history in German courts, and were linked originally to French military contests in the 11th century or earlier.⁴¹ Such competitions featured individual confrontations between knights or groups of knights, and grew to include jousting (mounted combat with lance, shield, and armor), equestrian exercises, sword play, archery, and pikemanship. By the late 16th century, German tournaments had grown to include 'tilting', or jousting on a divided field with a fence or barrier that partially separated the contestants (so that blows could be delivered from horseback but serious collisions averted), and an individual competition with the lance called 'running at the ring' (*Ringelrennen*) in which mounted knights rode at a printed target of concentric circles that could be staged at various heights and would, under certain circumstances, 'punish' errant plunges by striking riders with a trigger

Schaab (Stuttgart, 1993), pp. 164-238; Birgit Kümmel, *Der Ikonoklast als Kunstliebhaber, Studien zu Landgraf Moritz von Hessen-Kassel (1592-1627)* (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 1996).

⁴⁰ Cited in Engelbrecht, "Ritterspiele am Hofe", p. 77.

⁴¹ See Richard Barber and Juliet Barker, *Tournaments, Jousts, Chivalry and Pageants in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1989), and Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

mechanism. Running at the ring, in particular, allowed knights to practice their skills with the lance and try to avoid attack (the trigger mechanism would swing a pole or chain in their direction), but it did not put knights in mortal danger.

Historians continue to debate an important question about the relationship between early modern tournaments and contemporary German battle practices—did tournaments in the late 16th century allow nobles to practice authentic combat skills? Or were they increasing irrelevant relics of a passing “age of chivalry”, in which antique forms had supplanted real military utility? Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly has argued persuasively that contemporary German strategists did find a useful role for military tournaments on the eve of the Thirty Years’ War, and that Germans found them beneficial for practicing techniques and simulating real battle experiences.⁴² This is the case for both mounted knights and foot soldiers, who increasingly played visible roles in the German tournaments. The weapons used by foot soldiers in these tournaments included, as we shall see, the pike, battle axe, sword, and musket,⁴³ so planners were careful to include the staples of the German infantryman, including the new firearms that would gradually change how enemies were engaged. In addition, elaborate rules were developed that both accommodated the safety of those participating, determined what weapons would be used, and specified a mechanism for keeping score. The same was true of mounted combat in the early 17th century tournaments—regulations about the

⁴² Watanabe-O’Kelly, *Triumphall Shews*, pp. 13-26. See also Roy Strong, *Art and Power. Renaissance Festivals 1450-1650* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1984). For an opposing view, see Martin C. Mandlmayr and Karl Vocelka, “Vom Adelsaufgebot zum stehenden Heer”, in *Spezialforschung und ‘Gesamtgeschichte’: Beispiele und Methodenfragen zur Geschichte der frühen Neuzeit*, edited by G. Klingenstein and H. Lutz (Munich, 1982).

⁴³ See, for example, the regulations for foot soldiers at the 1596 christening in Kassel. See Dilich, *Beschreibung und Abriß dero Ritterspiel*, pp. 8-12.

horses, armor, weapons for jousting or tilting, and combat techniques would be carefully discussed before the contest began. Naturally, of course, mounted combat required extensive training and costly equipment, so these activities remained the domain of only the wealthiest men attending the tournaments.

It is Landgrave Moritz of Hessen-Kassel who adapted this earlier style of tournament to a celebration that was more self-consciously Italian and classical in its imagery and symbolism. It is fascinating to observe the number of tournaments Moritz himself participated in and the extent to which they marked the events of his life: At his baptism in 1572, Moritz's family hosted a small tournament that featured mounted knights in combat; for Moritz's wedding to Agnes von Solms in 1593 (one year after he became landgrave), eight days were set aside for military contests that included jousting, running at the ring, and combat on foot. Moritz continued this theme a year later at the christening of his first child, Landgrave Otto, when he added fireworks, pageantry, and costuming based on Italian and classical models to his tournament agenda. Wilhelm Dilich included in his description of these events a Hellenistic mountain surrounded by muses, a Pegasus figure, fireworks that lasted four hours long, and various musical innovations.⁴⁴ In addition, a tournament was celebrated that allowed guests to seek honor and glory, hone their military skills, and participate in the spectacle.⁴⁵

The birth of his second child in 1596 (a girl), provided Moritz with an opportunity to expand the scope of his baptismal celebrations and introduce further stylistic

⁴⁴ For a survey of the literature about fireworks displays in early modern Europe, see Chris Philip, *A Bibliography of Firework Books: Works on Recreational Fireworks from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Winchester, 1985).

⁴⁵ Dilich, *Beschreibung und Abriß dero Ritterspiel*, p. 3.

innovations he had learned from Italian courts. It is no surprise that Moritz found these styles intriguing; through the *Collegium Mauritianum* in Kassel, Moritz had enthusiastically followed developments in Italian arts and letters, and he had encouraged those around him to study Italian as time permitted. An even greater development, however, was Hessen-Kassel's new standing among the Protestant powers of Europe. Landgrave Moritz looked to expand his influence in Protestant circles, and this meant forging closer alliances with England and the important Protestant princes in Germany. The birth of Moritz's daughter coincided with an active period of diplomatic intercourse between England and Hessen-Kassel; to cement these ties, Moritz asked Queen Elizabeth to serve as godmother to his daughter and to participate in her baptism as she was able. The young German girl would then be named Elisabeth, and would stand as a symbol of the close relationship between the two Protestant powers.

These diplomatic negotiations were conducted by the Earl of Lincoln, the English Ambassador representing Queen Elizabeth, and were formalized by the reception of the Earl into Hessen-Kassel shortly before the baptism was celebrated. The Queen was unable to attend, but the esteemed English Ambassador would represent her. An English description of the Earl of Lincoln's journey is recorded in Edward Moning's *The Landgrave of Hessen his princelie receiving of her Majesties Embassador* and also Wilhelm Dilich's German description of the christening.⁴⁶ Both accounts demonstrate how pleased the Kassel court was to associate itself with Tudor power and prestige, a beginning that would hopefully develop into a more significance alliance. In addition to

⁴⁶ See *Ibid.*, p. 4; also Edward Monings, *The Landgrave of Hessen his princelie receiving of her Majesties Embassador* (London, 1596).

the English contingent, a long list of Protestant princes and supporters were invited to the important German baptism. Chief among these guests were Duke Christoph of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, an important Lutheran prince from the Lower Saxon territories, and the territorial Bishop of Bremen (also in Lower Saxony).

The baptism itself took place on August 24, 1596 at the church of St. Martin in Kassel—two full months after the birth of Elisabeth. Such a delay is not that unusual for princely baptisms—after all, it took a while to negotiate and plan these events—but it is worth noting that this practice did not line up with current evangelical teaching on the urgency of baptism or with the popular practice for the lower orders of society (see Chapter 5). In matters of timing and celebration, Lutheran dukes were happy enough to ignore popular preaching when it suited their needs.⁴⁷ The baptismal service took place in the court chapel, which was richly decorated with tapestries, and followed the sermon and the distribution of the Eucharist to the major participants. Although Queen Elizabeth was not present herself, Monings tells us that an official portrait of her was placed strategically at the baptism, providing further evidence of the Queen's interest in this event, and what may be a unique use of Elizabeth's image by supporters in diplomatic affairs on the continent.⁴⁸ Dr. Georg Schönfeldt, the court preacher of the landgrave and

⁴⁷ Higher status families also delayed their baptisms in England to make the necessary preparations. See David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 101

⁴⁸ Tudor historians have long discussed the interest Queen Elizabeth took in her official portraiture, and how her image was used to bolster the power and prestige of the monarchy. See Roy Strong, *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963) and Penry Williams, *The Later Tudors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 389-453. Those present at the baptism apparently found this an appropriate substitute, although it is not described by Dilich's German translation. See Horst Nieder, *Ritterspiele, Trionfi, Feuerwerkspantomime* (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 1999), pp. 39-41.

acting Superintendent of Kassel, baptized baby Elisabeth with the assistance of Sir Richard Fines and Master Edward Clinton. Although the precise liturgy is not given, the rubric appears to have been Lutheran with subtle modifications that would have made the ritual more familiar to the Anglican visitors. For example, a basin was used rather than a standing font, and the pastor was careful to have one Englishman hold the basin, another the water, and another a towel (perhaps with the thought of being inclusive). In this way, we are given a brief glimpse at an important liturgical reality for princely baptisms when a touchy diplomatic alliance was the goal: theological subtleties and national customs could be bent in the name of political expediency as long as the essential Trinitarian formula and water baptism was preserved.

After the baptism, an elaborate procession led participants to the baptismal feast at the castle (*Schloß*), which included trumpeters, mounted knights, carriages, camels, uniformed foot soldiers, members of the English legation, the Hessian nobility, Landgrave Moritz and his family, and the citizens of Kassel. A contemporary illustration carefully labels this impressive procession, a veritable coming-out party for high-born Elisabeth and an announcement that the festivities were just beginning.⁴⁹ The English legation also gave baby Elisabeth a beautifully constructed christening bed embroidered in green cloth with white and green plumes. The deliberate use of green fabric and accents in this gift is quite significant; at this time green draping was considered the exclusive privilege of queens and princesses, and was reserved especially for ceremonial

⁴⁹ Dilich, *Beschreibung und Abriß dero Ritterspiel*, pp. 4-5 and following unnumbered illustration. Dilich also mentions the basic events of Elizabeth's baptism in his Hessian chronicle, recommending that readers consult his book if they want additional information. See Dilich, *Hessische Chronica*, p. 343.

use in the bed and lying-in chambers. By using green, the English assembly forged a deliberate and culturally appropriate connection between Elizabeth, Queen of England, and Elisabeth, princess of Hessen-Kassel.⁵⁰

The tournament following the baptism began on August 25th and lasted for four days. The first two days were devoted to combat on foot, the third to running at the ring (*Ringelrennen*) and a costumed “masquerade”, and the fourth to competitions on horseback and on foot. Participants in the foot contests wore armor and used pike and sword to strike blows, fighting typically over a barbed fence that divided them (Figure 6-1). Mounted warriors ran at the ring using lances and wearing elaborate costumes; they also jousted on an open field and fought hand to hand with swords and protective armor (Figure 6-2). At the conclusion of the tournament, the Hessians presented an elaborate fireworks display that featured a bank of cannons and a giant seated figure who showered sparks a short distance from the city (Figure 6-3). The seated figure may represent Duke Moritz himself, the proud patron and master of ceremonies.⁵¹

One of the most dramatic aspects of the christening tournament was a processional masquerade called the *Inventio*, which consisted of a series of costumed groups and parade floats that represented mythological beings and classical iconography. Landgrave Moritz took center stage in this procession as the classical figure Evergetes

⁵⁰ For the ceremonial use of green in “la chamber verde”, see J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1949), p. 54.

⁵¹ It was not unusual for returning military troops to participate in mock military battles that celebrated their victories in the early modern period, although there is no indication that the forces of Hessen-Kassel were involved in any organized way with the 1596 baptismal celebrations. Fireworks enhanced provided an excellent backdrop for mock battles; they allowed princes and courtiers the ability to see their troops in action without actually being present on the battlefield. I thank Simon Werrett for sharing this insight with me at the November 2000 History of Science Society Conference in Vancouver, B.C.

the Just King, with all the attributes of an intelligent and virtuous ruler. Costumed groups also appeared in the procession in large troops called *Auffzüge*; Moritz himself stood in the fourth *Auffzug* and was accompanied by the bearded canopy bearers *Gravitate*, *Constantia*, *Candore*, and *Veritate* (who symbolized classical virtues). There were also two mounted standard bearers and four female musicians identified as either *Grace* or *Charity*.⁵² Other classical figures in this procession included *Perseus*, *Andromeda* (who held the head of *Medusa*), *Bacchus*, *Neptune*, *Sol* and *Luna*, *Paris*, *Apollo*, and a large float representing *Mount Parnassus*. There was also a fascinating cavalcade that concluded the *Inventio* and showcased the diverse peoples of the world in a number of careful subgroups: *Americans* (*Tyrannis Canibalum*, *Inertia Brasiliana*, and *Divitiae Mexicensis*); *Africans* (*Abundantia Aegyptiaca*, *Fides Punica*, *Deserta Barbariae*, and *Novum ex Lybia*); *Asians* (*Pompa Persica*, *Sagacitas Arabum*, *Superstitio Syriaca*, and *Caeremoniae Iudaicae*); and finally *Europeans* (*Sapientia Graeca*, *Iustitia Romana*, *Robur Germanicum*, and *Libertas Scythica*).⁵³ As *Watanaby-O'Kelly* has noted, the festival iconography no longer seemed specifically German (as *Hessians* had witnessed in previous baptismal tournaments) but the parade was now international in character, reminiscent of the larger celebrations at Italian or French courts in the late-sixteenth and

⁵² *Dilich, Beschreibung und Abriß dero Ritterspiel*, pp. 29-30 and following three-panel illustration.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-56. *Dilich* also notes that special music was played to introduce the various peoples, with melodies that were somehow thought to represent them. For the *Americans*, a brass trumpet, a strange horn shaped like a coronet or swiveled pipe, and a large wind instrument were used: "Unter diesen Musicanten bliese der eine ein wunderbare messinge Trommet / der ander ein selßam horn in gestalt eines Zinken oder gedrehten Pfeiffen / der dritte aber ein unbekantes grosses gewundens Instrument / so die gestalt eines spißigen Schneckenhauses angabe. Mit dieser wol klingenden Music / wie menlich erachten kan / prangete unser America herein." *Ibid.*, p. 43.

early-seventeenth centuries.⁵⁴ Rather than a movement towards conservative evangelical piety and the minimalist celebration favored by the Lutheran reformers, Landgrave Moritz changed course dramatically with the 1596 christening, emphasizing the political role of godparents and introducing lavish, pagan mythologies.

Protestant Military Alliances and the Baptism of Moritz II (1600)

The baptismal celebration that followed at Kassel in 1600 was even more dramatic and imbued with classical mythology. This christening celebrated the birth of Moritz II of Hessen-Kassel, Moritz's second son, and the learned Landgrave used the opportunity again to meet with like-minded Protestant dukes and supporters, and to form strategic alliances. Traditionally, the baptismal practices of both Lutherans and Calvinists had limited baptismal sponsors to three adults by the end of the sixteenth century. This restriction was enforced at the parish level for members of the lesser classes and suggested as a 'pious practice' (in other words, a voluntary observance) to noble and princely families. For this christening, however, Moritz selected 17 godparents from prominent Protestant families as sponsors for his namesake—men and women who could pledge their support for Moritz and Hessen-Kassel in the years to come. Wilhelm Dilich again documented the christening events of 1600 in a beautifully published folio book with text and accompanying illustrations. In the front matter and general

⁵⁴ Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, *Triumphall Shews*, p. 50. See also Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, "The Iconography of German Protestant Tournaments in the Years Before the Thirty Years War", in *Actes du XXIIe Colloque d'Etudes Humanistes: Spectacle et Image deans l'Europe de la Renaissance* (Tours, 1991). For a discussion of Italian festival iconography in the mid-16th century, see Elena Povoledo, "Le Théâtre de Tournoi en Italie", in *Le lieu théâtral à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1968).

introduction, Dilich carefully listed the godparents and their territorial affiliations in large type. The most important Protestant dukes from Saxony (the Albertine and Ernestine branches), Lower Saxony, Brandenburg, and Württemberg were represented, as well as several key Imperial Electors. The sponsor role included Friedrich IV (Pfalzgrave of Rhein and Elector Palatine), Loisa Juliana (wife of Friedrich), Christina (sister of Friedrich), Georg Gustav (Pfalzgrave of Rhein), Sophia (Dowager Electress of Saxony, born Margravess of Brandenburg), Friedrich Wilhelm (Duke of Saxony), Anna Maria (wife of Friedrich Wilhelm), Maria (sister of Friedrich Wilhelm), Christian I (Elector of Saxony and Margrave of Thuringer), Johann Ernst (Duke of Sachsen-Eisenach), Christoph (Duke of Braunschweig-Lüneburg), Friedrich (Duke of Württemberg), Sibylla (wife of Friedrich, born Princess of Anhalt), Christian (Prince of Anhalt), Anna (wife of Christian), Otto (Grave of Solms), and Dorothea (Princess of Solms).

This group is nearly identical in structure to the federation known as the Protestant Union, a military alliance formed in 1609 to oppose the powerful Catholic dukes in Bavaria, Bohemia, and Austria, and the pro-Catholic policies of Emperor Rudolf II (r. 1576-1612). As a result, this christening festival can be seen as an early forerunner of that alliance—it is clear that Moritz and his Protestant allies were already thinking carefully along the lines of a defensive coalition against their Catholic foes, although Dilich's report itself does not contain any political notes from their meetings. But it is also evident that the Protestant sponsors of 1600 would not be expected to provide routine catechetical instruction for the young Moritz II. Although Lutheran preaching and *Kirchenordnungen* suggested that baptismal sponsors should act as spiritual guides in

the future, this responsibility was not mentioned in the Dilich text or suggested by events of the celebration. However, as we shall see, the baptismal sponsors were careful to be physically present at the christening and to perform their liturgical roles.

Moritz II was born “about noon” on July 14, 1600, and Dilich tells us that Landgrave Moritz began corresponding immediately with prospective godparents about the baptism, inviting them to the forthcoming christening and describing the festivities that would accompany the happy event.⁵⁵ As a practical consideration, these negotiations must have begun in some manner before the actual birth of Moritz II, but inevitably these overtures could not be settled upon until the young child had been successfully delivered and was deemed hale and healthy. As I discussed in Chapter 5, it was considered bad luck to formalize sponsorship roles before the birth of a child, and in any case, the drama of childbirth in the early modern period guaranteed that neither mother nor child were safe until well past the delivery. At Kassel, the godparents who agreed to sponsor Moritz II were requested at the castle Schloß within one month’s time for the baptismal rite. Dilich tells us that all transpired according to plan, and the sponsors gathered at the Kassel court chapel on August 13, 1600. (However, only four princes were mentioned by name in the text, and there is no direct reference to Landgrave Moritz or his wife.) At the agreed time, the little boy was baptized by Gregory Schönfeld, the same Doctor of the Holy Scriptures who had baptized Elisabeth four years earlier.⁵⁶ The baptism was thus

⁵⁵ “...das solch Fürstlich Kind und herrlein dem Herrn Christo und seiner gemeine durch die H. Tauffe zugebracht und einverleibet würde / hatt sein Fürst. G. alt wolhergebrachtem Christlichem brauch nach / erstlich durch unterschiedliche Legatos und Abgestandte zu Gevattern ersucht und gebeten.” Dilich, *Beschreibung und Abriß*, p. 2.

⁵⁶ “Demnach aber hochermelte Fürstliche Gevattern den 13 Augusti in zukommen gebeten / haben ihr Chur und Fürstliche G. daran am wenigsten nicht verfehlet / und die jenig / so der

administered by the most important divine in Hessen-Kassel, and was celebrated in an upright and pious manner, in accordance with the accepted Lutheran ritual. Again, however, it appears that Moritz and his chronicler made some effort to appease the mixed Protestant crowd assembled at the baptism, because the theological language used to describe the efficacy of the water bath was a mixture of Calvinist and Lutheran teaching. In particular, the service remained neutral on the controversial issues of exorcism and the forgiveness of sin. Dilich summarized the work by saying that baptism was a sign (*bundszeichen*), that the child was now a member of the Christian community, and that the washing would provide life-long benefits including a knowledge of God's love.⁵⁷

Immediately after the baptism, the celebrants walked directly from the chapel to a banquet hall, where all the trapping of a traditional baptismal feast had been made ready. At this juncture, the knights of the assembled princes and the remaining ladies who were

Kindtauff persönlich beyzuwohnen entschlossen / jreisen darnach angestellet / dz sie anernentem Tage zu Cassel anlangen mögen / wie ebener massen auch die jenigen / welche diß Christliche Werck durch Legaten verrichten wollen / ihre darzu verordnete also abgefertigt / das sie nicht weniger an dem tag auch ihren Einzug gehalten. Also ist solches alles / wie in solchen Fürstlichen versamlungen / mit empfaßen / willkommen heissen / entgegen reiten / mit Freuden schüssen und anderem / welches alles zu erzehlen unnötig / der brauch und gewonheit / auff herrlichst zugangen / nemlich / Es seind in der Person selbs erchienen und eingeritten Pfalzgraff Fridrich Churfürst / Herzog Fridrich Wilhelm Administrator der Chur Sachsen / Pfalzgraff George Gustaus, und Herzog Johan Ernst zu Sachsen. Darauff dann des folgenden tages / nach angehörtem Göttlichen Wort und verrichtem Christlichem Gebet und Ceremonien / das junge herrlein durch Gregorium Schönfeld der heiligen Schrifft Doctorem und Superintendentem zu Cassel getaufft / und ihm von seinen Baden nach seinem Herrn Vatter der nahme Moriz geben worden." Ibid.

⁵⁷ "[Einen Baden] Welchem nuhn der Allmechtige ewige Gott geben und verleihen wolle / das gleich wie er damaln in der Tauffe / als dem bundszeichen / dem Herrn Christo und seiner gemeine zubracht und einverleibet ist / also er in derselben hinfuro in Gottes Furcht / Liebe und Erkenntnus erwachse / zuneme / und bestendig biß ans ende verharre: Demselben wolle auch Gott in langwieriger gesundheit glücklichs Leben / alle wolfart und leibs vermögligkeit / hohe weisheit / und alle rugenden / so einem solchen Fürsten wol anstehen und geziemen / ferner bescheren und mitrheilen / auff das er in fried und ruhe nicht allein ihm selbs / sondern auch der ganzen Christenheit / und lezlich unserm lieben Vatterland / dem Fürstenthumb Hessen / nützlich / förderlich und behülfflich sein könne / Amen." Ibid.

waiting in the women's rooms (*Frawenzimmer*) were added to the group and the feasting began. Dilich writes that at this point a herald appeared (accompanied by several figures in monastic robes), and they delivered written challenges called *Cartellen* to the party, which invited the assembled knights to participate in specific competitions over the following days.⁵⁸ Written challenges became an important aspect of evening banquets during tournaments in this period, and often featured clever poetry, counter challenges, and chivalrous exchanges. Dilich does not provide specific details about the ensuing feast, but the size of the banquet clearly violated the limits set by Lutheran reformers as articulated in contemporary *Kirchenordnungen* and secular edicts. I have found no public criticism of such indulgence by the Lutheran reformers—a telling omission, especially when the campaign against excessive celebration for the lower orders was going on (see Chapter 5). The reformers clearly were willing to set different standards for different social levels.

The processional *Inventio* and accompanying military tournament that followed the baptismal party lasted five days: August 14th was spent in preparation, August 15th and 16th were set aside for a grandiose parade, and August 17th and 18th were occupied by a variety of military exercises. In the military tournament, Dilich describes a foot combat, running at the ring, and tilting competitions (jousting over a low fence that

⁵⁸ "...als nach volnbrachtem Göttlichem Ampt und Tauffe / sich die Fürstliche Gevattern zur Taffeln geseßt / und sonst menniglich von Rittern und Frawenzimmer sich zu Tisch begeben / und numehr fast die malzeit verbracht / fand sich zu hoffe in gemönlichem habit und comitatu ein Herold / derselb / als er zugelassen ward / verfüger er sich forterß nach gethaner hoher reverentz zu der Fürstlichen Taffel / und uberlieffert daselbs ein schreiben mit zweyen beygefügen Cartellen, welches / demnach es von ihm abgenommen / und durch die Secretarios verlesen / ward ihm nicht allein sein beferen bewilligetb / sondern muste auch ferner solches / so wol auch die Cartellen in allen Saalen selbs mit lauter stimm verlesen / wie folget." Ibid., p. 3.

protected against dangerous collisions). In one illustration, Moritz himself is shown leading a group of foot soldiers and musicians; he is dressed in a white field coat and leads the group by carrying a spear.⁵⁹ There is also a thorough list of regulations for the competitions, including an illustration of a ring target that knights were supposed to strike with their lances. In general, the tournament seems to be built on the 1596 model, and featured military contests that Germans found entertaining to watch and that were useful on the battlefield.

Prizes were awarded to participants not only for their success in military combat but also for their looks.⁶⁰ In several instances noble ladies awarded these accolades after watching the tournament from observation platforms or indoor facilities. Although combat was an exclusive aspect of “male” court culture (and also limited to the well-born or very rich), the women who attended court tournaments were certainly not idle as the tournament progressed; they used the opportunity to become better informed about developments in neighboring territories, forged deeper connections between families (which often included a discussion of suitable marriage betrothals), and fine-tuned plans for the evening’s events, in which they would be important participants. Indeed, the most dramatic evening activities at Kassel in 1600 were the elaborate costumed balls, where music, dancing, and romantic poetry set the stage for the additional “challenges” that would be issued to foster contests in the coming days.

During the processional activities, elaborate wheeled carts carried mythological characters and allegorical symbols that symbolized classical heroes, virtuous rulers, and

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37 and preceding illustration.

⁶⁰ In all, five prizes were awarded, the third being an award for the knight who looked the best.

enigmatic national groups. There were parade groups (*Auffzüge*) in the procession, and pageantry, elaborate costuming, and diverse music for each ensemble. Landgrave Moritz played several important roles in the procession. In the fourth *Auffzug* he played Nimrod, a warrior on horseback, and he was accompanied by the classical “adventurers” Cyrus, Alexander, Mithridates, Hippolytus, and Agamemnon.⁶¹ Dilich tells us that the impetus for the scene is derived from the third book of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, and a specific reference is made to the influence of the goddess Diana in the text. In the eighth *Auffzug*, Moritz played Philalithia, the central figure in a float called *Republica*, which represented the attributes of just government.⁶² Moritz again presented himself as a wise and just ruler, underscoring his position as an important Protestant leader and patron. Accordingly, the parade satisfied not only an entertainment function, with the enticements of pure spectacle and the opportunity to preview tournament contestants, but it also suggested to the viewer that Landgrave Moritz was a virtuous prince who was well educated, magnanimous, and mighty. Through the process of extension, the grand baptism suggested that Moritz’s allies were also powerful—the baptismal sponsors were now intimately connected with his family and his cause.

The Stylistic Legacy of the Kassel Baptisms: Tournament Books and Baroque Pageantry (1609-1618)

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

⁶² “In dem letzten Auffzug / nemlich der Philalithiae, wird eigentlich vorgestellt und beschrieben Republica, und wie ein regiment recht und wohl angestellet sein müsse / nemlich / es sol darinnen vor andern im schwang sein Philalithia, das ist / der fleis und liebe zur Warheit.” Ibid., pp. 30-33.

The dramatic christenings at the court of Hessen-Kassel brought notoriety to German baptismal festivals and infused them with neo-classical style and imagery. This encouraged other rulers, particularly those who participated in the Protestant Union of 1609, to experiment with similar forms. The stylistic legacy of Kassel was apparent in many of the weddings and baptisms celebrated at the major Protestant courts, and an expanding company of writers, illustrators, and printers labored to produce the beautiful tournament books that documented them. A double wedding between the Protestant dynasties of Brandenburg and Württemberg (the first at the Stuttgart court in 1609, the second at the Jägerndorf court in 1610) utilized similar classical imagery and allegorical iconography in their festival processions and military tournaments. In the Stuttgart festival, there were again numerous foot competitions, tilting exercises, the running at the ring joust, and the costumed *Auffzug* processions that so dramatically marked the Kassel baptisms of 1596 and 1600. The grand finale in Stuttgart was a gigantic processional float called (patriotically enough) *Germania*; this symbol of Teutonic unity was accompanied by festival participants dressed as ancient German heroes and ten women carrying cards with princely attributes that included Nobilitas, Hospitalitas, Concordia, Religio, and Iustitia.⁶³

In October 1613, there was another important christening at the Anhalt court in Dessau, which celebrated the baptism of Duke Johann Georg's youngest daughter, Eva Katherina. The baptismal festival itself was described in a short booklet with foldout

⁶³ See Balthasar Kuchler, *Repraesentatio der fürstlichen Auffzug und Ritterspiel...* (Stuttgart, 1609), HAB Gm 1152 4°; and Johann Oettinger, *Warhaffte Historische Beschreibung Der Fürstl. Hochzeit / und des Hochansehnlichen Beylagers So Der Durchlechtig Hochbegorn Fürst unnd Her / Herr Johann Friderich Herzog zu Württemberg...* (Stuttgart 1610), HAB Gm 1158 4°.

illustrations that included a discussion of the pan-European iconography.⁶⁴ The procession began with “Turkish” troops who menaced the Germans with swords, crescent-decorated flags, and contemporary Turkish costumes, setting the stage for a confrontation between Turkish warriors and Christian knights.⁶⁵ The games included mounted combat and a jousting event called the *Quintain*, in which knights rode full speed at the wooden effigy of a Turk and tried to pierce it with their lances. There was also a processional dialog in Spanish involving Don Quixote de la Mancha, and several parodies of German archetypes, including beer-drinking peasants who marched with upraised pitch forks, antique German warriors who displayed their outmoded tactics, and oafish visitors from Braunschweig and the Harz mountains in Lower Saxony.⁶⁶ Unlike the earlier christening tournaments, the Dessau celebration included more traditional German humor and was less dramatic and Italianate than many of the earlier Protestant festivals. When Duke Johann Georg celebrated the wedding of his oldest daughter Sophia Elisabeth to Georg Rudolph of Schlesien the following year, the tournament and

⁶⁴ *Cartel, Auffzüge / Vers und Abrisse / So bey der Fürstlichen Kindtauff / und frewdenfest zu Dessa / den 27. und 28. Octob. vorlauffenden 1613... praesentiret worden* (Leipzig, 1614); HAB 441.17 Hist. (1).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁶ Some of the humorous figures were accompanied by comic poems. “Jim von Braunschweig” is parodied with this verse: “Ich bin ut den Brunschwicker Land / Allen Stallbrödern wol bekindt / Die heeten mick den groten Jim / Darumb dat ick in groten Grim / Manch Reutersman / welches nie erhört / Mit supen hebe dot gemord / Wenn ick heb eins geschmeret in / So sitt ick gern bim külen Win / Drub von gutem Hamburger Bier / Ein Leschtrunck fompt zu statten mir / Bißweilen lat ick ock ruhm gahn / Ein Trunck Hannoverischen Brühan / Wann man so gehet zum Himmel ein / Wer wolt nicht gern ein Reuter seyn.” *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

Auffzüge were similar their iconographic style and representation of both Germanic and classical themes.⁶⁷

Now all the major Protestant courts seemed to be celebrating important baptisms with lavish tournaments and processions. The sequence of these events became rapid as tensions between Protestants and Catholics increased in the Holy Roman Empire, and the Protestant need for diplomatic and military reassurance intensified. On March 10, 1616, Duke Johann Friedrich of Württemberg celebrated the baptism of his son Friedrich with a baptismal tournament that was carefully documented by Georg Rudolf Weckherlin (1584-1653), a fascinating figure in the early Baroque period who served in both German and English courts in the seventeenth century and is known for his diplomatic correspondence, contemporary chronicles, and vernacular poetry.⁶⁸ The mother of the new baby was Barbara Sophia from Brandenburg, an important princess in her own right, and she assisted her husband in welcoming several distinguished guests, including Princess Elizabeth of England (the daughter of James I), Elizabeth's husband Frederick V of the Palatine, the Margrave of Baden, the Margrave of Brandenburg, Christian of Anhalt-Bernburg, and the Württemberg dukes related to Duke Johann Friedrich (Ludwig Friedrich, Friedrich Achilles, and Magnus Friedrich).

⁶⁷ This wedding celebration began on October 27, 1614 and took place at the Dessau court. For a discussion of the processional activities, see *Abbildung und Repraesentation Der Fürstlichen Inventionem, Auffzüge / Ritter Spiel / auch Ballet, so ... zu Dessa / Bey des... Georg Rudolph Herzogen in Schlesien... / Mit... Sophia Elisabeth .../... Beylager... 1614 gehalten worden* (Leipzig, 1616); HAB 441.17 Hist. (2).

⁶⁸ Georg Rudolf Weckherlin, *Triumpf Newlich bey der F. Kindtauf zu Stutgart gehalten* (Stuttgart, 1616); HAB 192 Hist 8°. For a contemporary English translation, see Georg Rudolf Weckherlin, *Triumphall shevvs made at Stutgart*, English Short Title Catalog microfilm (STC, 2nd ed.), 25186, 1046:02.

Since young Friedrich had been born before Christmas in 1615, this baptism provides us with another example of the lengthy delay that sometimes accompanied princely baptisms. In this case, the baby was two and a half months old by the time of his christening, a delay that the Lutheran reformers discouraged, but one that was all but unavoidable if the proper preparations were to be made. Weckherlin says that the baptismal service was announced with the sound of trumpets at the Stuttgart castle about nine o'clock in the morning, a summons which initiated a grand procession of high-born electors, margraves, princes, and nobles from the kingdoms being represented, who walked together to the court chapel for the ritual. The assembled congregation heard the Word of God, brought the child to the font, and participated in the baptism. Immediately after the blessed event, the entourage returned to the castle banquet hall for a lavish baptismal feast, and we are told that 22 high-born guests sat at the central table.⁶⁹ The celebrants feasted throughout the day and into the night, no doubt discussing the pending tournament events that would include the by now familiar processional groups and military diversions. Weckherlin wrote that the day ended with three special musical ensembles, who played popular festival music from Italy, England, and France.

In one month's time we have another festival, the baptismal service for Sophie Elisabeth, the only child of Duke Christian Wilhelm of Brandenburg. The baptism itself was celebrated at the Brandenburg court in Halle on April 7, 1616, and the christening was followed by a lavish tournament that included processional activities and familiar combat games such as tilting and running at the ring. These events were recorded in two illustrated books that possess, in my opinion, the finest festival pictures produced for an

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-5

early modern baptismal festival.⁷⁰ The pageantry included women on foot and in carts who bore descriptive labels that identified the virtues Spes, Fides, Caritas, Victoria, and Fortuna. Following these Christian and classical role-models were women wearing neck chains who embodied some of the opposing vices, including Avaritia and Libido. In the procession Hungarians, Turks, and Saracens appeared on horseback, and following them came a long train of male and female “American Indians” with dark hair, fanciful clothing, clinging children, and exotic names like Hiciosia and Korwizitz Ka. In addition, the books depicted two unusual military games: a jousting event called the *Kopffrennen* in which riders attempted to stab the wooden head of a Turk, and a mounted exercise that contemporaries called the *Carousel*, in which two or more groups of riders chased after each other and fought with hollow balls, shields, and agile moves.⁷¹

The Halle christening also featured a very elaborate fireworks presentation, which our anonymous recorder tells us took place on the evening of April 12, 1616. The fireworks took place on the grounds near the Halle castle and lasted about 2½ hours. The focus of the display was a central fortress manned by “Turkish” soldiers, who shot light arms and cannons at the surrounding Germanic forces. Men crouched behind hastily constructed barriers to fire their own cannons at the Turkish fortress, and two groups of

⁷⁰ The books are bound together into one volume at the Herzog August Bibliothek. See *Cartell zu der Herrn Maintenatoren Auffzüge wie sie zu Hall in Sachsen den 8.9. und 10. Aprilis Anno 1616 ordentlich nach einander seindt gehalten worden* (Halle, 1617), HAB 20 Geom.(1); and *Repraesentatio Der Fürstlichen Auffzüge, Ritterspiel auch Feuerwerck und Ballet Welche... Herr Christian Wilhelm... auf denselben Fürstlichen Fräuleins... Sophien Elisabeths Kindteuff zu Halle in Sachsen Den 8.9.10.11. und 12. Aprilis Anno 1616 gehalten* (Leipzig, 1617), HAB 20 Geom.(2).

⁷¹ According to Watanabe-O’Kelly, the origins of this event are probably the training rituals for Moorish, Turkish, or Saracen warriors; see Watanabe-O’Kelly, *Triumphall Shews*, pp. 45-48. For a description of the Carousel in Halle, see *Cartell zu der Herrn Maintenatoren*.

foot soldiers moved toward the central structure bearing rifles which they aimed and fired at the ground. At the fringes of the foray, trumpeters sounded the charge and other men lit small rockets which were launched over battlefield from stationary racks. The accompanying illustration depicts the sky alit with hundreds of flares, missiles, and rockets; in the background a building has caught fire and burns in the melee.

If the events of Halle in 1616 seem a little more tense and deliberately warlike, they may have matched the political mood of the christening—central Europe was advancing quickly toward large-scale confrontation, and relationships among the members of the Protestant Union had grown strained. Duke Christian Wilhelm himself was less than content with his position among the Protestant princes, and clearly hoped the christening of his daughter would cultivate closer bonds with his peers. But if the festival had been designed to elevate Brandenburg's position among the Protestant territories, it wasn't successful. In 1617, the Protestant Union refused to support Brandenburg's claims against the duchies of Cleves-Jülich and Christian Wilhelm quit the alliance. A series of well-publicized baptisms had brought the Protestants together and to some extent provided opportunities to maintain the strategic relationships, but the festivals themselves were naturally unable to mediate all the inherent complexities of the diverse military alliance.

The last major high-born baptism celebrated before the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War took place in Stuttgart at the Württemberg court in July of 1617. Duke Johann Friedrich's third son Ulrich had been born on May 17th and Johann Friedrich arranged his baptism so that it would coincide with an eagerly anticipated wedding

between Johann Friedrich's brother Ludwig Friedrich and Elisabeth Magdalena of Hessen-Darmstadt. This double celebration, which we have seen once before, was primarily a political union between two Protestant dynasties. To cement this bond, Johann Friedrich appropriately asked the parents and an uncle of the bride to act as baptismal sponsors for young Ulrich. These family members were Landgrave Ludwig of Hessen-Darmstadt and his wife Eleonora (a princess from the Württemberg house), and Ludwig's brother Landgrave Philip, who controlled the Hessen territories in Butzbach. Numerous other high-born guests were also present for the ceremonies, including Landgrave Moritz of Hessen-Kassel; Margrave Friderich of Baden; the Württemberg dukes and their families, and the important nobles of Hessen-Darmstadt and the Württemberg territories.

The festivities began in Stuttgart on July 13th with the baptism of Ulrich. Court secretary Georg Rudolf Weckherlin again describes the ceremony and the tournament that followed, and his textual description is usefully supplemented by a book of illustrations by Esaias Hulsen that is bound in the same volume at the Herzog August Bibliothek.⁷² The christening began with a call to worship in the late morning sounded by drummers and trumpeters. After this signal, the assembled dukes, landgraves, and nobles walked dramatically to the court chapel and were seated for the baptismal

⁷² Georg Rudolf Weckherlin, *Kurtze Beschreibung / Dess zu Stutgarten / bey den Fürstlichen Kindtauf und Hochzeit / Jüngstgehaltenen Frewden-Fests / verfertigt Durch Georg-Rodolfen Weckherlin* (Tübingen, 1618), HAB 36.17.4(2) Geom. 2°; Esaias von Hulsen, *Aigentliche Wahrhafftige Delineatio und Abbildung aller Fürstlichen Aufzüg und Rütterspieln. Bey dess Durchleüchtigen Hochgebornen Fürsten... Johann Friderichen Hertzogen zu Württemberg... Fürstlichen Kindtauff: und dann bey Hochemelt... Bruders... Ludwigen Friderichen... mit... Magdalena Elisabeth auss Hessen Beylager und hochzeitlichem Frewdenfest celebrirt und gehalten, in Stuttgart den 13.14.15.16 und 17. July anno 1617* (Stuttgart, 1617); HAB 36.17.4(1) Geom. 2°.

service.⁷³ Weckherlin wrote that beautiful music was played for those assembled and the court divine Hans Bernhard Löhr preached a godly sermon.⁷⁴ Young Ulrich was apparently not present for the early part of the service, for the text tells us that after the sermon the siblings of Duke Johann Friedrich (Agnes, Friedrich-Achillies, and Friedrich-Magnus) brought the baby into the church for the actual baptism and handed him to the sponsors. This may have been a practical gesture to accommodate a fussy infant, but was more likely a careful addition to the baptism ritual that gave important family members a visible role in the service and allowed them to both transfer spiritual care of the infant and symbolically welcome new family members.⁷⁵ With the baby in the hands of the godparents (Landgrave Philip, Landgrave Ludwig, and his wife Eleonora), the young prince was taken to the font. Here, in the arms of his extended family, the young child was baptized by pastor Löhr and given the name Ulrich, which Weckherlin displays in prominent 48-point type in his chronicle.⁷⁶

⁷³ “Der Dreyzehende Tag Julii. / Phoebus hatte kaum das erste Viertel seines täglichen gangs / und des dreyzehenden Tags Julii (welcher für die Gottsforcht / Gebet / und Christliche Wercke sonderlich bestimmet) In diesem thail der Welt verbracht / da sich alle Fürstliche / Gräflische und Edle Personen / durch den Trummen und Trummetenschal / vielmehr aber durch Ihre aigne herzliche Gottseelige Andacht ermahnet / und geraizet / In die ganz herzlich gezierte Hof Capellen verfüget.” Weckherlin, *Kurtze Beschreibung Stutgarten*, p. 11.

⁷⁴ “Und nach geendeter lieblichen Music / Gottes Wort / so Ihnen der Ehrwürdige und Hochgelehrte Herz Hans Bernhard Löhr / der H. Schrifft Doctor / und Fürstl. Würtemb. Hofprediger verkündiget / angehört.” Ibid.

⁷⁵ If I am correct about this gesture, it functions like the activity of a father who enters the church with his daughter at a wedding ceremony and symbolically passes her to the groom, a sign that both unites the two families and transfers responsibility for her care. To compare the baptism and wedding rituals at Stuttgart; see Ibid., pp. 12-14.

⁷⁶ “Un nachdem under wehrender Predigt / Die Durchleuchtige / hochgeborne Fürstin und Fräwlin / Fräwlin Agnes / Herzogin zu Würtemberg u. / von Ihren beeden Herzn Brüdern / Herzn Friderich-Achillen / und Magno geführt / und andern Adels Personen belattet / das jüngst-geborne Prinzlin auch in die Kirchen gebracht / Ist solches hernach / Fürstlichem und Christlichem gebrauch gemäß / Ehrngedachtem Herzn Hofpredigern fürgetragen / von Ihme getaufft / und von hochermelten Herzen Ludwigen / Landgrafen zu Hessen u. / Frawen Eleonora /

After the baptism, the group moved immediately to the princely christening banquet. The event was apparently held in a large hall with room for many tables and the busy movements of the servers and entertainers who attended to the needs of the guests. At the first table, reserved for the highest-born dukes and landgraves (the *Fürstliche Personen*), twenty-three guests and family members were seated.⁷⁷ Beside this table were other tables for the remaining graves and nobles present at the baptism. Weckherlin also noted with pride that the food was not limited to the oxen, pork, and beef eaten by the Persians or Romans at earlier banquets, but included delicious offerings from all over Europe. An additional high point of the meal was the wine, which servers brought repeatedly in costly vessels of gold, crystal, and silver.⁷⁸ But the celebration didn't last late into the night, for the next day was the wedding celebration and Weckherlin tells us that the guests and servants had to make preparations for the coming ceremony and feast, as well as the traditional pre-wedding activities. In this regard, the baptism and wedding rituals were joined into one grand celebration that celebrated the union between two great Protestant dynasties.

The procession and tournament that followed the wedding began on July 15, 1617 and concluded on Sunday, July 20th. (The final event was a worship service and farewell

Landgräfin zu Hessen / Geborner Hertzogin zu Würtemberg u. / und Herzen Philipsen / Landgrafen zu Hessen u. / auß der heiligen Tauff gehabt / und Ulrich genant worden." Ibid.

⁷⁷ "Bald hernach ist ein recht Fürstliches Banckeh gehalten worden / da man sahe drey and zweinzig Fürstliche Personen and einer Tafel / Welche (wie auch andere Graven und Herzen-Tafeln) nicht mit ganzen Ochsen / Schweinen / oder Rindern / wie die Persianer und Römer vor zeitten zuthun pflegten / sondern mit den allerköstlichsten / angenehmsten / und ganz außerlesnen Gerichten und Speisen / welche jetziger zeit in Europa zu bekommen / bedöckt und beladen." Ibid.

⁷⁸ "Und dann auch von den außbündigsten / so wol frembden als Einländischen / nach eines jeden wunsch und begehren / in Gold / Christal / oder Silber beygebrachten Weinen und Getränckt / bereichet und belieblichet wurden." Ibid.

banquet in the castle garden.) The pageantry and diverse military activities were very similar to types that I have examined already in this chapter; there was a processional *Auffzug* that featured parade floats with familiar classical images and themes from German history, and many of the leading guests and participants appeared on carts in full costume. Duke Johann Friedrich appeared in ceremonial dress on horseback as the virtuous king, with wedding hearts on his clothing, saddle, and sword, and riding in the company of women named Victoria and Constantia.⁷⁹ Landgrave Ludwig of Hessen-Darmstadt is shown with his wife and brother in a procession featuring the figures Fides, Prudentia, Temperantia, Fortitudo, and Constantia, demonstrating both the qualities of just rule and, perhaps not coincidentally, the characteristics of good Christian godparents.⁸⁰ There were also lavish and fantastic costumed groups in the procession. Irish soldiers made an appearance, along with Spanish-speaking knights and warring parties of Americans, Romans, Turks, and Moors, who emerged from floats that represented the Aristotelian elements of Fire, Earth, Water, and Air, respectively.⁸¹ During the military tournament, there were again foot exercises, tilting competitions, running at the ring, and another Carousel event in which groups from the four lands fought on horseback using balls, spears, and shields (See Figure 6-4).

Like the earlier baptisms we have examined, the Stuttgart festival had a predominantly political purpose in mind: it demonstrated the power and generosity of the

⁷⁹ To see the illustration that depicts Johann Friderick the reader must lift a heart-shaped emblemata flap in the book. See Hulsen, *Aigentliche Wahrhaffte Delineatio*, p. 6.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-18.

⁸¹ It is not unusual to find thematic associations between the four elements and peoples thought to represent them in various lands. At the Stuttgart tournament, the American Indians were associated with Fire, the Romans with Earth, the Turks with Water, and the Moors with Air. See *Ibid.*, p. 91.

Württemberg dukes, and used the joint baptism and wedding ceremony to forge closer ties with important Protestant allies. The godparent relationship was a critical part of this bond, and it was cemented by a preparatory process, the actual baptismal ritual, the feast that followed, and the concluding tournament and festival activities. The baptismal procession allowed the Protestant courts to use pageantry and iconography as a way to communicate their strengths, fears, and designs. Time and again, the reader sees the ruling dukes and landgraves projecting clear messages about how they wanted to be perceived. Through their parade floats, costumes, firework displays, and military dress they projected the image of virtuous, wise, and mighty rulers in the tradition of great classical and German heroes. In addition, there was a very visible military component in each festival that provided not only the opportunity to encourage knightly traditions and practical battle skills, but also to focus German aggression on the traditional enemies of Christ: the Turks and the Moors. The remaining peoples of the Four Lands (American Indians, Africans, the Irish, etc.) inhabited a more ambiguous position; they remained novel oddities to be paraded and enjoyed, but they were not attacked and rarely spoke.

Conclusion

Looking back to the baptismal celebration I examined at the beginning of this chapter, the christening of Anna Ursula in 1572, a steady movement away from theologically-oriented princely baptisms is apparent. Instead of a focus on theology and orthodoxy, the christenings of the early 17th century communicate a new interest in Italianate style, and the growing need for diplomatic reassurance and military training.

Both types of baptism have a predominately “political” meaning, but in 1572 the need for confessional clarity was obviously more politically pressing for the court of Braunschweig-Lüneburg than it would be for later Lutheran and Calvinist princes. Indeed, in the military build-up that would become the Thirty Years’ War, Protestant dukes and landgraves worried more about the threatening military power of their Catholic rivals than the theological subtleties that divided them. The rapid pace of baptisms and weddings after the Protestant Union of 1609 demonstrates that Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics were anxious to affirm their common-ground in a variety of ways, but especially through baptismal sponsorship, marriage bonds, and joint military exercises. In this context, the confessional boundaries between Lutheran and Calvinist rituals seems to blur a little; the baptismal liturgies they used still suggested confessional subtleties, but these fine points were rarely recorded in the surviving tournament books and sometimes makes it difficult to tell if the ceremonies were Lutheran, Calvinist, or Anglican in origin. This theological vagueness is probably a testimony to the cooperative spirit of the Protestant Union, but the subtlety may also demonstrate the rather limited extent to which evangelical dogma changed traditional thinking about infant baptism in German courts. Baptismal feasts continued to be celebrated as they had been before the Reformation: godparents were chosen from lists of socially or politically valuable peer groups, the young princes or princesses were baptized as infants as soon as the preparations could be made (although this typically took some time), and there was usually a baptismal feast afterwards that celebrated the child, praised the ruling dynasty, and honored the godparents.

The Reformers themselves seemed content enough with this development—they supported princes with glowing sermons and their presence at baptisms, and they did not speak out against the excesses they had so criticized among the lower classes.⁸² This obviously says a lot about the practicality of the later Protestant reformers, but also about the early modern understanding of the difference between high-born peoples and the lower classes. As sumptuary laws and other ordinances plainly show, there were simply differences between what nobles and regular people could do. These differences also applied to baptism—the high-born princes could have more elaborate feasts and festivals than the lower classes could have, and the reformers both accepted and supported this idea. It would have been quite impractical for the reformers to reject the very celebrations that put them on center stage, allowed them to preach directly to the German nobility, and permitted their words and actions to be recorded and remembered.

The meaning of baptism in Reformation Germany did not emerge solely from the dogma and machinations of evangelical pastors in any case. The meaning of Lutheran baptism was constructed in a collective way through the complex intersection of many cultural discourses relating to initiation and integration. These discourses included ideas about God, salvation, childbirth, gender, social class, confessional identity, godparentage, and the complex language of baptismal ritual. From this rich assortment of potential meanings, individual Christians created their own interpretations of baptism each time the ritual was celebrated in their midst.

⁸² The church order for Jever, Oldenburg, and Delmenhorst (1582) placed limitations on the size of baptismal parties that rich people (*Riekisten*) could host (they were bigger than the parties allowed for middle class and poor people), but the order prudently omitted any discussion of how *Fürstliche Personen* should behave. There was a clear difference between controlling rich burgers and regulating the lifestyle of powerful princes. Sehling 7/2, p. 1257.



Figure 6-1: Foot combatants use pike and sword to strike blows over a barbed fence in the military contests that followed the baptism of Elisabeth of Kassel in 1596. Wilhelm Dilich, *Beschreibung und Abriss dero Ritterspiel...*, 1601.



Figure 6-2: A mounted knight charges the effigy of a Turk in the first combat area, while two knights with lances ride at each other in the second. In the background, a mock castle and “war machine” stand surrounded by a mote. At the base of the castle two warriors fight on foot. Wilhelm Dilich, *Beschreibung und Abriss dero Ritterspiel...*, 1601.

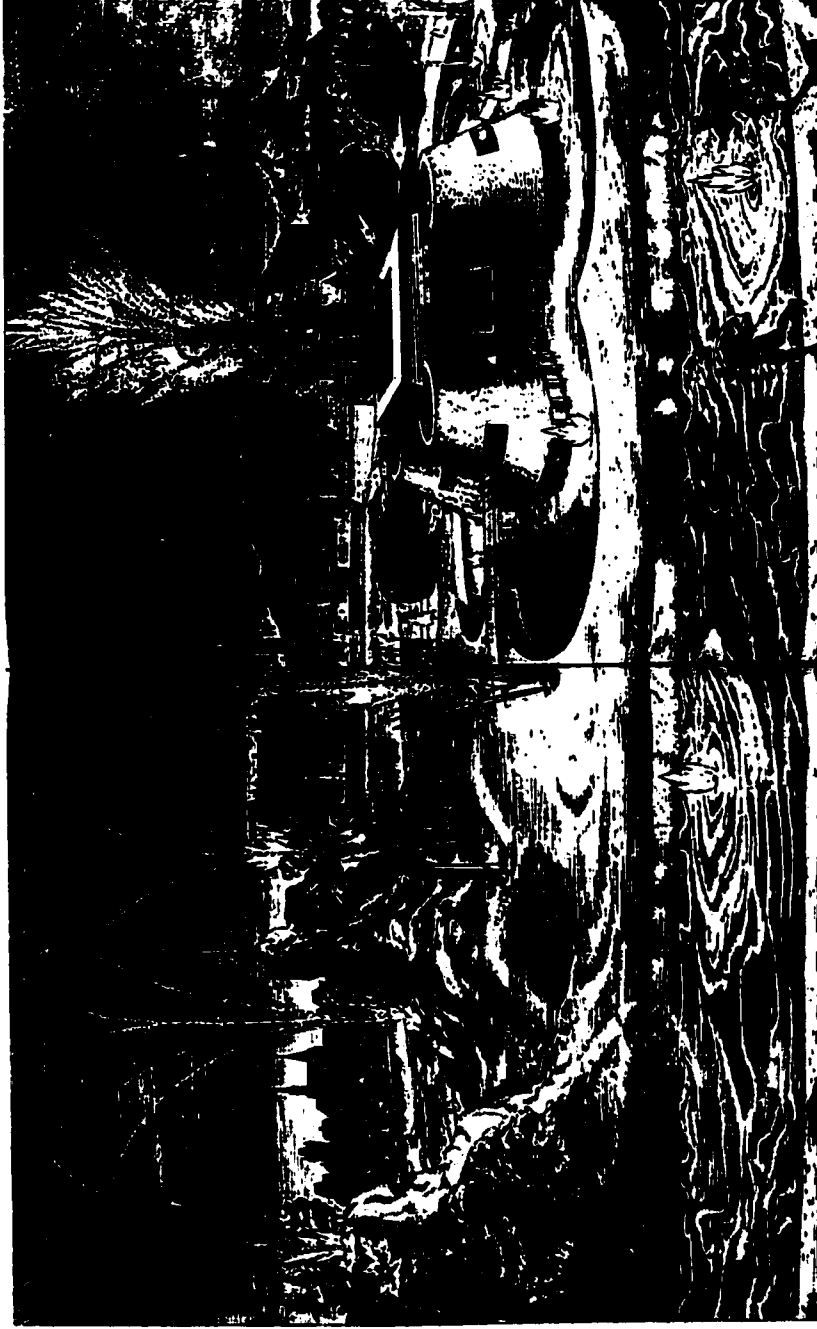


Figure 6-3: Hessians present an elaborate fireworks display at the end of the 1596 baptismal celebrations. A giant seated figure (Duke Moritz?) is the center of the action. Wilhelm Dilich, *Beschreibung und Abriss dero Ritterspiel...*, 1601.



Figure 6-4: National groups representing the Four Elements (Earth, Fire, Water, and Air) compete in a Carosel contest at the 1617 baptism of Prince Ulrich in Stuttgart. Esaias von Hulsen, *Aigentliche Wahrhafftige Delineatio und Abbildung aller Fürstlichen Auffzug und Ritterspieln* (1617)

Abbreviations

BC	Theodore G. Tappert, ed., <i>The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church</i> (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959).
LKAB	Evangelisches Landeskirchlichesarchiv Braunschweig
HAB	Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel
JGNK	<i>Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für niedersächsische Kirchengeschichte</i> (Blomberg/Lippe).
LW	<i>Luther's Works, American Edition</i> , 55 vols., edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann (St. Louis, MO and Philadelphia, PA: Concordia and Fortress Press, 1955-1986).
NSLHAW	Niedersächsisches Landeshauptarchiv Wolfenbüttel
OER	Hans J. Hillerbrand, ed., <i>Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation</i> , vols. 1-4 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996).
Sehling	Emil Sehling, <i>Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des 16. Jahrhunderts</i> , vols. 1-5 (Leipzig, 1902-1913), vols. 6-15 (Tübingen, 1955-1977).
WA	<i>D. Martin Luthers Werke Kritische Gesamtausgabe</i> , 57 vols., eds. J. F. K. Knaake et al (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883-; reprint 1964-68).

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Eines E. Rahts Stadt Braunschweig	NSLHAW, Abt. Sammlung 40, Nr. 2277.
Friederich Ulrich Kindtauff Ordnung	NSLHAW, Abt. Sammlung 40, Nr. 1567.
Friederich Ulrich Krieg Reichsthalers	NSLHAW, 1 Alt 11, Nr. 18-19.
Patenbrief Justus Georg Schottelius	NSLHAW, Alt Findbuch "Gevattern (Schottelius, 1650)"

Evangelisches Landeskirchlichesarchiv Braunschweig

Grafschaft Blankenburg Tauffest	LKAB, V. 709.
Gevattern und die Kindertaufe	LKAB, V. 448.
Kindtaufen nicht an einem Sonntag	LKAB, V. 1517.

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- *Des Durchleuchtigen Hochgebornen Fürsten und Herrn / Hern Georgen / Herzogen zu Braunschweig und Lüneburg / Constitutio und Verordnung /.../ bey Hochzeit / Kindtauff / Begräbniß / und Gastereyen hinfüro gehalten werden soll. Hildesheim, 1638; HAB Gn 3744.*
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