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**Religion and the Military in the Holy Roman
Empire c.1500-1650**

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Religion and the Military in the Holy Roman Empire c.1500-1650

Summary

This study is the first in-depth examination of military religiosity in the Holy Roman Empire in the 16th and early 17th century. Despite a lack of research into military religious sensibilities historians have uncritically repeated a contemporary stereotype that branded soldiers as ‘un-Christian’. The study argues that soldiers were not religiously deviant but that their spirituality differed little from that of their contemporaries. However, one aspect of post-Reformation culture, confessional thinking, was noticeably absent in the military, both structurally and in everyday life. These latitudinarian attitudes were fostered by warlords, as is reflected in martial law, and become evident in military diaries as well as the conduct of warfare in the period. The occurrence of military religious violence does not detract from this general atmosphere of ‘toleration’. Instances of confessional violence have to be considered exceptional given the predominantly unproblematic coexistence of adherents of different confessions within the military and daily encounters with populations of all creeds. An examination of attitudes towards dying, death and burial shows that, while the importance of dying well according to the *ars moriendi* was recognized in the military, the reality of soldier life made orderly deaths frequently impossible. Soldiers’ religious attitudes were therefore in some ways more pragmatic than those of the civilian population but soldiers of all denominations shared universal Christian norms, a finding that fundamentally challenges previous negative estimations regarding military religiosity.

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree:

Signature: _____

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Introduction

Thomas von Lobbecke was losing his mind. He was a Landsknecht mercenary and had had his fair share of “gorging, boozing, fornication and blasphemy” when one night in 1558, he broke into a Catholic church in Flanders.¹ He vandalized it, stripped naked, broke into chests and closets, dressed in liturgical vestments and paced through the church singing. When the priests found him, they could get no sense out of the “strange canon” and fetched the regiment’s provost, who was in charge of policing the soldiers, but he, too, could do little. Finally, the priests found all the hosts gone and asked Lobbecke where he had taken them. He replied that he had eaten them all because he had not received the sacrament in a good twenty years and had wanted to make up for his negligence on this occasion.²

Whether this scene really took place or not is secondary; what is important is its message: Lobbecke represented a typical German mercenary, steeped in sin and with little regard for religion. God smote him with madness for his un-Christian ways and his behaviour in the church was a reminder of what befell those who disregarded their religious duties and violated Christian norms. For 16th and 17th century readers it would have seemed neither surprising nor accidental that the protagonist was a Landsknecht, as the German infantry were commonly known to be arch sinners and irreligious. Some claimed that they were without any religion at all and even in league with the Devil.

This study deals with these men, their families, and their religious views and examines the characteristics of religion in the socio-cultural context of the military. The period between 1500-1650 witnessed dramatic changes in the military sphere and European society and culture in general. At the beginning of the 16th century, the military was in the midst of a comprehensive transformation that deemphasized the role of the former professional military elites and saw an unprecedented number of commoners who sought to make a living as mercenaries. Due to the large numbers of infantry needed to make the new tactics efficient, military historians suggest that army size increased at least ten-fold in the 16th and 17th century.³ The wider socio-cultural framework was fundamentally altered by the fragmentation of Latin Christianity and the

¹ Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof, *Wendunmuth*, Herman Österley (ed.), Tübingen 1869, I:102, 130f.

² Ibid. 131.

³ Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution, Military Innovation and the Rise of the West 1500-1800*, 2nd rev. ed. Cambridge 1996 [1988], 1ff; Frank Tallett, *War and Society in Early Modern Europe (1495-1715)*, London/New York 1992, 9.

pluralization of religious cultures that ensued, which in turn led to confessional conflicts and wars across Europe in which soldiers naturally played a central role.⁴ How soldiers related to the ever-changing religious and socio-political climate is almost entirely un-researched, however.

This study represents the first systematic examination of the religious dimension of military life during the period of reformation and religious pluralization in Germany. Although the last few decades have produced a wealth of scholarship in military social history, we know hardly anything about the role of religion in 16th and early 17th century military life.⁵ There exists only a single collection of essays on early modern military religiosity in the Holy Roman Empire, and most of the contributions address military contexts from the second half of the 17th century onwards.⁶ The 16th century and the first half of the 17th century are almost entirely unstudied despite the fact that this was the period in which Europe lapsed into one and a half centuries of confessional violence.⁷

⁴ For recent overviews of reformation historiography see: Mac P. Holt, 'The Social History of the Reformation: Recent Trends and Future Agendas', *Journal of Social History*, 37, Special Issue Autumn 2003, 133-144; Diarmaid MacCulloch, Mary Laven and Eamon Duffy, Mary Laven and Eamon Duffy, 'Recent Trends in the Study of Christianity in Sixteenth-Century Europe', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 59 (2006), 3, 697-731; Thomas A. Brady, 'From Revolution to the Long Reformation: Writings in English on the German Reformation, 1970-2005', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 100 (2009), 48-64; Thomas Kaufmann, 'Die Deutsche Reformationsforschung seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 100 (2009), 15-47.

⁵ The most relevant monographs of the last twenty years are: Peter Burschel, *Söldner im Nordwestdeutschland des 16. Und 17. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen 1994; Reinhard Baumann, *Landsknechte. Ihre Geschichte und Kultur vom späten Mittelalter bis zum Dreißigjährigen Krieg*, Munich 1994; Matthias Rogg, *Landsknechte und Reisläufer: Bilder vom Soldaten. Ein Stand in der Kunst des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Paderborn, Munich, Vienna, Zurich, 2002; Jan Willem Huntebrinker, "Fromme Knechte" und "Garteteufel" - *Söldner als soziale Gruppe im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, doctoral dissertation Technische Universität Dresden 2008, [published Konstanz 2010]; John A. Lynn, *Women, Armies and Warfare in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 2008. Essay collections include: Kroener and Pröve (eds.), *Krieg und Friede*; Karin Hagemann and Ralf Pröve (eds.), *Landsknechte, Soldatenfrauen und Nationalkrieger. Militär, Krieg und Geschlechterordnung im historischen Wandel*, Frankfurt a.M., 1998; Kroll and Krüger (eds.), *Militär und ländliche Gesellschaft*; Matthias Asche, Michael Herrmann, Ulrike Ludwig and Anton Schindling (eds.), *Krieg, Militär und Migration in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Berlin 2008.

⁶ Michael Kaiser and Stefan Kroll, *Militär und Religiosität in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Münster 2004.

⁷ The pertinent articles are Michael Kaiser, 'Cuius exercitus, eius religio? Konfession und Heerwesen im Zeitalter des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 91 (2000), 316-353; Matthias Rogg, 'Gottlose Kriegerleute? Zur bildlichen Darstellung von Söldnern des 16. Jahrhunderts im Spannungsfeld von Lebenswirklichkeit, öffentlicher Meinung und konfessioneller Bildpropaganda', in: Kaiser and Kroll, *Militär und Religiosität*, 121-144; Robert I. Frost, 'Confessionalisation and the Army in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 1550-1667', in: Joachim Bahlcke and Arno Strohmeyer (eds.), *Konfessionalisierung in Ostmitteleuropa. Wirkungen des religiösen Wandels im 16. Und 17. Jahrhunderts in Staat, Gesellschaft und Kultur*, Stuttgart 1999, 139-60; D.J.B. Trim, 'Conflict, religion and ideology', in: Frank Tallett and D.J.B. Trim (eds.), *European Warfare 1350-1750*, Cambridge 2010, 278-299. Trim's main focus is on political actors, however, and deals only in passing with the religious behaviour of soldiers.

A series of conflicts with a strong confessional element broke out in the Holy Roman Empire almost immediately after the Reformation had begun. The Peasants' War (1525), the Anabaptist rule of Münster (1534/35), the Schmalkaldic War (1546/47), the Cologne (or *Truchsessische*) War (1583-88) all either arose from religious tensions or displayed a strong confessional element.⁸ In many senses, confessional strife culminated in the Thirty Years War, which all major European powers were drawn into at different stages.⁹ The term 'religious war' has been criticised for being too diffuse.¹⁰ Franz Brendle and Anton Schindling have advanced the term 'confessional war' (*Konfessionskrieg*) as a better characterization of the conflicts within Western Christendom, as genuine 'religious wars' were only ever officially waged against the Turks.¹¹ More pertinently for this thesis, Brendle and Schindling stress the importance of differentiating between the experience and interpretation of conflicts at four different levels: that of the policy-makers, the groups and individuals actively and passively affected by the events, the authors and readers of propaganda and lastly the level of memory. Conflicts could be interpreted differently at all levels: while imperial

⁸ On the Peasants' War, see: Franz, Günther, *Der Deutsche Bauernkrieg*, 7th rev. ed. Darmstadt 1965; Peter Blickle, *Die Revolution von 1525*, 4th ed. Darmstadt 2006; idem, *Der Bauernkrieg. Die Revolution des Gemeinen Mannes*, 3rd rev. ed. Munich 2006. Essay collections include: Bob Scribner and Gerhard Benecke (eds.), *The German Peasant War of 1525*, London 1979; Peter Blickle, Thomas A. Brady Jr. and H.C. Erik Midelfort (eds.), *The Revolution of 1525: The German Peasants' War from a New Perspective*, Baltimore 1981. Studies of the Anabaptist rule in Münster include Sigrun Haude, *In the Shadow of Savage Wolves: Anabaptist Münster and the German Reformation During the 1530s*, Boston/Leiden/Cologne 2000; Ralf Klötzer, *Die Täuferherrschaft von Münster. Stadtrefomation und Welterneuerung*, Münster 1992; Hubertus Lutterbach, *Das Täuferreich von Münster. Wurzeln und Eigenarten eines religiösen Aufbruchs*, Münster 2008. On the Schmalkaldic War see, Gabriele Haug-Moritz and Georg Schmidt, 'Schmalkaldischer Bund' in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. XXX, Berlin / New York 1999, 221-228; Gabriele Haug-Moritz, 'Der Schmalkaldische Krieg (1546/47) – ein kaiserlicher Religionskrieg?', in: Franz Brendle and Anton Schindling (eds.), *Religionskriege im Alten Reich und in Alteuropa*, Münster 2006, 93-105; Gabriele Schlütter-Schindler, *Der Schmalkaldische Bund und das Problem der causa religionis*, Frankfurt a.M., Bern, New York, 1986. Max Lossen's *Der Kölnische Krieg* (2 vols., Gotha and Munich/ Leipzig 1882/1897) will likely remain the most detailed study on this conflict for the foreseeable future since the collapse of the Cologne Stadtarchiv in March 2008.

⁹ The historiography on the Thirty Years War, especially after the 450th jubilee of the Peace of Münster in 1998 is vast. The most prominent monographs are Josef V. Polišínský, *The Thirty Years War*, London 1971; Johannes Burkhardt, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, Frankfurt a.M. 1992; Asch, *Thirty Years War*; Geoff Mortimer, *Eyewitness Accounts of the Thirty Years War 1618-48*, Basingstoke/New York 2002; Peter H. Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy – A History of the Thirty Years War*, London 2009. Essay collections and local studies include: Geoffrey Parker (ed.), *The Thirty Years War*, 2nd rev. ed., London/ New York 1997; Klaus Bussmann and Hans Schilling (eds.), *1648 – War and Peace in Europe*, 3 vols., Münster 1998; Stefan Ehrenpreis (ed.), *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg im Herzogtum Berg und in seinen Nachbarregionen* (Bergische Forschungen 28), Neustadt a.d. Aisch 2002; Plath, *Konfessionskampf*.

¹⁰ Franz Brendle and Anton Schindling, 'Religionskriege in der Frühen Neuzeit. Begriff, Wahrnehmung, Wirkmächtigkeit', in: Brendle and Schindling (eds.), *Religionskriege*, 15-52, 19ff.; Haug-Moritz, *Schmalkaldische Krieg*, 94. See also Kai Bremer, 'Zur Rhetorik und Semantik des Begriffs „Religionshandel“ in der konfessionellen Polemik', in: Hans Peterse (ed.), *Siß scheint der Krieg den Unerfahrenen. Das Bild vom Krieg und die Utopie des Friedens in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Göttingen 2006, 25-33.

¹¹ Brendle and Schindling, *Religionskriege*, 19.

propaganda, for example, was consciously trying to dissimulate wars against Protestant princes as secular policing measures against rebels and breakers of the imperial peace, the confessional propaganda machines of both sides tended to stress the religious element of the conflict. For the larger population, too, confessional and religious motives and interpretations were believable and often dominant.¹² We consequently have to ask where the military stood in all this. Did soldiers interpret their experiences in the framework of confessional politics and did they gain motivation through this interpretation of events as Johannes Burkhardt has suggested for the Thirty Years War?¹³ Were they ‘mercenaries’ in the pejorative sense, who only fought for pay? Or did they develop a mode of interpretation that was particular to the military? These will be some of the guiding questions throughout this thesis.

Military history in post-war Germany was for a long time considered an academic “urchin” (*Schmuddelkind*).¹⁴ While French and Anglo-American historians began writing a ‘new’ military history from the 1960s onwards, most social historians in Germany shied away from the military as the subject seemed uncomfortably close to the chauvinism and nationalism the country tried to leave behind.¹⁵ As Peter Burschel has observed, social historians seem to have found it easier to empathize with the disenfranchised as objects of study than to sympathize with soldiers: “Was the mercenary not primarily a ‘perpetrator’, in any case more a perpetrator than a victim?”¹⁶ Only in the late 1980s did this situation change and the 1990s witnessed a veritable ‘boom’ in military social and cultural history with the publications of several essay collections and monographs.¹⁷ Since Burschel’s complaint in 1994 that war and the

¹² Ibid. 17.

¹³ Burkhardt, *Dreißigjährige Krieg*, 134.

¹⁴ Ralf Pröve, ‘Vom Schmuddelkind zur anerkannten Subdisziplin? Die „neue Militärgeschichte“ der Frühen Neuzeit. Perspektiven, Entwicklungen, Probleme’, *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 51 (2000), 597-612. See also the following articles for more in-depth reviews of the historiography: Bernhard R. Kroener, “‘Vom extraordinari Kriegsvolck’ zum “miles perpetuus”. Zur Rolle der bewaffneten Macht in der europäischen Gesellschaft’, *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 43 (1988), 1, 141-188; idem, ‘Militär in der Gesellschaft. Aspekte einer neuen Militärgeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit’, in: Thomas Kühne and Benjamin Ziemann (eds.), *Was ist Militärgeschichte?*, Paderborn 2000, 283-299.

¹⁵ For example André Corvisier, *L’Armée Française de la fin du XVIIème siècle au ministère de Choiseul – Le Soldat*, 2 vols., Paris 1964; Fritz Redlich *The German Military Enterprise and His Workforce. A Study in European Economic and Social History*, 2 vols., Wiesbaden 1964; or Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road 1567-1659. The Logistics of Spanish Victory and Defeat in the Low Countries’ Wars*, Cambridge 1972.

¹⁶ Burschel, *Söldner*, 18.

¹⁷ Wolfram Wette (ed.), *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes. Eine Militärgeschichte von Unten*, Munich 1992; Burschel, *Söldner*; Baumann, *Landsknechte*; Bernhard R. Kroener and Ralf Pröve (eds.), *Krieg und Frieden - Militär und Gesellschaft in der frühen Neuzeit*, Paderborn, Munich, Vienna, Zurich, 1996;

military were a taboo subject among German social historians the situation has changed drastically.¹⁸ In 1995, the ‘Arbeitskreis Militär und Gesellschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit’ was founded by Bernhard Kroener and Ralf Pröve and began to publish a series of themed essay collections and monographs (*Herrschaft und soziale Systeme in der Frühen Neuzeit*) as well as a journal, *Militär und Gesellschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit*, that is now in its 16th year of publication.¹⁹ Topics that have been addressed in the literature include legal structures, social composition and living conditions, the representation of mercenaries in art, and recently outside and inside perceptions and constructions of the military as a social group as well as gender relations in the armies.²⁰ We thus have a rather good knowledge of several central aspects of military social and cultural life. The role of religion in the military context during this period of reformation and confessionalization is barely explored, however, and the following chapters seek to address this gap.

Historians are usually content to repeat what appears to be accepted as a truism – that religion did not play a role in the military. As the first chapter will show, this notion is an uncritical perpetuation of a bias against soldiers that had a long tradition but gained renewed currency around 1500 and was repeated habitually and formulaically by early modern commentators. In the 19th century, mercenaries and their perceived lack of attachment to a national or ideological cause were perceived and characterized as antithetical to the nationalist *zeitgeist*. Gustav Freytag’s descriptions of the horrors of the Thirty Years’ War especially left a lasting impression on the popular imagination and academic studies alike.²¹ The early modern mercenary was thus portrayed as a

Hagemann and Pröve (eds.), *Landsknechte*; Michael Kaiser, *Politik Politik und Kriegführung. Maximilian von Bayern, Tilly und die Katholische Liga im Dreißigjährigen Krieg*, Münster 1999

¹⁸ Burschel, *Söldner*, 17.

¹⁹ <http://www.amg-fnz.de/>, (last accessed 09/09/11).

²⁰ Michael Möller, *Das Regiment der Landsknechte. Untersuchungen zu Verfassung, Recht und Selbstverständnis in deutschen Söldnerheeren des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Wiesbaden 1976; Burschel, *Söldner*; Rogg, *Landsknechte*; Huntebrinker, *Fromme Knechte*. I would like to give many thanks to Dr. Huntebrinker for his generosity in making his dissertation available to a stranger and for subsequently lending advice and opinions. On gender relations see the contributions in Hagemann and Pröve, *Landsknechte, Soldatenfrauen und Nationalkrieger*, and more recently Lynn, *Women*.

²¹ Gustav Freytag, *Bilder aus der Deutschen Vergangenheit*, III: *Aus dem Jahrhundert des großen Krieges (1600-1700)*, 5th rev. ed. Leipzig 1867. See Robert Ergang, *The Myth of the All-destructive Fury of the Thirty Years War* (Pocono Pines 1956), for an early but generally overlooked discussion of the development of this idea in the 19th century and more recently Kevin Cramer, *The Thirty Years’ War and German Memory in the Nineteenth Century*, Lincoln 2007. See also Bernhard R. Kroener, “‘The Soldiers are very poor, bare, naked, exhausted’: The living conditions and organisational structure of military society during the Thirty Years’ War”, in: Bussmann and Schilling, *1648*, II, 285-291, 285; Mortimer, *Eyewitness Accounts*, 1f; Wilson, *Europe’s Tragedy*, 779ff.

villainous vagabond, murderous by trade, irreligious out of defiance and immoral by nature.

Hans Delbrück challenged this view already in the 1920s, but historians have continued to see armies as a catch basin for societal surplus.²² Cicely V. Wedgwood's estimation that "the armies thus raised without regard to race or religion were the outcasts of society or the surplus population of overcrowded districts" is representative of the tenacious and common view of the early modern military.²³ Writing on the eve of the Second World War, Eugen von Frauenholz described the mercenary army of the mid-16th century in the idiom of his time as "degenerate" (*entartet*).²⁴ The conviction that mercenaries, especially foot soldiers, "commonly led violent, debauched lives of poverty and crime" can be found also in more recent studies.²⁵ Postulations regarding the corrupting influence of military life on soldiers' moral constitutions continue to be a staple of historical commentary on the soldiery. One recent commentator maintains that soldiers' "bad reputation" was "often well deserved" and speculates that some recruits "were probably fairly decent characters, although in an environment reputedly permeated with drink, gambling and violence they may not have stayed that way for long".²⁶ Similarly, when Günter Barudio states that even veteran soldiers who had managed to preserve "a glimmer of honour and conscience" could nevertheless be recruited as assassins, he makes the tacit assumption that these were virtues that few soldiers retained in the long run.²⁷

Given this dominant view of mercenary moral corruption, it is perhaps not surprising that few scholars have devoted their attention to religious sentiments in this putative Gomorrah. Authors who do volunteer a -usually un-researched- opinion on military religiosity mostly agree on "soldiers' indifferent attitude towards religious

²² Hans Delbrück, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst*, 4, Berlin 1920, (digital ed. Berlin 2002 [Digitale Bibliothek 72]), 3596.

²³ Cicely V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War*, New York 2005 [1938], 87. Who supposedly decided which individuals were 'surplus' and should join the armies is unclear and one of the more undemanding arguments against this point of view.

²⁴ Eugen von Frauenholz, *Lazarus von Schwendi. Der erste deutsche Verkünder der allgemeinen Wehrpflicht*, Hamburg 1939, 20.

²⁵ Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art in the Late Middle Ages*, Berkeley 1993, 2 vols., vol.1, 26.

²⁶ Erik Swart, 'From "*Landsknecht*" to "*Soldier*": The Low German Foot Soldiers of the Low Countries in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century', *International Review of Social History*, 51 (2006), 75-92, 78f.

²⁷ Günther Barudio, *Der Deutsche Krieg*, Frankfurt a.M. 1998, 165.

considerations” or that “the contempt of soldiers for religion is a matter of record”.²⁸ Although Frank Tallett treats religion on less than two pages in his study of war in early modern society, he makes some strong statements regarding military religious attitudes in this short space. While he recognizes that “the ethos of soldiering encouraged an *affected* disregard of established norms of religious behaviour”, he quickly represents this affectation as an actual lack of conviction.²⁹ Tallett states “that military men were noted for their profanity and irreligion”, that religiosity if it is detectable at all was limited to “mechanistic, death-bed type of piety” and that “soldiers were remarkable for the lack of any religious sensibility at all”.³⁰ Ultimately, in his estimation “the army milieu as a whole tended to be dechristianizing”.³¹ The underlying assumption is clear: soldiers were religiously abnormal in a cultural context in which religion supposedly dictated the individual’s behaviour in all aspects of life.

The present study seeks to challenge this historiographical commonplace of the early modern military as a realm of ‘godlessness’ or irreligion. It hardly seems controversial to maintain that Christian religion framed, structured and informed early modern society, culture and individual lives. The notion that an entire socio-professional group like the military should fall out of the socio-cultural framework so comprehensively as to warrant the descriptors ‘irreligious’, ‘areligious’, ‘un-Christian’ and so forth seems too sweeping and undifferentiated to carry force. Why would hundreds of thousands of men and women stray from the common contemporary worldview merely because of their profession? These questions are highlighted all the more since recent studies of the military as a social group are in agreement that the military in fact represented a cross-section of society and that soldiers and their families did not constitute a discrete, isolated social entity but remained closely connected to larger society.³² The constant influx of new recruits and other individuals, the billeting in villages and towns and the reintegration of those that survived into civilian contexts

²⁸ Siegfried Fiedler, *Kriegswesen und Kriegführung im Zeitalter der Landsknechte*, Koblenz 1985, 90; Redlich *German Military Enterpriser*, I, 476.

²⁹ Tallett, *War and Society*, 128. Italics mine.

³⁰ Ibid. 127-128.

³¹ Ibid. 128.

³² Burschel, *Söldner*, 54ff.; Baumann, *Landsknechte*, 62ff.; Kroener, *Soldaten*, 286; idem, “Das Schwungrad an der Staatsmaschine?” Die Bedeutung der bewaffneten Macht in der europäischen Geschichte der Frühen Neuzeit, in: Idem and Pröve (eds.), *Krieg und Frieden*, 1-23; Michael Kaiser, ‘Die Söldner und die Bevölkerung. Überlegungen zu Konstituierung und Überwindung eines lebensweltlichen Antagonismus’, in: Stefan Kroll and Kersten Krüger (eds.), *Militär und ländliche Gesellschaft in der frühen Neuzeit*, Hamburg 2000, 79-120, esp. 106ff; Jan Willem Huntebrinker, ‘Geordneter Sozialverband oder Gegenordnung? Zwei Perspektiven auf das Militär im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert’, *Militär und Gesellschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit*, 10 (2006) 2, 181-199, 181.

all provided points of connection between the military and society at large. The experiences of daily life certainly differed between the civilian and military realm and soldiers claimed a distinct social position in their encounters with civilians but the notion of a discrete military ‘culture’ has been rejected.³³ That the military social realm had a “dechristianizing” effect as Tallett posits thus seems implausible.

Soldiers, in Peter Wilson’s words, “occupied an ambiguous place in society as servants of the authorities who engaged in activities breaching the most basic Christian commandments”.³⁴ This raises important questions. How did soldiers negotiate the demands of their profession and their actions within the framework of Christian ethics? What importance did religion have in the armies that fought the confessional wars that erupted after the Reformation? What, if any, were the characteristic elements that set religious thinking and religious practice apart from the civilian context? The following chapters aim to find answers to these questions by examining different aspects of military religiosity and place them in dialogue with civilian contexts.

An important question that runs through the dissertation is the nature of confessionalization in the military and in how far confessional sentiments were shared by those who fought the wars of religion. The confessionalization paradigm has dominated especially German historiography for three decades and the processes, dynamics, and even the existence of confessionalization and the closely associated subject of ‘social discipline’ continue to be hotly debated.³⁵ Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhard, the initial advocates of the confessionalization thesis, took a strongly statist view and envisioned these changes as top-down processes but this characterization of a ‘confessional coercion-state’ (*konfessioneller Zwangsstaat*) soon

³³ Kaiser, *Söldner und Bevölkerung*; Huntebrinker, *Fromme Knechte*, 261ff.

³⁴ Wilson, *Europe’s Tragedy*, 834.

³⁵ On ‘social discipline’ see Gerhard Oestreich, ‘Strukturprobleme des europäischen Absolutismus’, in: *Geist und Gestalt des frühmodernen Staates*, Berlin 1969. Given the frequency with which these concepts have been discussed it seems unnecessary to provide a renewed overview in this context. For discussions of the ‘confessionalization’ and ‘social discipline’ paradigms see Stefan Breuer, ‘Probleme und Problemverlagerungen bei Max Weber, Gerhard Oestreich und Michel Foucault’, in: Chr. Sachße, F. Tennstedt (eds.), *Soziale Sicherheit und Soziale Disziplinierung. Beiträge zu einer historischen Theorie der Sozialpolitik*, Frankfurt a.M. 1986, 45-69; Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation. Central Europe 1550-1750*, London/New York 1989, passim; Winfried Schulze, ‘Konfessionalisierung als Paradigma zur Erforschung des Konfessionellen Zeitalters’, in: Burkhard Dietz and Stefan Ehrenpreis (eds.), *Drei Konfessionen in einer Region. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Konfessionalisierung im Herzogtum Berg vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, Cologne 1999, 15-30; and more recently with an extensive bibliography: Franzisca Loetz, *Mit Gott handeln – Von den Zürcher Gotteslästerern der Frühen Neuzeit zu einer Kulturgeschichte des Religiösen*, Göttingen 2002, 50ff.

elicited criticism.³⁶ Micro-historical and historical anthropological studies have seriously challenged the validity of the confessionalization paradigm and its periodization and have shown that religious pluralization was complex, multi-layered, non-teleological, unpredictable and contradictory. If it occurred at all, it was the result of negotiation, pragmatism and compromise with locally specific dynamics, rather than simple implementations of a reform program from above.³⁷

It also becomes increasingly clear that confessional categories such as 'Catholic', 'Lutheran' or 'Reformed' belie the great diversity *within* the denominations and the existence of confessional hybrids. Crucially, the churches can no longer be seen as monolithic blocks, as religious practice and attitudes varied considerably from place to place.³⁸ Hybrid forms of worship developed in many locales and across the Empire a

³⁶ Wolfgang Reinhard, 'Zwang zur Konfessionalisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalters', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, 10 (1983), 257-277; 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; idem, 'Die Konfessionalisierung im Reich. Religiöser und Gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Deutschland zwischen 1555 und 1620', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 246, 1 (1988), 1-45. The confessionalization paradigm was in many ways a synthesis of Oestreich's model of social discipline and the Ernst Walter Zeeden's notion of *Konfessionsbildung*, which described inner-ecclesiastical developments (*Die Entstehung der Konfessionen. Grundlagen und Formen der Konfessionsbildung im Zeitalter der Glaubenskämpfe*, Munich/Vienna 1965). The term 'konfessioneller Zwangsstaat' was used by Reinhard, *Zwang*, 268. For early criticism see Heinrich Richard Schmidt, *Dorf und Religion. Reformierte Sittenzucht in Berner Landgemeinden der Frühen Neuzeit*, Stuttgart 1995; idem, 'Sozialdisziplinierung? Ein Plädoyer für das Ende des Etatismus in der Konfessionalisierungsforschung', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 265, 3 (1997), 639-682. More restrained criticism was voiced for example in Winfried Schulze's review of Schilling's *Konfessionskonflikt*, *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, 12 (1985), 104-107.

³⁷ To name but a few: Schmidt, *Dorf*; Thomas Robisheaux, *Rural Society and the Search for Order in Early Modern Germany*, Cambridge 1989; Marc R. Forster, *The Counter-reformation in the Villages: Religion and Reform in the Bishopric of Speyer*, Ithaca 1992; idem, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque: Religious Identity in Southwest Germany, 1550-1750*, Cambridge 2001; idem, *Catholic Germany from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, Basingstoke 2007; Christian Plath, *Konfessionskampf und fremde Besatzung. Stadt und Hochstift Hildesheim im Zeitalter der Gegenreformation und des Dreißigjährigen Krieges (ca.1580-1660)*, Münster 2005. Schilling himself later argued for a 'pincer-movement' (*Zangenbewegung*): 'Disziplinierung oder "Selbstregulierung der Untertanen"? Ein Plädoyer für die Doppelperspektive von Makro- und Mikrohistorie bei der Erforschung der frühmodernen Kirchenzucht', *Historische Zeitschrift* 264, 3 (1997), 675-691, 680.

³⁸ On the German Catholic Church's resistance to the Tridentine reforms see Plath, *Konfessionskampf*, 92, and Marc R. Forster, 'The Elite and Popular Foundations of German Catholicism in the Age of Confessionalism: The *Reichskirche*', *Central European History*, 26 (1993) 2, 311-325. A global perspective on the Counter-reformation is provided by Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal 1540-1770*, 2nd ed. Cambridge 2005. German Catholic suspicion of the Jesuits is described by Forster, 'The Thirty Years' War and the Failure of Catholicization', in: David M. Luebke (ed.) *The Counter Reformation*, Malden (MA)/Oxford 1999, 163-197, 174. On the variety of Catholic practice across Europe see Dorothea Nolde, 'Andächtiges Staunen – ungläubige Verwunderung. Religiöse Differenzenerfahrungen in französischen und deutschen Reiseberichten in der Frühen Neuzeit', *Francia* 33 (2006) 2, 13-34; Kaspar von Greyerz, *Religion und Kultur. Europa 1500-1800*, Göttingen 2000, 71f. Mark R. Forster, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque: Religious Identity in Southwest Germany, 1550-1750*, Cambridge 2001, 61. Diversity in the Lutheran context is covered by Thomas Kaufmann, *Konfession und Kultur. Lutherischer Protestantismus in der zweiten Hälfte des Reformationsjahrhunderts*, Tübingen 2006. See also David Luebke, 'Confessions of the Dead.

multiplicity of local religious ‘flavours’ developed which often defy neat confessional categorization.³⁹ We therefore have to conceptualize the religious landscape until the end of the Thirty Years War as very much in flux and, vitally, not consistently assignable to a confessional ‘camp’. Thus, while establishing doctrinal uniformity was of utmost importance for church leaders, to whom “[c]onflicting religious opinions were not an acceptable option”, communities and individuals were shaping and diversifying the religious options available to them, sometimes boldly, sometimes tentatively, in some cases actively, in others obliviously.⁴⁰

Religious diversity did not necessarily breed conflict, a fact that has been largely overlooked. Confessional coexistence has attracted scholarly attention only relatively recently but the studies that have been conducted so far already represent a significant counterbalance to the still dominant view that religious fragmentation inevitably led to conflict.⁴¹ In many German towns and villages, two or more confessions co-existed in a peaceful, if not necessarily happy, manner. Many individuals around 1600 more or less consciously subscribed to a confession but this did not mean that they were uncritical of their own creed or automatically hostile towards members of another. Religious extremism or divisiveness conflicted with communal ideals of neighbourliness and communal cohesion and oftentimes this moral system simply overrode matters of religion.⁴² Many communities adopted an indifferent attitude towards confessional allegiance.⁴³ So, while elites could be pursuing policies of confessional purity, the populace often took a much more tolerant stance.⁴⁴ In the absence of pressure from above, Protestants and Catholics therefore often lived peacefully together in the same communities, the same neighbourhoods, streets and houses. Confessional tension did

Interpreting Burial Practice in the Late Reformation’, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 101 (2010), 55-79; Karen E. Spierling, ‘Daring Insolence toward God? The Perpetuation of Catholic Baptismal Traditions in Sixteenth-Century Geneva’, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 93 (2002), 97-125.

³⁹ Hsia, *Social Discipline*, 141; Marc R. Forster, *Catholic Germany from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, Basingstoke 2007, 29; Plath, *Konfessionskampf*, 95, 96 (footnote), 100.

⁴⁰ Patrick T. Ferry, ‘Confessionalization and Popular Preaching: Sermons against Synergism in Reformation Saxony’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 28 (1997) 4, 1143-1166, 1145.

⁴¹ See the contributions in Kaspar von Greyerz, Hartmut Lehmann, Thomas Kaufmann and Manfred Jakubowski-Tiessen (eds.), *Interkonfessionalität – Transkonfessionalität- binnenkonfessionelle Pluralität. Neue Forschungen zur Konfessionalisierungsthese*, Heidelberg 2003; Benjamin Kaplan, *Divided By Faith. Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge (MA) / London, 2007; C. Scott Dixon, Dagmar Freist and Mark Greengrass (eds.), *Living With Religious Diversity in Early Modern Europe*, Farnham / Burlington 2009. See also: C. Scott Dixon, ‘Urban Order and Religious Coexistence in the German Imperial City: Augsburg and Donauwörth’, *Central European History* 40 (2007) 1, 1-33; Wilson, *Europe’s Tragedy*, 38ff.

⁴² Forster, *Thirty Years War*, 167, Hsia, *Social Discipline*, 137.

⁴³ Greyerz, *Religion und Kultur*, 181.

⁴⁴ Hsia, *Social Discipline*, 83f.

increase in the decades around 1600 but the Thirty Years' War led to a "growing dislike of religious fanaticism" and "Religious peace had actually 'broken out' among the populace well before the signing of peace treaties in 1648".⁴⁵ The questions for the present study that arise from this research concern the negotiation of religious difference in military communities, which were predominantly confessional composites. How did military authorities and individuals deal with religious diversity and how did the confessional dimension of war affect those who fought in them?

The source base for this study is heterogeneous, as the military before the end of the Thirty Years War did not leave many traces in the archives and the documentary evidence that does survive is not very yielding of the questions this study seeks to answer.⁴⁶ What little archival material exists largely concerns secular, not religious matters. Research in the city archives of Cologne and Wolfenbüttel and the Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf reflected a well known problem: while military sources postdating 1650 became increasingly more numerous, documents from before that time usually fit into a few not very sizeable boxes and contained hardly any useful evidence for the present study. The methodology therefore had to be made more flexible to comprise diverse materials including legal tracts, military manuals, theological and devotional literature, chronicles, autobiographies, letters, eyewitness accounts, news pamphlets, woodcuts, songs, and even material objects. The evidence presented in the following is therefore taken from previously known materials, which were collated and interrogated with new questions in mind. Each chapter relies on different kinds of sources so that an introduction and discussion of these will be provided in the respective contexts.

The first chapter will address and unpack the early modern stereotype of soldiers as 'godless' and aims to explain why soldiers elicited such revulsion in their contemporaries. The sources for this chapter are mainly normative texts written by theologians and military authors. While the stereotype has been recognized, military historians have thus far failed to contextualize it diachronically and synchronically with the result that early modern soldiers appear singularly depraved. By a close reading of these formulaic allegations and contextualizing them historically, the chapter examines

⁴⁵ Forster, *Thirty Years' War*, 167; Hsia, *Social Discipline*, 176.

⁴⁶ On the difficult source situation see for example Burschel, *Söldner*, 22f.

why soldiers were considered arch sinners in the period of study and whether the behaviours that earned them this negative reputation allow us to draw conclusions on their religious views.

The second chapter turns to examine the role of religion in military organization based on martial law codes, military manuals and religious provisions made for the soldiery. Due to the very good documentary situation pertaining to martial law, the legal structure of the military is well studied but religious provisions have so far been examined only cursorily. The chaplaincy of the period has received next to no scholarly attention, probably because field preachers were reputedly as impious as their flock. The chapter provides evidence that suggests that military chaplains were in fact not of a lower order than their civilian colleagues and that the criteria for military and civilian pastoral care were almost identical. Devotional literature aimed at soldiers began to appear in the early 17th century and will be examined here in regards to the religious values that were conveyed in this genre. Finally, religious iconography on military banners will be taken into account.

The third chapter aims to examine what role religion in general and confession in particular played in soldiers' lives. The first sections of the chapter are based mainly on autobiographical accounts, all of which have been previously known but are read here with new questions in mind. It becomes evident that military diarists were not, in fact, 'godless' but in dialogue with God in much the same way as their contemporaries were. What has to be accounted for, however, is that the majority of ego-documents exhibit a decidedly un-confessional worldview. Attitudes towards sex and marriage are examined on the basis of a convolute of letters from 1625 that allow varied insights into soldiers' relationships with local women. Military blasphemy, finally, is examined in the light of recent scholarship on blasphemy in the civilian context.

The fourth chapter addresses a topic that seems to stand in stark contrast to this general un-confessional mindset: religious violence. Military religious violence is thus far only inadequately studied and the chapter compares acts of religious violence committed by soldiers to the 'rites of violence' that have been described for the civilian context.

The last chapter addresses military attitudes towards dying, death and burial. The historiography of death has emphasized the importance of the *ars moriendi* in early modern culture but many of the norms and expectations that surrounded the good death and honourable burial were difficult, if not impossible to meet in the field. The chapter

investigates how theologians and soldiers negotiated the precarious circumstances under which soldiers were likely to die.

A note on the terminology

The terms ‘soldier’ and ‘mercenary’ will be used interchangeably in the following as a distinction is impossible to maintain in the period concerned. The men we are concerned with in the following were mercenaries in the sense that they did not necessarily fight for their rightful lord or their native country and they received pay for their services. German historians at times differentiate between ‘mercenary’ (*Söldner*) and ‘soldier’ (*Soldat*)⁴⁷ and although this is probably not intended, the distinction has ideological overtones that seem unhelpful. Both German words, *Söldner* and *Soldat*, and their cognates in other European languages have the same etymological root, Latin *sol[i]dus*, which means either the late classical coin or simply ‘pay’. ‘Mercenary’ is derived from Latin *mercennarius*, meaning ‘paid’ or ‘hired’, or ‘hired worker’, while the root *merces*, translates as ‘pay’, ‘wage’. ‘Mercenary’ and ‘soldier’ thus both denoted warriors who rendered military service in exchange for pay. The second issue concerns the terms ‘religion’/‘religious’ and ‘confession(al)’. Given the significant problems with the confessionalization paradigm, care should be taken not to confuse the ‘religious’ with the ‘confessional’. If we consider ‘confession(al)’ to refer to distinctly Catholic, Lutheran or Reformed outlooks, ‘religious’ might describe a less partisan, more universally ‘Christian’ worldview. The distinction will become clearer in the course of this study but at this point it may suffice to caution not to conflate the two. A religious person did not necessarily have to identify with a distinct confessional position and inversely, an individual who did not exhibit a pronounced confessional identity should not be considered irreligious.

⁴⁷ For example Baumann, *Landsknechte*; Burschel, *Söldner*.

Chapter 1

‘A New Order of Soulless Men’ – Towards an Understanding of the Soldier Stereotype in Early Modern Society and Culture

Georg Niege was a student of theology in Marburg when he decided to become a Landsknecht in 1545/46. In his rhymed autobiographical poems he claims poverty as the reason for leaving the university after he had received his baccalaureate.⁴⁸ But there is a problem with Niege’s self-representation: Brage bei der Wieden, the editor of Niege’s literary oeuvre, has shown that the young man was not destitute at all.⁴⁹ In fact, he received an annual stipend of twenty guilders from his hometown of Allendorf on which he could have lived for another four years. His decision to leave university proved to be a good one career-wise: Niege quickly secured a position as a regimental scribe and spent the rest of his life in various military and civilian administrative positions and had appointments as regimental judge and captain of his own regiment. Why, then, did he fabricate a story of destitution when he reminisced about his life? The motivation seems to have been the negative image that was stereotypically attached especially to common soldiers in early modern Europe: those allegedly ‘godless’ and ‘dissolute’ men who, like Niege, deserted their position in life to follow the drum.

This chapter seeks to achieve three objectives: first, to establish the early modern stereotype that associated the mercenary soldier with ‘un-Christian’ behaviour and explain the nature of these behaviours, second, to disentangle the allegations and contextualize them historically and, thirdly, to suggest explanations as to why the common soldier in particular stirred such anxiety. In doing so we will mostly view the military from an outside perspective, the perspective of the contemporaries who left the most damning indictments of soldierly vice. The following discussion is intended to illustrate the deep-seated tension between the moral wardens of Christian society and the military profession, which was perceived as threatening due to its alleged immorality. The point that is argued throughout is that these contemporary descriptions are not objective portrayals of soldiers but expressions of a stereotype, a *topos* that was common across Europe and, contrary to common historical opinion, was not early

⁴⁸ Brage Bei der Wieden (ed.), *Leben im 16. Jahrhundert. Lebenslauf und Lieder des Hauptmanns Georg Niege*, Berlin 1996, 45ff.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 44.

modern in origin but had a long tradition. Furthermore, it will be shown that the deviant behaviour attributed to soldiers, which prompted their condemnation as ‘un-Christian’ and ‘godless’, consisted not so much of spiritual offences but of behaviours that ran contrary to certain Christian social norms. As we have seen in the introduction, this distinction is necessary because historians have taken the moralists’ descriptions of soldiers’ behaviours as ‘godless’ to indicate that they had no regard for religion in general. In fact, this chapter argues, these descriptions allow us no insight into military spiritualities but merely indicate conflicting opinions on what constituted good Christian behaviour; what moralists decried as ‘godlessness’, soldiers may have regarded as perfectly acceptable or at least excusable.

Many historians have taken these formulaic allegations at face value in an attempt to create a putative ‘realistic’ image of early modern warfare and capture the revulsion soldiers caused in their contemporaries.⁵⁰ Bernhard Kroener writes about the historiography of the Thirty Years War: “Evaluation of mostly normative evidence reinforced the [historical] view that every soldier [...] belonged to an international association of work-shy criminal elements”.⁵¹ Two historians have addressed the stereotype in some detail. Matthias Rogg has documented it in visual representations of mercenaries but while the images he describes are illustrations of the literal condemnations we will encounter below, his study does not add much to an understanding of *why* the figure of the mercenary soldier attracted certain kinds of associations.⁵² Jan Willem Huntebrinker’s insightful examination of outside perceptions of the military also includes a discussion of stereotypical forms of deviant behaviour that were connected to soldiers in images (idleness, *garden* – the verb denoting the banding together of unemployed mercenaries who begged or turned to crime to support themselves – gambling, boozing, licentiousness and luxury) but his discussion does not encompass matters of religion.⁵³ This chapter seeks to add to the understanding of the stereotype by examining its religious dimension. In doing so, it is pertinent to first establish the stereotype and its formulaic nature. Secondly, we will examine the long tradition of condemning soldiers in Christianity, a crucial aspect that has thus far not been related to the vilification of the early modern mercenary. Finally, the central

⁵⁰ See Burschel, *Söldner*, 47.

⁵¹ Kroener, *Soldaten*, 286.

⁵² Rogg, *Landksnechte*.

⁵³ Huntebrinker, *Fromme Knechte*, 109ff.

allegations will be placed in their historical context in order to understand how the specific anxieties surrounding the mercenary fit into the wider cultural framework.

Establishing the stereotype

Expressions of contempt especially of rank and file soldiers are omnipresent in early modern texts. In order to establish the main moral and religious shortcomings associated specifically with the Landsknechte and show the ubiquity of the stereotype, the following passages reflect the positions of influential authors of different confessions, from different genres and different points of time. They have been chosen due to their prominence both in their own time and in the way they have shaped later perceptions.

Condemnations of soldiers were voiced across Europe in the decades around 1500 and Erasmus of Rotterdam addressed the vices of the soldiery repeatedly. To Erasmus, soldiers may have been “idiots” but more devastatingly he thought them “barbarians, [...] blackguards, murderers, and robbers”.⁵⁴ A similar sentiment was expressed in the *Institutio* for the future emperor Charles, where armies were characterized as “a barbarian rabble, made up of all the worst scoundrels”, a notion that led Erasmus to the conclusion that “there is no class of men more abject and indeed more damnable” than soldiers.⁵⁵ In the *Querela pacis* (1517), Peace speaks of “godless soldiers” and “the criminal dregs of hired mercenaries” and concludes that soldiers “deserve not the crucifix but crucifixion”.⁵⁶ The notion that soldiers were criminal, immoral and ‘godless’ was thus not limited to the German perspective but shared by other European thinkers.

Due to the need to establish a doctrinal profile, Protestant theologians became the “prime movers in public discourses about German values” and also dominated discussion about the immorality of mercenary soldiers for the rest of the century.⁵⁷ An early example of Protestant military condemnation can be found in a dialogue by Johann Eberlin von Günzburg, a former Franciscan who had left his order in 1521 to

⁵⁴ Erasmus, ‘Dulce bellum inexpertis’, transl. Denis L. Drysdall, in: J.N. Grant (ed.): *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 35, Toronto, Buffalo, London 2005, 399-439, 415, 437.

⁵⁵ Erasmus, ‘Education of a Prince’, transl. Neil M. Cheshire and Michael, J. Heath, in: A.H.T. Levi, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 27, Toronto, Buffalo, London 1986, 203-288, 282f.

⁵⁶ Erasmus, ‘A Complaint of Peace Spurned and Rejected by the Whole World’, transl. Betty Radice, in: A.H.T. Levi (ed.): *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol.27, Toronto, Buffalo, London 1986, 292-322, 304, 309, 316.

⁵⁷ Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up. Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe*, Oxford 2010, 143.

study with Luther and Melanchton.⁵⁸ According to Eberlin, the problems caused by warfare lay both in the “useless, damaging and ruinous” wars of the time and in the immorality of the soldiery itself. Perceiving the Landsknechte as a recent phenomenon, Eberlin branded them as a “new order of soulless men” who entered freely into a profession dangerous to their souls and became accustomed to sins like “scolding, swearing, insults, cursing [...] whoring, adultery, defiling virgins, gluttony, boozing, [...] thieving, robbing, murdering”.⁵⁹ “In short,” he concluded, “they stand bound completely in the power of the devil”. Eberlin also saw going to war as a social problem, as in his view, soldiers ran away from home, abandoning their families, “their sweet fatherland and sworn service and required work”.⁶⁰ Once corrupted, soldiers were better off dead as they would infect and ruin society with “their evil customs in words, clothes [and] deeds” and tempted others into “idleness, gambling, drinking, whoring etc”.⁶¹ For Eberlin, the soldiers’ immorality was thus a social problem.

Two years later, Martin Luther explained that, given the right motivation, the military profession was a God-pleasing one.⁶² Echoing theologians of pious violence like Bernard of Clairvaux, who had maintained that a warrior killing an evildoer was not a “mankiller” (*homicidia*) but a “killer of evil” (*malicidia*), Luther likened the Christian soldier to a surgeon who amputates in order to save the patient.⁶³ Fighting for pay was not immoral either, as Luther considered soldiers’ martial prowess to be God-given so that they could hire out their service “exactly as though his skill were an art or trade” and receive pay just like an artisan would.⁶⁴ While professional soldiering was thus theoretically a God-pleasing occupation, in practice, Luther also reckoned that “a great many soldiers belong to the devil”.⁶⁵ The reasons were manifold: soldiers, according to Luther, tried to suppress contemplation of God’s judgment in order that their conscience not interfere with their work and they blasphemed. The professional warrior’s alleged lust for war and refusal to ply a different trade until their lords called them to service “and thus from laziness or roughness and wildness of spirit waste their time” was taken

⁵⁸ Johannes Eberlin von Günzburg, *Mich wundert das kein gelt ihm land ist*, s.l. 1524. On Eberlin, see Christian Peters, *Johann Eberlin von Günzburg: ca 1465-1533; franziskanischer Reformator; Humanist und konservativer Reformator*, Gütersloh 1994.

⁵⁹ Eberlin, *Mich wundert*, Aii^vf.

⁶⁰ Ibid. Aiii^r.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Martin Luther, ‘Whether Soldiers, too, Can be Saved’, R.C. Schultz and H.T. Lehmann (eds.), *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 46 (The Christian in Society III), Philadelphia 1967, 93-137, 96.

⁶³ Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*, Oxford 1999, 70.

⁶⁴ Luther, *Soldiers*, 131.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 134.

as a sign that they “cannot be on good terms with God”.⁶⁶ In characteristically clear terms, Luther attacked not only the common professionals but also the impoverished nobles and knights who considered feuding and waging war their birthright but had no just cause: “The excrement of the eagle can boast that it comes from the eagle’s body even though it stinks and is useless; and so these men can also be of the nobility”.⁶⁷

Here, Luther’s views seemed rather moderate, which certainly owes to the fact that he was writing in response to a request for a theological opinion on his profession from the mercenary captain Assa von Cramm.⁶⁸ In other contexts, he exhibited clear revulsion with soldiers and, like Erasmus and Eberlin, he considered them to be societal refuse unfit for any other profession.⁶⁹ Luther declared himself to be “the greatest enemy of the Landsknechte” who “would much rather live under the guardianship of Turks or Tartars than under theirs”. Luther was therefore not critical of war in the way that Erasmus and, to a lesser extent, Eberlin were but he shared their estimations regarding the immorality of soldiers.⁷⁰

The pacifist Sebastian Franck’s oft-cited *Kriegbüchlin des frides* (‘The War-Book of Peace’, 1539) is one of the strongest condemnations of war and the soldiery in the 16th century. To Franck, soldiers were “devils in human form” (*vermenschte teüffel*) and he repeatedly specified what made them so diabolical.⁷¹ Soldiers were “idle arsonists, robbers, murderers, unchaste people, gamblers, drunks, blasphemers, shameful mercenaries [...] and all kinds of evil, executioner-like rascallions”.⁷² Their sole occupation in times of peace was “to start all kinds of mischief in the towns, to burden land and people” and spend their time with “cards, dice, gambling, drinking, whoring, blaspheming and idleness” until given a chance to “practice their art of war” which consisted of “bloodshed, robbing, murder, burning, making widows and orphans”.⁷³ Citing the polymath Heinrich Agrippa, Franck claimed that the word ‘warrior’ had become merely a catch-all term for “merciless gnarls, tyrants, church robbers, thieves, murderers, adulterers, gypsies, fencers, whorers, gamblers, drunks, torturers, arsonists, witches, poison cooks, runaway knaves, daredevils, foolhardy

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 101.

⁶⁸ Luther’s explication came just in time as von Cramm died from disease in 1528, see: Spangenberg, *AdelsSpiegel*, vol.2, 58^{Rff}.

⁶⁹ Martin Luther, *Gesamtausgabe, Tischreden*, vol. IV, Weimar 1916, 600 (#4987).

⁷⁰ Martin Luther, *Gesamtausgabe, Tischreden*, vol. II, Weimar 1913, 301 (#2039)

⁷¹ Sebastian Franck, *Das Kriegbüchlin des frides*, s.l. 1539, xvii.

⁷² Ibid. xxxi^R.

⁷³ Ibid. li^V.

people, [...] and the whole devil-rabble that is related to the guild of scoundrels”.⁷⁴ Soldiers therefore epitomised evil and were the antithesis of Christian morals.

In 1558, the Lutheran theologian Andreas Musculus updated Martin Luther’s explanations regarding the god-pleasing conduct of war.⁷⁵ Musculus was less concerned with the social threat posed by the military than with the question of soldiers’ salvation. He was doubtful of it for four main reasons. Firstly, they freely endangered their lives by becoming soldiers and, secondly, he alleged that “warriors [were] commonly evil, impudent, raw and bloodthirsty fellows”. Thirdly, he had reservations regarding “the deed as such”, namely “stabbing, strangling, murdering, robbing, taking, burning and harrying” of innocent people and, fourthly, soldiers died steeped in sinful “boozing, gorging, whoring, gambling, quarrelling [and] blaspheming” and would be judged accordingly by God.⁷⁶ In times of war, “all evil knaves flock together in one heap and warriors are nothing else than a heap of raw, wild and impudent people with whom decency, honourability and piety have little room”, making the army an “alluvium of all vices and godless behaviour”.⁷⁷ Soldiers were “sunk and drowned in all major vices and sins so that little blessedness can be hoped for in them”; soldiers’ “clothes, gestures, words and deeds” made them act no longer humanly but completely “diabolically”.⁷⁸

As the following examples reveal, 17th century writers perpetuated the stereotype. The anonymous evangelical field preacher who published a religious handbook for soldiers in 1620 did not condemn the soldiery summarily - his intention was to give Protestant soldiers a guideline towards salvation - but he also repeated the litany of soldier vice in some passages.⁷⁹ In his *Kriegs Belial*, a long and oft-cited tract first published in 1633, the Saxon theologian and ducal court preacher Arnold Mengerling exceeded previous diatribes in polemical vigour.⁸⁰ ‘Belial’, Mengerling elaborated, was the appropriate name for the military devil as it meant ‘the one without a yoke’, fitting, because the devil and his soldiery spawn rejected the “yoke of divine laws” (*jugo legis divinae*).⁸¹ Mengerling also composed a soldier catechism that included commandments that were a direct inversion of the Decalogue, and a *credo* in which

⁷⁴ Ibid. Liiii^R.

⁷⁵ Andreas Musculus, *Vom beruff und stand der Kriegseuleth*, Frankfurt O., 1558.

⁷⁶ Ibid. Bi^V.

⁷⁷ Ibid. Bi^R.

⁷⁸ Ibid. Aiii^f.

⁷⁹ Anon, *Auffrichtiger Teutscher Soldaten Regul, Oder Kurtze Erinnerung an den Teutschen Evangelischen Kriegßmann*, s.l. 1620, 7, 11.

⁸⁰ Arnold Mengerling, *Perversa Ultimi Seculi Militia Oder Kriegs-Belial*, 3rd ed., Meissen 1641, 431.

⁸¹ Ibid. 72.

soldiers renounced every principle of Christian belief and even denied the existence of God, Christ or an afterlife.⁸² In many ways, *Kriegs Belial* appears as a culmination of military condemnation, as it presented the soldiery as a demonic sect, which had completely surrendered to the rule of the devil. Whereas previous authors described soldiers as men who had strayed from the norms of Christian society, Mengerling characterized soldiers no longer as lapsed children of God but as the offspring of the devil Belial who was also their deity. Soldiers, in other words, stood entirely outside of Christian society and its norms; they were the ultimate outsiders.

Military authors did not, as one might expect, attempt to defend soldiers but joined moralists and theologians in condemning the soldiery and inserted moralising passages against the soldiery in their works. This, too, was not a German idiosyncrasy but a European phenomenon.⁸³ Leonhardt Fronsperger, the prolific military writer of the 16th century, may be cited here *pars pro toto* for his numerous colleagues who reiterated the by now familiar accusations.⁸⁴ Fronsperger did protest against the view that no soldier or Landsknecht would enter Heaven and expressed his anger at those who predicted summary damnation of all military souls. Two pages later, however, he conceded that the German way of waging war was more “un-Christian and sowish” than that of Jews or heathens and later declared that many soldiers were morally utterly corrupt.⁸⁵

What these examples show is that the recurrent complaints against the soldiery uniformly invoked a similar set of immoral behaviours, taken by the authors to indicate military ‘godlessness’ and even allegiance with the devil. It is precisely this formulaic nature and the frequently verbatim repetition of points of criticism that raises suspicion as to their reliability as straightforward descriptions. Apparently we are dealing here with a literary convention, rather than observation. The following section traces the development of this topos from Christian scripture through the Middle Ages.

⁸² Ibid. 660, 662ff.

⁸³ See for example Raimond de Beccarie de Pavie, Baron de Fourquevaux’s *Kriegs=Practica*, Frankfurt a.M. 1619, which discusses the problems surrounding the oath. According to the author, swearing by God would only lead soldiers to blaspheme while having soldiers swear by their salvation appeared pointless, as they had forfeited any hopes in this respect already (742f).

⁸⁴ Other examples include Adam Junghans von der Olnitz, *KriegsOrdnung / zu Wasser vnd Landt*, Cologne 1598, Aii^R; Johann Jacob von Wallhausen, *Kriegskunst zu Fuß*, Leuwarden 1630 [1^o Oppenheim 1615], 6.

⁸⁵ Leonhart Fronsperger, *Geistliche KriegßOrdnung*, Frankfurt a.M., 1565, III^R, XXI^Rf.

Unconverging a tradition of warrior condemnation

An important fact that has not been appreciated thus far in studies dealing with the stereotype surrounding professional soldiers is that the allegations of immorality and un-Christian behaviour were not new either in tone or content. Rogg and Huntebrinker both have studied stereotypical depictions of mercenary soldiers on the basis of woodcuts in popular print.⁸⁶ From this material, Huntebrinker has concluded that “fundamental delineations between morally legitimate and illegitimate forms of military” were shaped in the 16th century.⁸⁷ There are several elements that seem to justify this interpretation: military developments and the newness of the Landsknecht soldier, the uniformity with which a particular catalogue of vice was associated specifically with this warrior type and, thirdly, the fact that this topos was fully formed around 1500 and merely reiterated thereafter. Both the sources and the historiography therefore give the impression that “a new order of soulless men” did indeed come into being in the late 15th century. Problems arise when we try to account for this phenomenon: how could a fully formed stereotype arise in such uniformity across pre-modern Germany and Western Europe? In order to find an answer, we should consider the history of military condemnation.

Suspicion of soldiers can be found already in the earliest Christian texts. John the Baptist’s admonition to soldiers to be content with their pay and not extort money from the people (Luke 3:14) implies that the precursors of the Christian sect already had a view of soldiers as greedy and violent. While Christians could often avoid army service in the first few centuries AD, martyrs like Maximilianus (†295) were venerated not despite their profession but because they denounced the military on the grounds of their beliefs. In the *Acta Maximiliani*, it is indicated that the unwilling young recruit rejected the military lifestyle and its temptations and equated “*militare*” with “*malefacere*”.⁸⁸ The notion that soldiering entailed or at least tempted immoral behaviour thus already existed in Christianity early on.

Turning to medieval sources, it becomes evident that clerics already condemned the knighthood and especially the subordinate warriors (*milites*) in terms that began to resemble those used by early modern military critics. The *milites* especially were

⁸⁶ Rogg, *Landsknechte*; Huntebrinker, *Fromme Knechte*.

⁸⁷ Huntebrinker, *Fromme Knechte*, 155.

⁸⁸ Anon., ‘Acta Maximiliani’, in: P. Guyot and R. Klein (eds.), *Das frühe Christentum bis zum Ende der Verfolgungen*, repr. Darmstadt 1997 [¹1993-1994], vol. I, 166ff.

targeted by the concepts of the Peace of God and Truce of God that were promoted from the first half of the eleventh century onwards and aimed at limiting the impact and the occurrence of violent conflict.⁸⁹ The Peace of God intended to reduce the suffering of non-combatants by creating categories of people that were explicitly exempt from violence (clerics, women, peasants, etc.), while the Truce of God tried to impose prescribed periods of peace (Friday to Monday, the entirety of Lent and feast days) to reduce the time available to wage war and feud.⁹⁰ Crusading ideology, too, was partly informed by a desire to channel Christendom's violent potential into a 'God-pleasing' military effort. The exact words attributed to Urban II in his appeal to Christian warriors vary but the underlying sentiment – whether Urban's or the chroniclers' is secondary here – is evidently similar to the views of early modern theologians and moralists. The chronicler Fulcher of Chartres had the pope say: "Now will those who once were robbers become *Christi milites*; those who once fought brothers and relatives will justly fight barbarians; those who once were mercenaries for a few farthings will obtain eternal reward".⁹¹ Baldric of Dol presented Urban as rather more outspoken in his criticism of the knighthood and in terms that are even more akin to the early modern tirades: "you pervert [knighthood] in wickedness [...] you oppressors of orphans and widows, you murderers, you temple-defilers, you lawbreakers, who seek the rewards of rapacity from spilling Christian blood".⁹²

One of the milestones of Christian war-doctrine, Bernard of Clairvaux's *De laude novae militiae* (c. 1130), also contained complaints about soldiers similar to those expressed several centuries later. Punning on the near homophony of *militia* ('soldiery', 'knighthood') and *malitia* ('knavery', 'vice'), Bernard reserved the term *militia* for the Knights Templar, while more secular knights were summarily slighted as *malitia*.⁹³ Bernard criticised knightly pomp, flamboyancy and effeminate fashions.⁹⁴ He praised the Templars for their efforts to "earn their bread", for refraining from idle knightly vices like dice, chess, hunting, falconry and for rejecting the "vanities and deceitful

⁸⁹ See Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, transl. Michael Jones, Malden/Oxford 1984, 270ff.; Kaeuper, *Chivalry*, 73.

⁹⁰ Richard H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace. A Historical Survey and Critical Re-evaluation*, Nashville 1960, 110.

⁹¹ Quoted in Kaeuper, *Chivalry*, 75.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Bernard de Clairvaux, *In Praise of the New Knighthood – A Treatise on the Knights Templar and the Holy Places of Jerusalem*, transl. Conrad Greenia, intro. Malcolm Barber, Trappist (KY) 2000.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 17, 37.

follies” of “jesters, wizards, bards, bawdy minstrels and jousters”.⁹⁵ Even more dangerous to the worldly knights’ spiritual welfare was the fact that they were moved to fight “by flashes of irrational anger, hunger for empty glory or hankering after some earthly possessions” and lacked right intention, one of the Augustinian requisites that made killing not sinful.⁹⁶ The sum of his complaints about the knighthood caused Bernard to conclude that secular knights did not fight “for God but for the devil”⁹⁷ another element that was echoed by early modern writers as we have seen.

While knights and knightly customs in general could attract the ire of clerical commentators, medieval mercenaries were variously reviled as “vastatores”, “incendarii”, “raptores”, or “barbarii”.⁹⁸ The distinction between ‘knight’ and ‘mercenary’ was one that was difficult to draw in theory, especially among the less affluent strata. In practice, the line was even blurrier and often vanished altogether.⁹⁹ Errantry, the search for military adventures to prove one’s valour, was a central element of the chivalric code and so was *largesse*, the generous dispersal of one’s spoils to subordinate knights. Gathering an armed force was achieved through “a downward flow of largesse” from the warlord which in turn secured “an upward flow of loyalty” among the *milites*.¹⁰⁰ In chivalric tales these gifts were usually magnificent horses, weapons or other goods but in reality, payment in cash became increasingly widespread from the thirteenth century onwards.¹⁰¹ Pay was also necessary recompense when a lord or prince wanted to employ his vassals’ services beyond the forty days per year that were their obligation.¹⁰² Thus, the difference between a ‘gift’ handed out by a warlord in appreciation of a knight’s loyalty or paying him for rendered service may have mattered ideologically (and may still matter to the more romantically inclined) but is a moot point for the present study. Professional warriors received pay in one form or another and whether they were called ‘knights errant’ or ‘mercenaries’ lay very much in the eyes of the beholder.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 46f.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 38.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 45.

⁹⁸ Peter Burschel, *Söldner*, 45.

⁹⁹ Maurice Keen, *Chivalry*, New Haven/London 2005, 230f.

¹⁰⁰ Kaeuper, *Chivalry*, 197.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 225.

¹⁰² Volker Schmidtchen, ‘Ius in bello und militärischer Alltag. Rechtliche Regelungen in Kriegsordnungen des 14. bis 16. Jahrhunderts’, in: H. Brunner (ed.), *Der Krieg im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit. Gründe, Begründungen, Bilder, Bräuche, Recht*, Wiesbaden 1999, 25-56, 29.

On the Italian peninsula the reliance on the *condottieri* (military contractors) and the havoc wreaked by their mercenary bands led to repeat papal condemnation. Pope Innocence even called for a crusade against the large mercenary contingents that were marauding through France and Italy in 1215. He thus legally and rhetorically placed mercenaries outside of Christian society, as religious war was usually waged against non-Christians or heretics.¹⁰³ The same sentiment underlay Urban V's denunciation of mercenaries as "pagans, and people not redeemed by Christ's blood", a classification that resulted in Urban's summary excommunication of all European mercenaries as well as their employers in the bull *Clamat ad nos* in 1366.¹⁰⁴ The excommunication was ignored, however, and the powers of Europe, including the Vatican, continued to rely on mercenaries. The Church sent mixed messages as to the employment of mercenaries and their moral or religious integrity, as can be seen in the example of John Hawkwood, the successful English military entrepreneur. His biographer William Caferro writes: "When Hawkwood fought for Milan against papal armies in 1371, the pope denounced him as a 'son of Belial'. When Hawkwood joined the pope the next year and won several battles, he was hailed as 'an athlete of God and a faithful Christian knight'".¹⁰⁵ Condemning the mercenary in religious terms was thus not a genuinely religious statement but political rhetoric that invoked religious terms. It was not the profession as such that was problematic but for whom certain mercenary contingents fought. When the papacy was in a position to hire mercenaries it did, but when its secular rivals outbid the Vatican, mercenaries were condemned. The political motivations behind the Church's periodic denunciation of mercenaries were readily recognizable and it seems that few paid attention to what Rome's position *du jour* happened to be. The Vatican used its religious powers and employed religious terminology to exert an influence on its secular affairs and set the precedent for the entire confessional spectrum once Rome's monopoly on religious condemnation had been eroded. But even before the Reformation, condemning mercenaries in religious terms was used in the propaganda of secular powers as well. In the mid 15th century, Bohemian mercenaries were summarily accused of the 'Hussite heresy', which, in the eyes of their enemies, explained their

¹⁰³ Baumann, *Landsknechte*, 14.

¹⁰⁴ William Caferro, *John Hawkwood – An English Mercenary in Fourteenth-Century Italy*, Baltimore 2006, 116, 127. Note that the pope mentioned the same devil that Mengerling claimed had created the soldiery of the 17th century.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 24.

cruelty and avarice.¹⁰⁶ In this context, the allegations of heresy were also intended to bring Bohemians' employers into disrepute: Duke Ludwig of Bavaria-Ingolstadt fell under the imperial ban in 1434 for hiring Bohemian contingents. During the Soest Feud (*Soester Fehde*, 1444-1449) the archbishop of Cologne's enemies branded him 'the heretic' (*ketter*) for his reliance on Bohemian troops and as late as 1504, Maximilian I could obtain crusading indulgences after his opponents had hired Bohemian mercenaries in the Landshut War of Succession.¹⁰⁷

What this overview of earlier criticism of professional warriors and specifically mercenaries shows is that rhetorical condemnations traditionally placed disagreeable soldiers outside of the international communion of Christians. Late antique, medieval and early modern critics identified the same or at least similar objectionable military traits, which already led medieval writers to condemn soldiers as 'pagan', 'un-Christian', and 'godless'. What is more, it seems that the lower echelons of the military hierarchy raised the greatest objections. The stereotype and the rhetoric of the 'un-Christian' soldier was thus neither new, nor specific to the early modern common infantryman when it was reapplied to the 'new' type of soldier that appeared in the decades around 1500. This also explains why condemnations of the Landsknecht were so thoroughly formulaic from the beginning. The stereotype did not arise spontaneously, nor was it necessarily reflective of reality: early modern detractors merely transplanted a fully formed rhetorical tradition onto the new type of warring commoners who, as we will see in the following, were perceived to threaten the collapse of the Christian social order through their mere existence.

Rebels against the divine social order

The Landsknechte had direct precursors in the Swiss mercenary model but contemporaries regarded them as a distinctly new phenomenon and as such they received a high degree of anxious attention and scrutiny in a culture that was inherently sceptical of change.¹⁰⁸ It is important to emphasise that the appearance of the Landsknecht as a distinctive new warrior type only marginally predated the renewed

¹⁰⁶ Uwe Tresp, *Söldner aus Böhmen. Im Dienst deutscher Fürsten: Kriegsgeschäft und Heeresorganisation im 15. Jahrhundert*, Paderborn 2004, 98.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 188ff.

¹⁰⁸ On the Swiss model, see Siegfried Fiedler, *Kriegswesen und Kriegführung im Zeitalter der Landsknechte*, Koblenz 1985, 30ff; Baumann, *Landsknechte*, 13ff;

concern with society's morals that characterized the 16th and 17th century, most commonly referred to in historiography as the 'social discipline'.¹⁰⁹ Most authorities, clerical and secular, as well as communities themselves attempted to reform and regulate the moral, religious and social makeup of society in as much detail as possible. Questions and anxieties regarding social order and moral conduct exercised increasing influence and found their expressions in countless moralizing tracts as well as an ever growing number of regulations issued by local and territorial elites in a bid to establish *gute Polizey*, a 'good order'. The Landsknecht thus entered the scene around the same time as anxieties surrounding the social order and moral standards were reaching new intensity.¹¹⁰

The historiography of stereotypical soldierly deviance usually does not sufficiently connect the allegations against soldiers to this wider cultural context and the changing moral(-izing) climate with the result that soldiers are represented as singularly depraved. J.R. Hale has argued with good cause that the scrutiny with which soldiers were viewed in the sixteenth century "applied to no other occupation group in the century, whether courtier, cardinal or prince" and it should be added that no other character was so commonly associated with as many vices as the soldier.¹¹¹ Prostitutes, for example, were primarily sexual deviants, while sturdy beggars were associated with idleness, but soldiers allegedly offended against almost every moral principle of Christian society. An important point that is usually understated is that many characteristics of the military stereotype such as sexual licentiousness, boozing, gambling, idleness and so forth were in fact not specific to soldiers but were perceived to be endemic in society in general.¹¹² Examining the allegations that were voiced against soldiers it is possible to divide them into two categories: deviant behaviours that

¹⁰⁹ Given the frequency with which these concepts have been discussed it seems unnecessary to provide a renewed overview in this context. For discussions of the 'civilizing process' and 'social discipline' paradigms see Stefan Breuer, 'Probleme und Problemverlagerungen bei Max Weber, Gerhard Oestreich und Michel Foucault', in: Chr. Sachße, F. Tennstedt (eds.), *Soziale Sicherheit und Soziale Disziplinierung. Beiträge zu einer historischen Theorie der Sozialpolitik*, Frankfurt a.M. 1986, 45-69; Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation. Central Europe 1550-1750*, London/New York 1989, passim, and more recently with an extensive bibliography: Franzisca Loetz, *Mit Gott handeln – Von den Zürcher Gotteslästerern der Frühen Neuzeit zu einer Kulturgeschichte des Religiösen*, Göttingen 2002, 50ff.

¹¹⁰ Kathy Stuart, *Defiled Trades & Social Outcasts. Honor and Ritual Pollution in Early Modern Germany*, Cambridge 1999, 6.

¹¹¹ J.R. Hale, 'Sixteenth Century Explanations of War and Violence', *Past & Present* 51 (1971), 3-26, 20.

¹¹² Huntebrinker, for example, mentions contemporary discourses in the footnotes but focuses exclusively on mercenary vice in the main argument (*Fromme Knechte*, 116, footnote 435). Burschel argues similarly (*Söldner*, 27ff.)

were intrinsic to the military profession and those that were considered general societal ills.

As we have seen, the fiercest early modern denunciations were usually not directed at military personnel in general but specifically at the ‘new’ Landsknecht foot soldiers. But what – apart from their martial prowess – made the rank and file so threatening? Fundamentally, it seems that these soldiers were perceived as uncontrollable and as a threat to the social order. The divine social order envisioned a threefold division of society into those who prayed (clergy), those who fought (nobility) and those who worked (commoners). To wage war, control and wield violence was the prerogative of the nobility.¹¹³ In the feudal army, knightly violence was harnessed and regulated by the chivalric ideal, at least in theory. But there was no comparable ideology in place to control the rapidly growing numbers of soldiering commoners.¹¹⁴ In fact, the tenets of chivalry often *explicitly* did not apply to common infantry. The obligation of *clementia* (‘clemency’) to spare a surrendering enemy, for example, extended to knights only, not commoners.¹¹⁵ The decades around 1500 therefore witnessed a marked shift in the categories of fighters and the emergence of a potentially worrying mass of soldiers to whom the old martial codes of conduct generally did not apply. Further compounding this problem was the notion that the knight’s compliance with the chivalric code was his own responsibility and a matter of honour. Such a professional ideology was not in place for commoners, however, and *ius in bello* had to be updated to effectively control the changing character of warfare, a process that took several decades. At least from the outside perspective therefore, the new type of warrior initially operated in a legal grey zone until the articles of war had developed into a regulatory framework that policed military life in ever greater detail and curbed the liberties and rights of soldiers ever more drastically.¹¹⁶ The third chapter will show that warfare was in fact regulated by mostly implicit military norms but these developed within the military sphere and may have been difficult to comprehend (or take

¹¹³ Henry Kamen, *Early Modern European Society*, London 2000, 70, 75f.

¹¹⁴ On chivalric ideal and practice see Keen, *Chivalry* and Kauper, *Chivalry*.

¹¹⁵ Contamine, *War*, 257; Schmidtchen, *Ius*, 38. For descriptions of massacres of prisoners of war in the Middle Ages see Sean McGlynn, *By Sword and Fire - Cruelty and Atrocity in Medieval Warfare*, London 2008, 91-133. For the 16th and 17th centuries refer to Bernhard R. Kroener, ‘Der Soldat als Ware. Kriegsgefangenschicksale im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert’, in: H. Duchardt, P. Veit, P. Monnet (eds.), *Krieg und Frieden im Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit. Theorie – Praxis -Bilder (Guerre et Paix du Moyen Age auf Temps Modernes. Théories – Pratiques – Représentations)*, Mainz 2000, 271-295.

¹¹⁶ See Burschel, *Söldner*, 133ff.

seriously) for outsiders. In this context, it may also be of importance to note that the major military handbooks of the time were written from the second half of the 16th century onwards, for example Fronsperger's *Von Kriegß Regiment vnd Ordnung* (1555) or Count Solms's '*Kriegsbuch*' (1559) which could indicate that they were responding to the need for a legal handle on the changing realities of warfare.¹¹⁷

The initial problem of a widely unregulated military force was compounded by the fact that soldiers exited civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction and entered the autonomous legal realm of the regiment the moment they swore on the articles of war.¹¹⁸ This special legal status will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter. Pertinent to the argument at this stage is the fact that legal separation of the civilian and military sphere could be a cause for concern. While proponents of social moral reform were busily – and often rather unsuccessfully – trying to implement the new regime of moral and religious discipline, the stipulations in the articles of war remained rather lax in this respect for a long time.¹¹⁹ From the outside at least, the military could look like a safe haven for those who wanted to lead a life of wantonness and dissolution, which further added to the image that it was the morally bankrupt who most eagerly sought out the military profession. Military society was portrayed with a certain ambiguity especially in the second half of the 16th century. Huntebrinker has shown that in contrast to the image of dissolution, an alternative mode of representing the military as a 'good' order was propagated as well.¹²⁰ He also points out, however, that portrayals of the hierarchical military order were intended to communicate a sense of legal containment of military power and may therefore be considered a reaction to contemporary fears of an untamed soldiery.

While such representations, in addition to the supposedly moderating influence of noble officers and the quite rapidly evolving articles of war, might have somewhat alleviated the symptoms of military rank growth in the eyes of the concerned civilian onlookers, there remained a fundamental problem, namely that commoners were not and could never hope to be *de militari sanguine*, 'of knightly blood'.¹²¹ Fighting in war was considered a natural monopoly but also a natural duty of the nobility who were

¹¹⁷ For example Fronsperger's *Fünff Bücher. Von Kriegß Regiment vnd Ordnung*, Frankfurt a.M. 1555; Reinhard von Solms '*Kriegsbuch*', s.l. 1559.

¹¹⁸ Möller, *Regiment*, 31ff.; Huntebrinker, *Sozialverband*.

¹¹⁹ See Chapter 2.

¹²⁰ Huntebrinker, *Sozialverband*, 184ff.

¹²¹ On the store placed in noble officers see Contamine, *War*, 163. On the genetic disposition of the nobility to fight and lead in war see Keen, *Chivalry*, 36, and Baumann, *Landsknechte*, 13.

thought to possess an innate ability for this purpose. In other words: nobles were by birth compelled to war, it was not their choice. Commoners on the other hand had been put on this Earth to support the warring caste with their labour but they were not supposed to become soldiers unless their sovereign called them to arms. For a commoner to want to fight, let alone have a penchant for violence, could be read as a sign of degeneracy.¹²² Violence was regarded as pathological by some: Paracelsus, for instance, considered the warrior to be a choleric who was both internally, by his choleric disposition, and externally, by the influence of Mars, induced to be violent.¹²³ This was a common perception and Huntebrinker has recently pointed out that around 1600 the choleric temperament was frequently represented as a soldier.¹²⁴ Against this background, the allegations of ‘innate depravity’ the moralists made against soldiers begin to make sense to a modern reader: fundamentally, soldiers and other individuals who chose to employ violence could be considered to be of “poor stock”.¹²⁵

In the past, when commoners had been called upon by their sovereigns, they had fought out of obligation and as subjects. The new soldiers, however, were commoners who left their station in life on their own volition, in other words: they *chose* to violate the divinely appointed social order and entered a social realm that was not their designated habitat. Precisely the voluntariness with which commoners actively sought war instead of plying their civilian trade until they were called to serve had led Luther to the conclusion that they could not ‘be on good terms with God’.¹²⁶ Those work-shy men who left their regular professions to become soldiers were accused of living off the peasants’ labour in order to indulge in their sinful, boozing, gluttony and idleness.¹²⁷ A commoner’s resolution to become a Landsknecht could consequently already be regarded as sinful but it was also feared to be a source of social instability. Leaving one’s allotted station in life was feared to create gaps in the social brickwork, as by enlisting, the common soldier was no longer able to serve the purpose in society that God had allocated to him. This was Eberlin’s point when he charged soldiers with

¹²² Hale, *Explanations for violence*, 12.

¹²³ K. Goldammer, ‘Der choleriche Kriegsmann und der melancholische Ketzer. Psychologie und Pathologie von Krieg, Glaubenskampf und Martyrium in der Sicht des Paracelsus’, in: H. Ehrhardt, D. Ploog and H. Stutte, (eds.), *Psychiatrie und Gesellschaft – Ergebnisse und Probleme der Sozialpsychiatrie*, Bern/Stuttgart 1958, 90-101, 95.

¹²⁴ Huntebrinker, *Fromme Knechte*, 123f.

¹²⁵ Hale, *Explanations for violence*, 16.

¹²⁶ Luther, *Soldiers*, 134.

¹²⁷ Huntebrinker, *Fromme Knechte*, 109ff, 150ff.

deserting their families, country and sworn service.¹²⁸ These fears were not altogether unfounded, as during the 15th and 16th century the size of armies positively exploded as has been already noted.

That soldiers entered their profession voluntarily also made them personally accountable for their deeds. In former times, culpability for waging an unjust war had been the prince's alone, while his followers were considered blameless, as they were duty bound to follow their liege.¹²⁹ A mercenary soldier, however, could no longer hide behind the prince: if he fought in an unjust war or behaved unjustly, he was accountable for this sin, too. Andreas Musculus addressed the problem in detail and claimed that commoners in the past had gone to war in the assuring knowledge that they were serving their rightful lord and thus God, which had eliminated the element of choice and the uncertainty regarding legitimacy that arose from it.¹³⁰ Musculus repeated Luther's arguments for why nobles should be soldiers and added that, as surplus Protestant noblemen could no longer be put into monasteries and could not be expected to work manually, the wars were needed more than ever to keep these gentlemen occupied.¹³¹ Turning his attention to commoners, he recommended that those who already were soldiers stay in their profession and take great care to lead God-pleasing lives. Young men who had not yet learned an occupation and were entertaining the idea of becoming warriors, could, strictly speaking, do so without imperilling their salvation. However, Musculus warned of the immoral environment and suggested that they might find another occupation as there were enough "evil knaves" (*böser buben*) to take their place in the armies.¹³² Men who already had a profession should remain in it and only go to war to defend their home, their sovereign, or if soldiers were needed to fight the Turk. As these examples suggest, the fact that commoners were perceived as abandoning their station in life in order to become soldiers caused trepidation and for a commoner to join the army could be interpreted as an act of rebellion against God's order.

Their dislocation meant that soldiers joined another marginalized social group, that of vagrants.¹³³ Robert Jütte defines vagrants as migrants who were "poor, unemployed, capable of earning a living, rootless and suspicious" and soldiers

¹²⁸ Eberlin, *Mich wundert*, Aiii^R.

¹²⁹ Contamine, *War*, 264.

¹³⁰ Musculus, *Beruff vnd Stand*, Di^Rff.

¹³¹ Ibid. Diii^V; Luther, *Soldiers*, 127f..

¹³² Musculus, *Beruff vnd Stand*, Diii^V.

¹³³ On the migrant element of military life, see Asche, *Militär*; Baumann, *Landsknechte*, 131ff; Burschel, *Söldner*, 273ff, 304ff; Huntebrinker, *Fromme Knechte*, 158ff.

accounted a significant portion of this section of society.¹³⁴ Anxieties surrounding vagrants and other mobile groups had multiple sources. Firstly, they were considered masterless and thus uncontrolled and their constant mobility made them uncontrollable, as they eluded the social and legal mechanisms that regulated communal life. Secondly, sturdy beggars, those who allegedly could work but would not, were seen as morally reprehensible because they lived off the industriousness of others while they themselves were “useless to God and the world” as a late 15th century chronicler remarked.¹³⁵ Thirdly, the association of the ambulant society of the road with criminality was not entirely fanciful but often rather accurate. With regards to soldiers, Huntebrinker has clarified that contemporaries did distinguish between soldiers’ necessary work-related wandering – to the muster or returning home – and the illegitimate loitering of the *Gartknechte*.¹³⁶ The *Gartknechte*, demobilised soldiers who tried to survive by begging and engaging in various degrees of criminality, were staples in 16th and 17th century mandates against vagrants and beggars and could endanger the safety of entire regions, especially if individuals and small groups amalgamated into larger *Garthausen*, which could number several thousand unemployed, unpaid and armed men and their families.¹³⁷ Ambrosius Pape, a Magdeburg pastor and writer of moralist literature, devoted a lengthy tract to the phenomenon of *garten*, in which he not only lamented the very real threat that the *Gartknechte* posed but again established a direct connection between the unemployed Landsknechte and the devil.¹³⁸

But why did the ambulant lifestyle, which characterized the military profession, affect soldiers’ moral and religious image? As Wolfgang von Hippel explains, early modern society did not perceive its constituents as “empirical-social” entities but in “normative-ethical” categories so that lifestyle was taken to indicate a person’s moral mindset.¹³⁹ As the household was considered the smallest unit of Christian society, those without a home and no stable existence could be considered anti-social and by extension even un-Christian.¹⁴⁰ The sturdy beggars, suspicious wanderers and

¹³⁴ Robert Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 1994, 147.

¹³⁵ Cited in Robert Jütte, *Abbild und soziale Wirklichkeit des Bettler- und Gaunertums zu Beginn der Neuzeit. Sozial-, Mentalitäts-, und Sprachgeschichtliche Studien zum Liber Vagatorum (1519)*, Cologne 1988, 46.

¹³⁶ Huntebrinker, *Fromme Knechte*, 161.

¹³⁷ Burschel, *Söldner*, 293, 304f.

¹³⁸ Ambrosius Pape, *Bettel vnd Garteteuffel*, Magdeburg 1586.

¹³⁹ Wolfgang von Hippel, *Armut, Unterschichten, Randgruppen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, München 1995, 4.

¹⁴⁰ On Reformation family values see Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household – Women and Morals in Early Modern Augsburg*, Oxford 1989.

unemployed soldiers were all considered idlers: if they could roam, they could equally well support themselves by honest work. In contrast, Peter Burschel has pointed out that early modern stigmatization of vagrants as ‘idlers’ not only denied the dire destitution on the roads but also entirely ignored the fact that work became increasingly scarce as the 16th century progressed.¹⁴¹ In the case of the soldiers, however, a rejection of manual labour was not just a matter of defamation but was defended by soldiers as a privilege of their special status as ‘free warriors’.¹⁴² Landsknecht songs often proudly contrasted the plight of the peasantry or other labourers with the work-free life of the soldier.¹⁴³ It appears then, that the accusations of ‘idleness’ were not groundless. At the same time, this aspect illustrates how civilian perspectives and military self-perception interpreted soldierly behaviour in opposing ways: what soldiers claimed as a privilege of their status as proud warriors, moralist commentators branded as decadent idleness.

Much to the disquiet of moralist sensibilities, as common soldiers in some regards slipped into the warring class of the aristocracy, it seems that many soldiers actually tried to imitate what they perceived as a noble lifestyle and used their position outside of the civil order to indulge in extravagant behaviours. The refusal to carry out manual labour was one instance; another was the flamboyant clothing that especially the Landsknechte tended to wear.¹⁴⁴ The *Pluderhose*, a baggy hose often worn with an attention-grabbing codpiece, was a fashion item closely associated with the Landsknecht; we will return to this garment shortly. Landsknechte dressed in finery prohibited to them in their civilian lives and this luxury and wastefulness fuelled the anxieties of those who saw the new soldiers as a threat to the social order and was taken to further exemplify their rejection of Christian norms. The other allegations habitually raised against soldiers – drinking, gambling, whoring, blasphemy and so forth – were not distinctively military transgressions but regarded as societal ills in general. The role of religion and morals in soldiers’ lives are further examined in Chapter 3.

¹⁴¹ Burschel, *Söldner*, 308f.

¹⁴² See Baumann, *Landsknechte*, 121f.; Burschel *Söldner*, 44, 137ff.

¹⁴³ See e.g. Anon., ‘Von dem König aus Frankreich’ (c.1525), in: Meinhardt (ed.), *Schwartenhals*, 12.

¹⁴⁴ The literature on Landsknecht dress is plentiful, see for example: Matthias Rogg, “‘Zerhauen und zerschnitten nach adelichen Sitten’ – Herkunft, Entwicklung und Funktion soldatischer Tracht des 16. Jahrhunderts im Spiegel zeitgenössischer Kunst”, in: Kroener and Pröve (eds.), *Krieg und Frieden*, 109-135; idem, *Landsknechte*, 18ff.; Jan Willem Huntebrinker, ‘Soldatentracht? Mediale Funktionen materieller Kultur in Söldnerdarstellungen des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts’, *Militär und Gesellschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit*, 13 (2009) 1, 75-103; idem, *Fromme Knechte*, 127ff.; Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, vol.1, 26, 45ff.; Rublack, *Dressing Up*, 140ff.

It is important to consider who the critics were and what they intended. Most of the condemnations were written from a social vantage point that was highly elevated in relation to the targets of these slights. This in itself is important as it was often lamented that moral standards severely diminished in proportion to social standing. Most of the tracts cited above were produced by a ‘moral minority’ who criticised those who in their view were morally inferior, if not doomed. Diarmaid MacCulloch has reminded us not to deride the moral reform programmes as “some pettifogging interference by humourless self-appointed tyrants with personal freedom”, in romantic fraternization with early modern deviants.¹⁴⁵ The sincerity, sense of urgency and ultimate well-meaning of the moralists who condemned the sinful ways of the soldiery should not be called into question. Nor should moderns regard their frustration concerning the lack of impact of their censure with *schadenfreude* only because the programmes of reform were antithetical to modern latitudinarian values.

But we also have to bear in mind that, firstly, moralists had a tendency towards didactic hyperbole to highlight discrepancies between the perceived status quo and the envisioned ideal and, secondly, that their ideals did not necessarily reflect a moral consensus.

Scott Hendrix has argued that the reformers saw the culture around them not as fundamentally “Christian with only minor deformities” but as a pagan perversion of Christianity so that their task was nothing less than a re-Christianization of the Western Church.¹⁴⁶ Hendrix also considers the inflationary allegations of paganism to be hyperbolic rhetorical vilifications of the current state of affairs. Each faction claimed privilege of interpretation and insisted that only its own agenda, doctrine and vision of society deserved be called ‘Christian’. Normative texts presented moral imperatives as absolute, there could be no *via media* and any aberration from that narrow path therefore had to be ‘un-Christian’, ‘godless’, ‘pagan’, ‘heretical’, ‘idolatrous’ and so forth.¹⁴⁷ With view of the allegations of soldierly ‘godlessness’ we consequently have to be cautious when we encounter such epithets which should be considered a linguistic mode of marginalization, not as descriptors of spiritual beliefs. Crucially, the success of social disciplinarians must not be overrated. Marc R. Forster has characterized the

¹⁴⁵ MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 591.

¹⁴⁶ Scott Hendrix, ‘Rerooting the Faith: The Reformation as Re-Christianization’, *Church History*, 69, (2000) 3, 558-577, 566.

¹⁴⁷ Christoph Auffarth, ‘Alle Tage Karneval? Reformation, Provokation und Grobianismus’, in: idem and Kerth (eds.), *Glaubensstreit*, 79-105, 79f.

reform programs as being “doomed to failure, for their goals were unrealistically ambitious” and while he gives this assessment for the context of post-Tridentine Catholicism, it holds true for the efforts of all confessions.¹⁴⁸ Ordinary people frequently ignored moral and religious reformers so that moral improvement was not a straightforward top-down process in which secular and religious elites imposed a new regime on to an acquiescent populace but an interaction that was characterized by negotiation and disagreement.

The case of Landsknecht fashion and especially the *Pluderhose* may serve to illustrate this point. Historians have highlighted different aspects of these fashions: Rogg has interpreted them as the wish to provoke, Burschel has used them as a measure of soldierly independence and Huntebrinker has regarded them as an iconographical device to communicate the “morally corrupted disposition of the wearer”.¹⁴⁹ While it is usually mentioned that neither the fashion of slashing cloth nor the *Pluderhose* were exclusively worn by soldiers but were, in fact, the rage especially among young men of the middling to upper social echelons, this important fact is usually not discussed further.¹⁵⁰ One of the tracts that invariably features in such discussions is Andreas Musculus’s sermon in which he attacked the trousers he found so offensive and there is a danger in reading such moralizing tracts as representative expressions of societal values.¹⁵¹ Huntebrinker, for example, acknowledges the ambiguity of soldierly attire but concludes that the fashion was “above all” regarded as a sign of wastefulness and haughtiness.¹⁵² If we consider other wearers, however, it becomes clear that these fashions were offensive only to the moral minority and precisely *not* to the majority. The very reason for the existence of Andreas Musculus’s tract against the garment was a conflict between one of his deacons, Melchior Dreger, and his congregation.¹⁵³ Dreger had preached against the *Pluderhosen* but instead of taking his words to heart, the following Sunday pranksters nailed a pair of the wicked trousers to a pillar opposite from the pulpit.¹⁵⁴ Enraged, Musculus composed another thundering sermon against the

¹⁴⁸ Forster, *Catholic Germany*, 6.

¹⁴⁹ Rogg, *Landsknechte*, 19; Burschel, *Söldner*, 42; Huntebrinker, *Soldatentracht*, 96.

¹⁵⁰ For example Rogg, *Landsknechte*, 19.

¹⁵¹ Andreas Musculus, *Vom Hosen Teuffel*, s.l. [Frankfurt a.d. Oder?], 1555. An anonymous song in which an old Landsknecht frayed about the new fashion was printed in the same year: Anon., ‘Ein new Klaglied eines alten deutschen Kriegsknechts wider die gewliche vnd vnerhörte Kleidung der Pluderhosen’, in: Meinhardt, *Schwartenhals*, 24f.

¹⁵² Huntebrinker, *Soldatentracht*, 96.

¹⁵³ See Rublack, *Dressing Up*, 110, for a discussion of the sermon.

¹⁵⁴ Stambaugh, *Teufelbücher*, 274.

diabolical depravity of the fashion. The theologians and their congregation clearly interpreted the *Pluderhose* differently: while for Musculus and Dreger it was an outward sign of inner depravity, Musculus had to concede that, apart from soldiers, the trousers were worn by many well-off “snot-nosed brat[s]” (*junger rotzlöffel*), especially in Lutheran territories.¹⁵⁵ It seems unlikely that the wearers of slashed garments and *Pluderhosen* did so with the main intention to shock. In Ulinka Rublack’s recent study of early modern dress, we find a series of 135 small watercolours that Matthäus Schwarz of Augsburg commissioned to document his wardrobe at many stages of his life.¹⁵⁶ Schwarz was a successful accountant in the Fugger firm and a veritable *fashionista*. Among his many outfits are several that could easily be classified as ‘typical’ Landsknecht dress, with wide sleeves, bright colours, wide berets and up to 4.800 slashes.¹⁵⁷ Schwarz was ‘dress-literate’: he knew the intricacies of the changing fashions and designed his outfits to communicate certain intentions. But he was definitely not a deviant. The *Pluderhosen* and the slashed garments should therefore be interpreted not as transgressive but merely as fashionable. Moralists like Musculus took umbrage and at times managed to convince authorities to issue chronically impotent sartorial legislation but to the wearers of these clothes they seem to have indicated stylishness, not degeneracy. Conflicting interpretations of moral values were consequently characteristic of society then as now but while the hardliners have left us lengthy explications of their moral vision, it would be a mistake to regard these as representative. Most soldiers “were young men with young men’s ideas of pleasure” and we should accept these ideas as equally valid.¹⁵⁸

This analysis has set out to examine a set of claims that characterized soldiers as ‘godless’, ‘un-Christian’ and even diabolical. It has been argued that these allegations were not peculiar to the early modern common soldiery but had a long tradition. They were not descriptions of spiritual deviance but stemmed from fears surrounding social stability and the pious ideals of a moral minority that soldiers were perceived to threaten. The unambiguousness with which the soldier was defamed as immoral and un-Christian was largely limited to the genre of normative texts, however. Evidence from other literary genres, media types and from everyday life present a more varied impression of how soldiers were perceived.

¹⁵⁵ Musculus, *Hosen Teuffel*, 21; 31.

¹⁵⁶ Rublack, *Dressing Up*, 33ff.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 51; 53; 56.

¹⁵⁸ Lynn, *Women*, 40.

Perspectives also shifted diachronically and commentators tended to claim that the soldiers of their particular day and age were corrupted to an unprecedented degree. Thus, 17th century authors occasionally juxtaposed the Landsknecht as a morally good warrior type with the perceived soldierly immorality and cruelty of their own times regardless of the fact that the Landsknechte had been subjected to the same kind of abuse from their contemporaries.¹⁵⁹ In woodcuts from the early stages of the Reformation, Landsknechte occupied an ambiguous position. They were frequently presented as the enemies of lecherous clerics and the pope and as champions of the Gospel, but also as the troops of the papal Antichrist.¹⁶⁰ The Landsknecht type in German imagery soon all but lost the potential to symbolize positive qualities and while this rendered the Landsknecht an unlikely choice to represent pious fortitude, the stereotypical immoral mercenary did not cause uniform disgust but was frequently a source of humour as well.¹⁶¹ In a humorous poem (*Schwank*) of 1558, Hans Sachs, a Nuremberg tailor and prolific poet, described how drunken soldierly behaviour filled even a devil with panic and caused Lucifer to henceforth refuse to admit Landsknechte into Hell as they seemed too dangerous.¹⁶² The stereotypical behaviour of the Landsknechte in this story is as much a source of humour as the stupidity and timidity of the devil, the supposed epitome of evil, and the fact that the Landsknechte had ‘out-devilled’ Lucifer.

One of Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof’s fables took this theme one step further and had the Landsknechte eventually bully their way into Heaven after being denied access to Hell.¹⁶³ Both stories describe the same stereotypical military behaviours that were lamented by moralists but here we find an element of admiration as well, as the Landsknechte render both the diabolical and the sacred impotent by this very special breed of human. The humour inherent in the idea that the agents of Hell should be scandalized by human behaviour rather presents the ability to traumatize a devil as a feat. In Kirchhof’s fable, the Landsknechte entirely unhinge Christian concepts of divine and diabolical powers, and the fundamental fears regarding post-mortem welfare

¹⁵⁹ Peter Burschel, *Söldner*, 48.

¹⁶⁰ Lyndal Roper, ‘The common man’, ‘the common good’, ‘common women’: gender and meaning in the German Reformation commune’, *Social History*, 12 (1987) 1, 1-21, 1, 4; Baumann, *Landsknechte*, 192ff.; Rogg, *Landsknechte*, 182ff; Burschel, *Söldner*, 30.

¹⁶¹ Rogg, *Landsknechte*, 185.

¹⁶² Hans Sachs, “Der Teuffel lest kein Landsknecht mehr in die Helle faren”, 1558, in: I. Hub (ed.), *Die deutsche komische und humoristische Dichtung seit Beginn des XVI. Jahrhunderts bis auf unsere Zeit*, Nuremberg 1854, vol.1, 1st book, 57-60

¹⁶³ Kirchhof, *Wendunmuth*, I, 136ff.

or damnation find a release in the comical inversion of early modern notions of Heaven and Hell. In this story, Hell seems like a pleasant place to spend eternity, the soldier souls make their way there on their own volition because of the famously warm climate. They are not damned to Hell but demand entry and only grudgingly trudge towards Heaven when they are barred from their first choice of a netherworldly abode. That the epitomes of depravity finally manage to shame Saint Peter into admitting them into Heaven is the ultimate inversion of traditional Catholic notions of post-mortem judgement and sainthood. The Landsknechte quite sharply de-sacralize the first pope and approach him on eye-level and they deal with the man Simon who, after his denial of Christ, neither deserves the epithet *petros* nor the reverence of sainthood. These examples may serve to illustrate how the same stereotypical characteristics of mercenary corruption that attracted the ire and condemnation of the moralists could also be a source of hilarity and slightly distant admiration in other contexts.

Conclusion

Bob Scribner described four different modes of classification of deviance that were operative in early modern German society: social dysfunctionality, economical dysfunctionality, vagrancy and socio-legal anomalies.¹⁶⁴ Mercenaries were extraordinary in the sense that they fit into *all* of these modes of classification. As we have seen, they were considered socially dysfunctional in a number of ways: they were perceived to upturn the divinely appointed social order, desert their station in life and supposedly live in debauched dissolution. Soldiers were associated with economical dysfunctionality through their alleged ruinously expensive clothing, their squandering of money on drink, prostitutes and gambling and their begging that arose from this wastefulness. They were by necessity vagrants, Scribner's third criterion. Finally, they were a legal anomaly as they belonged under regimental jurisdiction, beyond the reach of civil and ecclesiastical authority. The soldier was therefore associated with the entire spectrum of deviance and this unique concentration of transgressive behaviours in one socio-cultural type goes some way to explain why mercenary soldiers were presented as arch sinners in normative sources. Regarding the 'godlessness' of soldiers, we have seen that this allegation arose from social tensions and the transgression of moral ideals

¹⁶⁴ Robert Scribner, 'Preconditions of tolerance and intolerance in sixteenth-century Germany', in: Ole P. Grell and Bob Scribner (eds.), *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, Cambridge 1996, 32-47, 41.

but not necessarily, as far as the common list of vice is concerned, from genuine spiritual deviance. The epithets ‘godless’, ‘un-Christian’ etc. have been characterized as rhetorical devices to highlight the discrepancy between the envisioned ideal and the perceived reality of soldier life. There is therefore enough reasonable doubt as to the representativeness of the topos of the irreligious soldier and its application to real life, which opens up the possibility, indeed the necessity, to engage with religious attitudes in the military. What role did religion play in the military? The following chapters seek to provide some answers.

Chapter 2

The Religious Structures of the Military

Introduction

The first chapter identified and analyzed long-standing and ubiquitous negative stereotypes that characterized the military as a den of iniquity and irreligion. Serious doubt has been raised as to the representativeness of this stereotype and it remains to be seen whether – and if so in what ways – there is evidence for elements of military religious deviance, or ‘abnormality’. This chapter will examine the religious framework and the role of institutionalized religion in the military in order to ascertain what provision was made for the spiritual edification of the soldiery. While the military legal structure has been intensively studied, its religious dimension has so far only received cursory attention and the following discussion seeks to rectify this situation.

One of the main questions asked here is how the military structure and military religious policies fit into the larger socio-religious context. Since such discussions among scholars are often typified by notions of confessionalization, it has to be asked in how far confessional tendencies are detectable within the military in an age of confessional war. The academic consensus holds that “early modern armies” were “enclaves of religious indifference in a time during which the princes sought to educate and regulate their subjects according to their own confession”.¹⁶⁵ Studies on the later 17th and 18th century have found that neither confessionalization nor social discipline played much of a role in the standing armies.¹⁶⁶ Ralf Pröve has shown that by this point, toleration had become a core value of military law and society and intolerance was branded as un-Christian after 1648.¹⁶⁷ Pröve also presents evidence from conflicts between confessionally minded secular, and confessionally indifferent military authorities that defended toleration as a military custom, which indicates that there

¹⁶⁵ Jutta Nowosadtko, ‘Die Schulbildung der Soldatenkinder im Fürstbistum Münster. Konfessionelle Unterschiede in den Heeren des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts’, in: Kaiser and Kroll, *Militär und Religiosität*, 293-305, 293.

¹⁶⁶ Ralf Pröve, *Stehendes Heer und städtische Gesellschaft im 18. Jahrhundert. Göttingen und seine Militärbevölkerung 1713-1756*, München 1995; idem, ‘Reichweiten und Grenzen der Konfessionalisierung am Beispiel der frühneuzeitlichen Militärgesellschaft’, in: Greyerz et al. (eds.), *Interkonfessionalität*, 73-90; Nowosadtko, *Schulbildung*, 293ff.

¹⁶⁷ Pröve, *Reichweiten*, 82ff.

existed a marked difference in military and civilian confessional attitudes around 1700.¹⁶⁸ But it remains to be seen if this tolerant atmosphere developed in reaction to earlier confessional tensions or whether the military had always been free from confessional divisions.

The argument will move from the general to the specific. First, attitudes manifested in military handbooks and the articles of war will be examined. We will then consider the role of the chaplaincy, an element of the military structure that is almost entirely unexplored for the period before the mid-17th century. Religious literature aimed at soldiers has received no attention from historians so far and will be analysed before we discuss the importance of religious designs on military banners, a material source that has not been studied in the context of early modern military religiosity.

Religious stipulations in articles of war

The legal structure of early modern German armies is the best documented and studied aspect of the military realm.¹⁶⁹ The most read works on martial law and military structure were Leonhart Fronsperger's various books on the topic, which were published in many editions and permutations from the mid-sixteenth century onwards.¹⁷⁰ The regiment was an autonomous legal realm, a total institution with its own legal code: the *Artikelsbriefe*, articles of war. The contents of the articles of war were based on experience and they addressed the most frequent problems and transgressions encountered on campaign. The articles were read to the assembled men at the muster and their oath on the articles formally constituted the regiment. Each regiment had its own jurisdiction and executive personnel. Legal authority and jurisdiction rested with the *Obrist*, the colonel, who had been invested with his powers by the warlord.¹⁷¹ The regiment was therefore a sworn corporation with its own legal code and its own legal structure autonomous from civilian legal structures. The fact that

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 83.

¹⁶⁹ Burkhard von Bonin, *Grundzüge der Rechtsverfassung in den Deutschen Heeren zu Beginn der Neuzeit*, Weimar 1904; Wilhelm Beck, *Die ältesten Artikelsbriefe für das deutsche Fußvolk. Ihre Vorläufer und die Entwicklung bis zum Jahre 1519*, Munich 1908; Möller, *Regiment*. Baumann, *Landsknechte*, 103ff; Burschel, *Söldner*, 129ff; Oliver C. Prinz, *Der Einfluss von Heeresverfassung und Soldatenbild auf die Entwicklung des Militärstrafrechts*, Göttingen 2005. Most recently, Huntebrinker has argued convincingly for the great influence regimental legal autonomy had on the military as a social group (*Fromme Knechte*, 183-241)

¹⁷⁰ For example Leonhart Fronsperger *Fünff Bücher. Von Kriegß Regiment vnd Ordnung*, Frankfurt a.M. 1555; *Kriegs Ordnung Vnd Regiment samt derselbigen befehl*, Frankfurt a.M. 1564; *Von Kayserlichem Kriegsrechten Malefitz vnd Schuldhändlen*, Frankfurt a.M. 1565; *Von Kayserlichem Kriegsrechten Malefitz vnd Schuldhändlen*, Frankfurt a.M. 1566.

¹⁷¹ Möller, *Regiment*, 127ff.

this corporation, at least in theory, severed all ties with civilian legal authority set it apart from artisan guilds for example, which exhibited similar traits (sworn constitution, corporate rules and policing) but represented additional sub-orders *within* civil society, not legal alternatives.¹⁷² This legal structure of the regiment could be represented as a ‘good’ legal order but, as Huntebrinker has shown, the stereotypical dissolution of the mercenary frequently overrode the positive view of orderly military structure.¹⁷³

It is striking that the articles of war rapidly evolved during the 16th and early 17th centuries but that the religious stipulations found already in the ordinances of around 1500 underwent little change.¹⁷⁴ The field ordinances (*Feldordnungen*) from the second half of the 15th and early 16th centuries compiled by Wilhelm Beck already commonly contained most of the religious and moral prohibitions that became staples of later articles of war. They criminalized the plundering of churches and maltreatment of clerics, blaspheming, gambling, drunkenness, and sought to remove (unmarried) women or ‘whores’ from the train.¹⁷⁵ The only defining element that differentiated these earlier field ordinances from the articles of war was that the latter combined the regulations of the field ordinance with a specific short oath that the soldiers swore by God.¹⁷⁶ Therefore, while the Empire and Europe in general experienced the Reformation and the transformations brought with it, these momentous developments were generally not reflected in military law. Very rarely did warlords include explicit confessional demands in the articles they issued.

The set of articles under which soldiers served the Anabaptists at Münster (*datum* 2. January 1535) are a singular exception.¹⁷⁷ Jan van Leiden (Bockelson), the ‘king’ of Münster, reserved the term ‘Christian(s)’ exclusively for Anabaptists, while anyone who had not received adult baptism was referred to as ‘heathen’. Apart from the already unambiguous wording of the articles, they contained a number of orders that addressed potential conflict among the mercenaries arising from matters of faith. Given the dire situation of the ‘New Jerusalem’ and the near impossibility of swelling its ranks, Bockelson had to make concessions regarding the faith of mercenaries who were

¹⁷² See Huntebrinker, *Sozialverband*, 186f.

¹⁷³ Ibid. 191ff.

¹⁷⁴ For example the articles from c.1490 (Beck, *Artikelsbriefe*, 54f.) or the field ordinance issued in the recess of the Diet of Augsburg 1500 (ibid. 63f.)

¹⁷⁵ Beck, *Artikelsbriefe*, 41ff. Clerics, churches and certain categories of non-combatants had been exempt from military violence for centuries, see Contamine, *War*, 270ff.; Kaeuper, *Chivalry*, 73.

¹⁷⁶ Beck, *Artikelsbriefe*, 18. For such an oath, see e.g. Saxony, *Articuls=Brief*.

¹⁷⁷ HStA Düsseldorf, Jülich-Berg II 249a. On the Anabaptist kingdom of Münster see Klötzer, *Täuferherrschaft*; Lutterbach, *Täuferreich*; Haude, *Shadow*.

willing to serve him and, more problematically, could find a way into the besieged city. While the prophets had followed a ‘zero-tolerance’ religious policy inside the city replete with forced mass-baptisms for about a year, van Leiden could not be selective regarding whom he hired to defend his ‘kingdom’.¹⁷⁸ Adult baptism was waived as a precondition for service and men who had not yet “gained reason” and remained “heathen” could still enter the king’s service as long as they refrained from arguing with or insulting the “Christians”.¹⁷⁹ Another idiosyncratic article forbade insulting the “heathen authority” (*Oberkeit*) as it too was part of God’s plan and thus deserved a modicum of respect. The “Babylonian tyranny” (*babilonischenn tyranni*) of priests, however, was to be freely abused, as the clergy perverted God’s word to uphold their control and false preachers or prophets among the troops were to be expelled or killed.¹⁸⁰ The Münster articles of war are noteworthy for their strong wording and idiosyncratic religious stipulations but are atypical for the very same reason: hardly any warlord could afford to express confessional bias in the articles of war he issued.

While the general absence of confessional regulations in military law may seem remarkable at first sight, it was entirely in keeping with imperial policies regarding religion and war and the requirements of warfare in general. Although the period is commonly regarded as replete with confessional wars, it is important to realize – as Brendle and Schindling have pointed out – that the Empire did not officially lead a single religious war in the 16th and 17th other than the wars against the Ottomans.¹⁸¹ In fact, it was vital that religious differences were downplayed as much as possible if the Empire was to function as a military power. The reign of Charles V and his brother Ferdinand, who dealt with the political day-to-day in Central Europe, set several precedents for imperial religious policy, including approaches towards religion in the armies.¹⁸² The Empire depended on all its estates and their contributions to military services so that unity was simultaneously vital and difficult to achieve. The Empire faced powerful enemies: France to the West and the Ottomans to the East and South, two major powers that became allies in their wars against the Habsburgs. To these external enemies was added a growing internal threat in the form of the increasingly

¹⁷⁸ Lutterbach, *Täuferreich*, 78.

¹⁷⁹ HStA Düsseldorf, Jülich-Berg II 249a, fol. 2^v.

¹⁸⁰ HStA Düsseldorf, Jülich-Berg II 249a, fol. 1^v.

¹⁸¹ See Brendle and Schindling, *Religionskriege*.

¹⁸² On Charles V’s religious policies, see Albrecht P. Lutzenberger, ‘Die Religionspolitik Karls V. im Reich’, in: Kohler et al. (eds.), *Karl V.*, 293-343; Alfred Kohler, *Karl V. 1500-1558. Eine Biographie*, Munich 2005; Schilling, ‘*Veni, vidi, Deus vixit* – Karl V. zwischen Religionskrieg und Religionsfrieden’, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 89 (1998), 144-166.

unappeasable Protestant princes and cities that established the Schmalkaldic League (1530/31) as an alliance to protect Protestant interests.¹⁸³ The emperor could only fight the Franco-Ottoman alliance *or* sort out internal affairs at any one time. Charles and Ferdinand were in no position to push for a situation in which they were free to act against the Schmalkaldic League but had to wait for one and a half decades until circumstances developed in which a strike against the German Protestants became thinkable. Charles managed to conclude the Peace of Cr py with France in 1544. In a secret supplementary agreement, Francis I promised to support Charles with troops against the Turks and, importantly, against the German Lutheran princes which indicates that Charles and Ferdinand planned to finally strike against the Schmalkaldic League.¹⁸⁴ When Ferdinand was able to negotiate a one-year truce with Suleiman the following year, the brothers had the opportunity to act at last.¹⁸⁵ Even with the ability to deploy their undivided military might against the League, however, the Habsburgs were anxious to present the Schmalkaldic War (1546/47) as a war against breakers of the imperial peace not against heretics. Dissimulation of the true motives of the war was important, albeit in an inversion of the still current tendency to suspect pre-modern politics of using religion as a pretext for secular gain: Charles and Ferdinand undeniably had religious motivations but they did their best to present their actions as an entirely secular necessity.¹⁸⁶ The *Achtbrief* with which the imperial ban was declared over John of Saxony and Philipp of Hesse (20th July, 1546) was printed and circulated throughout the Empire and also explicitly addressed officers and common soldiers. A veritable propaganda war ensued that produced about 170 different texts in c.300 editions.¹⁸⁷ Charles and his advisors went to great lengths to present the Lutheran leaders as common rebels and breakers of the peace who were also guilty of *crimen laesae maiestatis*.¹⁸⁸ Not only did the emperor state explicitly that his motivations were not religious, but he also accused the elector and landgrave of using religion as a “cloak” (*Teckenmantel*) for their crimes.¹⁸⁹ The ‘rebels’ replied with printed declarations of their

¹⁸³ For an overview see: Haug-Moritz and Schmidt, *Schmalkaldischer Bund*; Schl tter-Schindler, *Schmalkaldische Bund*.

¹⁸⁴ Schilling, *Veni, vidi*, 148f.

¹⁸⁵ On the inherent difficulties in negotiating an Ottoman-Christian truce, see, Ernst D. Petrisch, ‘Zur Problematik der Kontinentalen Osmanenabwehr’, in: Kohler et al., *Karl V.*, 667-684, esp. 678ff.

¹⁸⁶ See Brendle and Schindling, *Religionskriege*, 35; Haug-Moritz, *Schmalkaldische Krieg*.

¹⁸⁷ Haug-Moritz, *Schmalkaldische Krieg*, 97.

¹⁸⁸ The text used here is Charles V, *R mischer Kayserlicher Maiestat Declaration: Wider Hertzog Friderichen Churf rsten von Sachsen unnd Landtgraff Philipsen von Hessen*, Regensburg 1546. Other editions were printed under different titles.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* Aiii^R; Bii^R.

own in which they tried to expose the emperor's religious motives and accused him of wanting to exterminate Lutheranism.¹⁹⁰

The example of the Schmalkaldic War shows the political importance of keeping religious differences at bay on the level of imperial politics. At the same time, avoiding confessional rifts among troops was also an imperative for any warlord. The highest priority was to assemble a force of adequate numbers with good equipment and, importantly, with the highest possible percentage of tried veterans. The soldiers' religious affiliation was a concern no warlord could realistically afford. The zeal a sovereign may have shown in trying to establish confessional homogeneity in his territory had to yield to the dictate of the mercenary market.¹⁹¹ Even if enough men of the desirable creed were available, discharging those soldiers or whole contingents that adhered to the adverse religion could have strengthened the enemy as the soldiers would simply have joined his ranks. As a result, all armies of the 16th and 17th century were confessional composites.¹⁹²

This pragmatism must not be confused with a lack of interest in military religious affairs, however. Count Tilly, the commander of the Catholic League forces, frequently ran into problems with the elector Maximilian over the appointment of officer positions.¹⁹³ Tilly needed men who displayed military talent. To him, confession was secondary, but time and again the elector and his council demanded that he search specifically for Catholic officers and get rid of those who were of the "adverse religion" (*widrigen religion*).¹⁹⁴ Military expediency and confessional idealism were thus a source of conflict between the commanders in the field and their employers but it has to be stressed that such attempts of confessional homogenization almost exclusively applied to officers and that these ambitions were pursued half-heartedly, if at all. Heinz Schilling's estimation of the armies of the Thirty Years' War as loci of "social and spiritual-ideological conformity" must consequently be rejected as overly optimistic.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ See e.g. John of Saxony and Philipp of Hesse, *Der Durchleüchtigst vnd Durchleüchtigen Hochgebornen Fürsten vnnnd Herren / Hernn // Johannis Friderichen Hertzogen zu Sachssen [...] Vnd Herrn Philipsen / Landgrauen zu Hessen [...] Beständige vnd warhafftige / verantwortung*, s.l. 1546.

¹⁹¹ Regarding the differences in Maximilian I of Bavaria's military and civilian confessional policies, for example, compare Wolfgang Hartinger, 'Konfessionalisierung des Alltags in Bayern unter Maximilian I.', *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte*, 65 (2002) 1, 123-156, with Michael Kaiser, 'Maximilian I. von Bayern und der Krieg. Zu einem wichtigen Aspekt seines fürstlichen Selbstverständnisses', *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte*, 65 (2002) 1, 69-99 and idem, *Cuius exercitus*.

¹⁹² See Burschel, *Söldner*, 163ff.

¹⁹³ Kaiser, *Cuius exercitus*, 333ff.

¹⁹⁴ Kaiser, *Politik*, 84f.

¹⁹⁵ Schilling, *Confessionalization*, 223.

The *ratio belli* forced warlords to resign to the fact that confessional homogeneity was theoretically desirable but practically unattainable.

The warlord was therefore well-advised to provide a legal framework that precluded religious tensions as far as possible. This meant that the articles of war could codify the lowest common theological denominator but not doctrinal specifics. As early as 1522, an imperial ordinance obliged chaplains to preach in a manner that did not invite national or confessional disputes.¹⁹⁶ The articles Charles V issued for his 1541 Turkish campaign still protected the saints from blasphemy but placing any more specific demands regarding the religious obligations of the soldiery was impracticable.¹⁹⁷ By the 1540s, the conflicts that could arise from confessional tensions among the soldiery threatened to cause serious problems in the imperial armies. It was therefore decreed again at the imperial diet at Speyer in 1542 that preaching had to avoid confessional bones of contention.¹⁹⁸ In 1544, a new set of imperial articles of war had to take account of the nationally and confessionally heterogeneous makeup of the force Charles was sending on another French campaign and incorporate a stipulation that explicitly stated that “no nation shall malign or affront another with words or gestures nor shall they get involved in disputations because of the faith”.¹⁹⁹ The imperial war council apparently also feared the Protestant contingents would cause problems and included another clause forbidding soldiers to “undertake anything in any way that is against the old religion”.²⁰⁰

The Peace of Augsburg (1555) brought temporary relief from confessional war and gave official recognition to the Lutheran estates. Charles’ hopes that a theological compromise could be achieved and the unity of the Church preserved had been shattered and he abdicated from his office. His successors, however, had to adapt to a bi-confessional Empire. Congruously, the imperial articles of war (*Reichsartikelbrief*) that Maximilian II instituted at the diet of Speyer in 1570 were void of any signs of religious preference. The *Reichsartikelbrief* sought to create a uniform legal military code for all troops operating in the Empire as well as regiments that were levied there

¹⁹⁶ Bonin, *Rechtsverfassung*, 61.

¹⁹⁷ Charles V, *Artickell wie sich die kriegslewt Edell vnnd vnedel ym zug wider den Turcken vorhalden sollen*, s.l. 1541.

¹⁹⁸ Bonin, *Rechtsverfassung*, 61; Baumann, *Landsknechte*, 195.

¹⁹⁹ Charles V, *Römischer Keiserlicher Maiestet bestallung [...] auff den jetzigen Zugk des 1544. jars*, s.l. 1544, Bi^V.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. Bi^R.

for service abroad.²⁰¹ For over a century, they were used as the template for imperial and Catholic articles of war.²⁰² The second article addressed religious issues. Soldiers were to refrain from impious behaviour such as blasphemy and admonished to pray for victory and attend the sermon whenever possible.²⁰³ The imperial war council therefore thought attendance of service to be important also in the exceptional context of military campaigns.

Two elements were new in the context of military law and seem to have been adapted from the civilian context.²⁰⁴ Firstly, the provost was given power to arrest whoever was “found in wine cellars or taverns or other frivolous locations during service or sermon” and to punish them “according to the colonel’s judgment”. Secondly, the selling of alcohol was forbidden during services or sermons. In the civilian context, promoting church discipline and appropriate behaviour during services was a chronic problem. But while the alcohol ban indicates that some soldiers preferred spirits to the spiritual, in Marc Forster’s estimation such behaviour “reflect[ed] not a popular rejection of the Mass but the unwillingness of some to treat the whole church service with the kind of reverence the clergy wanted”.²⁰⁵ It may be an over-interpretation of semantic minutiae but the usage of the confessionally unmarked term ‘*Gottesdienst*’ rather than e.g. ‘(heilige) Messe’ (Holy Mass) could be another indicator that the wording was kept deliberately ecumenical.

The liberty with which the colonels and their legal staff could decide on the degree of punishment for religious offences remained widely unchallenged until the end of the Thirty Years’ War. From around 1600, the wish to instil a “new morality” (*Neue Sittlichkeit*), the project of ‘social discipline’ that had exercised civilian authorities for decades, became faintly detectable in some military codes in so far as rules of moral

²⁰¹ On the Reichsartikelbrief see Jan Willem Huntebrinker, ‘Der Reichsartikelbrief von 1570. Zur Kodifizierung des Militärrechts in der Frühen Neuzeit’, in: Gernot Kamecke, Jacques Le Rider and Anne Szulmajster (eds.) *La Codification. Perspectives Transdisciplinaires*, Paris 2007, 87-102. The complete 1570 imperial ordinance including the articles of war for cavalry and infantry as well as addenda can be found in Johan Christian Lünig (ed.), *Corpus Iuris Militaris*, 2 vols., Leipzig 1723, I, 58ff. The passages concerning the military in the imperial recess that accompanied the articles of war of 1570 also show that religious matters were of little importance (*Corpus*, I, 327ff.). See also Huntebrinker, *Reichsartikelbrief*.

²⁰² For example Duke Maximilian of Bavaria’s articles of war (Lünig, *Corpus*, II, 778). Ferdinand III’s 1642 articles, and Leopold I’s revised version of 1665, still reiterated the religious regulations from the 1570 articles verbatim (Lünig, *Corpus*, I, 81f.).

²⁰³ *Corpus Iuris Militaris*, I, 70.

²⁰⁴ See Beat Kümin, *Drinking Matters. Public Houses and Social Exchange in Early Modern Central Europe*, New York 2007, 81.

²⁰⁵ Forster, *Catholic Revival*, 125.

conduct became more elaborate.²⁰⁶ Maurice of Nassau's 1590 *Artikelbrief* for the armies of the United Provinces became the template for Protestant powers' military ordinances: Denmark and Sweden both fashioned their articles after the Dutch model and English and Scottish ordinances of the 1640s were based on the Swedish version.²⁰⁷ The 1625 Danish articles of war that Christian IV issued for his troops in Germany contained relatively detailed stipulations regarding the punishment of religious transgressions.²⁰⁸ The first paragraph began with the customary reminder that it was God who bestowed fortune on an army and ordered officers to always instruct the soldiery to pray for His favour, not to miss sermons and to hear them happily and soberly.²⁰⁹ Common soldiers found drunk at sermons should be put in shackles, while officers were to lose their commission the third time they appeared drunk for service. The second article was also aimed at keeping the service sober and reiterated the alcohol ban during the sermon unless an ill person needed fortification. The third and fourth articles dealt with two 'registers' of blasphemy, which will be examined in the next chapter. The soldiers' oath, which occupied the final page of the 1625 articles, ended in the formula: "so help us God and his holy gospel, through Jesus Christ, AMEN", which gestured towards the centrality of the Bible in the Danish king's Lutheran faith.²¹⁰

The articles of war under which Gustavus II Adolphus led his troops into the Thirty Years War took the policing of religious conduct to an even higher level.²¹¹ A cursory glance over the Swedish articles already gives the impression that this legal code was a departure from the traditional form: regulations were detailed on twenty-eight pages, subdivided into twenty-four *tituli* and 112 articles. Three *tituli* addressed religious matters in nineteen articles. The first article introduced a prohibition of different kinds of idolatry (*Abgötterey*): false worshippers, idolaters, witches and weapon enchanter were to be apprehended, put on trial and expelled from the army

²⁰⁶ Burschel, *Söldner*, 136f.

²⁰⁷ Tallett, *War and Society*, 123. See also: Gerhard Oestreich, 'Der römische Stoizismus und die oranische Heeresreform', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 176/1 (1953), 17-43. The new Dutch martial law found a lot of interest in Germany and elsewhere: the articles of war were printed in translation for example Anon, *Kurtzer Begrieff / Der Kriegs Ordnung / So vnter den Herrn Staden [...] gehalten wird*, Rinteln 1625. Petrus Pappus annotated the Dutch legislation at length (*Holländisch Kriegs-Recht / vnd Articuls=Brieff*, Strasbourg 1643[1632]). The Scottish *Articles and Ordinance of Warre* (Edinburgh 1640) were essentially a translation of the Swedish model.

²⁰⁸ Denmark, *Articulsbrieff*. Citations are taken from the 1638 Glückstadt edition.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. Aii^R.

²¹⁰ Ibid. Fil^R.

²¹¹ Sweden, *Schwedisches Kriegs=Recht*. The articles were first issued for the Swedish army in 1621 and were printed in German repeatedly from 1632 onwards. Also in 1632, an English translation by William Watts was printed (*The Swedish Discipline*, London 1632).

should they offend again.²¹² That a repeat offence was conceivable suggests that no capital punishment for witchcraft was envisioned. Blasphemy was dealt with at length in articles II-VI.²¹³ If a soldier showed irreverence or made a farce of the service or the sacraments, he was to be tried before the *Consistorium Ecclesiasticum*. The consistory was a novel institution under the presidency of a senior cleric who was assisted by *assessore ordinarij*, the preachers of the respective regiments.²¹⁴ Titulus II concerned services and sermons. While other articles of war usually envisioned one service or mass per week – if they quantified the frequency of worship at all – the Swedish articles ordered short services that consisted of prayers and hymn singing to be held twice a day.²¹⁵ Article VIII addressed the rather striking problem of field chaplains who did not attend the service – rogue pastors appear repeatedly in this particular code – and specified that absentee chaplains should pay half their month's pay into a fund for ill soldiers. Soldiers who skipped service were to pay a fine the first and second time and faced twenty-four hours in the pillory on the third offence.²¹⁶ A preacher found drunk when he had to hold a service was to be reprimanded the first and second time and removed from his post and the army the third time.²¹⁷ Every Sunday and on feast days a full service with a sermon was to be held during which time no alcohol was to be sold, which was a standard rule by now, but neither were feasts or carousals allowed and transgressors faced a fine.²¹⁸

The articles of war from the period show that approaches towards the regulation of religious and moral conduct differed considerably depending on the warlord who issued the articles of war especially as the 17th century progressed. The drive towards a stricter religious – but not confessional – regime is noticeable across the confessional spectrum from the second half of the 16th century onwards.²¹⁹ The differences lie in the degrees to which confessional characteristics were included in the regulations. Imperial and Catholic articles generally phrased religious rules in confessionally unmarked terms but exhibit greater attention to matters of 'church discipline'. Protestant princes showed

²¹² Sweden, *Schwedisches Kriegs=Recht*, 4.

²¹³ These will also be examined in Chapter 3.

²¹⁴ Ibid. 8.

²¹⁵ Ibid. 6.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ The drunkenness of clerics and its effects on their duties had been discussed at least since the 10th century, see Reinhold Kaiser, *Trunkenheit und Gewalt im Mittelalter*, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna, 2002, 196ff.

²¹⁸ Ibid. 6f.

²¹⁹ See also Burschel, *Söldner*, 136ff.

a marginally greater readiness to include confessionally explicit terms and phrases, for example references to the sanctity of the Bible, but it is important to emphasize that these codes never prejudiced against Catholics nor contained stipulations that could be interpreted as religiously divisive. The offences mentioned in the articles of war (blasphemy, swearing, drunkenness during service, etc.) give a sense of what kinds of transgressions were considered frequent in the armies.²²⁰ Importantly, with the exception of the later Swedish articles that explicitly referred to institutionalised courts, the warlords delegated the enforcement of their regulations and jurisdiction to the regimental level, to the judgment of the respective colonel and his legal staff. To determine if, how, and with what frequency religious transgressions were punished one would therefore have to examine regimental court records but next to none have survived that predate 1650. We are therefore largely limited to descriptions of the legal system and forced to resort to educated guesses when it comes to legal ‘reality’.²²¹

Maren Lorenz has recently conducted a highly insightful study of military-civilian relations based on Swedish court martial records but her materials, dating from around 1650 to 1700, are the earliest sources of this kind that have survived in any greater number.²²² Huntebrinker has found the *Gerichtsbuch* of Wolfgang von Mansfeld’s regiment of 1625/26 in the Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden but his find is singular although military manuals advised keeping a regimental trial log.²²³ The fact that none of the trials recorded in the Mansfeldian trial log had an explicitly religious dimension is telling in itself.²²⁴ Lorenz has found some cases dating to around 1700 that included a brawl and “pissing” in church but these events are too late to be pertinent for the present study.²²⁵ As it stands, we cannot judge what approach individual colonels took to the policing of religious conduct or the extent to which religious misbehaviour was punished. That the prosecution of secular transgressions is mentioned not infrequently but not one clear instance of a punishment for a genuine religious offence has come to light so far suggests that religious policing played a subordinate role in the military day to day.

²²⁰ Here we find a correlation to the common allegations against soldiers described in Chapter 1.

²²¹ See Möller, *Regiment*, 196.

²²² Maren Lorenz, *Das Rad der Gewalt. Militär und Zivilbevölkerung in Norddeutschland nach dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg (1650-1700)*, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna, 2007

²²³ For a description, see Huntebrinker, *Fromme Knechte*, 28ff.

²²⁴ I would like to thank Maren Lorenz and Jan Willem Huntebrinker for their kind help and their generosity in sharing their research.

²²⁵ The cases were tried as violent crime and obscenity respectively: the punishments were pillory and a fine.

Religion in the regiment – the chaplaincy

The field chaplaincy of the period before c.1650 remains an unexplored field.²²⁶ The collection of essays edited by Doris L. Bergen traces the chaplaincy through history but does not include a study of 16th and 17th century Central Europe.²²⁷ Two articles in Kaiser and Kroll's *Militär und Religiosität* deal with military chaplains but only for the 18th century.²²⁸ Despite the promising title of Brendle and Schindling's recent essay collection (*Clerics in War*), the contributions examine the civilian clergy's experience of war and mention field chaplains only in passing.²²⁹ Claudia Reichl-Ham's study focuses mainly on modern chaplaincies and is unfortunately imprecise in several important aspects that concern the early modern military context.²³⁰ With the exception of the field consistory in the Swedish army during the Thirty Years War examined below, it was the privilege of the commanders to employ field preachers well into the 17th century. As there was no centralized organization of military pastoral services, documentation pertaining to military clerics before the mid-17th century is exceedingly patchy, which makes a systematic examination of the chaplaincy impossible. This section seeks to provide a profile of the field preacher's office and examine their pastoral duties and training, aspects we know little about. Individual field preachers have been the objects of study. Olivier Chaline's analysis of the Battle of White Mountain (8th November 1620) emphasizes the role of the Spanish Carmelite Dominicus a Jesu-Maria, who accompanied the Bavarian army and in Chaline's estimation profoundly influenced the events and outcome of the battle.²³¹ Bernd Autenrieth's biographical study of the 17th century Lutheran cleric Samuel Gerlach, who served as a field preacher first in the Swedish and then in Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar's armies, provides a unique insight into the life of a military chaplain and the

²²⁶ Apart from the studies mentioned below, see also Krusenstjern's brief discussion in 'Seliges Sterben und böser Tod. Tod und Sterben in der Zeit des Dreißigjährigen Krieges', in: Krusenstjern et al., *Alltag und Katastrophe*, 469-496, 485f.

²²⁷ Doris L. Bergen, *The Sword of the Lord. Military Chaplains from the First to the Twenty-First Century*, Notre Dame 2004.

²²⁸ Benjamin Marschke, 'Vom Feldpredigerwesen zum Militärkirchenwesen. Die Erweiterung und Institutionalisierung der Militärseelsorge Preußens im frühen 18. Jahrhundert', in: Kaiser and Kroll, *Militär und Religiosität*, 249-275; Hannelore Lehmann, 'Das Tuchfeldsche Soldatenkonventikel in Potsdam 1725/27. Erziehung zum frommen Soldaten oder Verleumdung des Soldatenstandes?', *ibid.*, 277-292.

²²⁹ Franz Brendle and Anton Schindling, *Geistliche im Krieg*, Münster 2009.

²³⁰ Claudia Reichl-Ham, *Die Militärseelsorge in Geschichte und Gegenwart* [Militär und Seelsorge, Themenheft 4], Vienna 2005.

²³¹ Olivier Chaline, *La Bataille de la Montagne Blanche – un mystique chez les guerriers*, Paris 1999.

possibilities for promotion the military and the networks of patronage that could be built there offered to clerics from humble backgrounds.²³²

The articles of war generally do not deal with the chaplaincy but frequent references to services and sermons imply that it was taken for granted that there were clerics accompanying the armies. Military manuals dealt with chaplains only in passing, which may have contributed to historians' lacking interest in the office. In the mid-16th century, Leonhart Fronsperger prefaced his very brief outline of an infantry chaplain's duties with a damning assessment. While he thought that every captain should strive to employ "a learned, Christian, able and honourable man" as his chaplain, Fronsperger thought good chaplains to be rare, as "the parishioners are commonly like the parson [...] the sheep like the shepherd, as lambs are rarely raised among wolves".²³³ Fronsperger did not explain why he deemed the infantry chaplains so morally questionable but a comparison with the neutral way he described their colleagues in the 'noble' cavalry suggests that he suspected the infantry clerics of dissolution merely because they were willing to minister to the Landsknechte.²³⁴ His low esteem of the infantry chaplaincy is also noticeable when he describes that the chaplain helped to do the captain's shopping and ran errands, so that the field preacher in Fronsperger appears to be more a servant with a spiritual side than a serious cleric.

Other military manuals were not as dismissive as Fronsperger's but treated the chaplaincy in a similarly brief manner. With the salient exception of the chaplaincy, Count Solms's '*Kriegsbuch*' described every military office at some length. The preacher was listed alongside minor staff with the comment that his duties were self-explanatory.²³⁵ While the reference to the field preacher could hardly be more brief, it is revealing in so far as Solms apparently did not consider the duties of a military chaplain to be any different from those of other clerics. Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof did provide an outline of the chaplains' duties, namely "to preach God's Word in the field, comfort the sick, and administer the holy sacrament to them, also to baptize new born children and to perform what else belongs to this office".²³⁶ The specifically military content only concerns the peculiarities of holding a service in the open field, during which the pastor

²³² Bernd Autenrieth, *Samuel Gerlach: Feldprediger, Hofprediger, Prälat (1609-1683). Ein schwäbischer Pfarrer zwischen Mecklenburg, Holstein, Danzig und Württemberg*, Stuttgart 2000.

²³³ Fronsperger, *Von Keyserlichem Kriegsrechten*, Frankfurt a.M. 1566, CXXXVI^R.

²³⁴ Ibid. XLI^R.

²³⁵ Solms, '*Kriegsbuch*', vol.2, 62^v.

²³⁶ Kirchhof, *Militaris Disciplina*, 133.

was to sing hymns that were “otherwise customary in churches”.²³⁷ What these passages suggest is that the field preacher’s duties were regarded as identical to those of the parish clergy and that he was supposed to provide ‘normal’ pastoral care in a transitory environment. The condemnatory tone of Fronsperger’s widely-read book and the little attention chaplains are given in military manuals of the time have prompted some historians to postulate that field preachers were of little importance in the military and that the “quality of chaplains tended to be low”.²³⁸ A closer reading of the brief passages suggests a fundamentally different picture, however. It seems that field preachers were hardly dealt with in military literature not because the authors thought that they were unimportant but because it was considered superfluous to provide specific explanations when the duties of a cleric in the army were exactly the same as they were in the parish.

This impression is corroborated by evidence from letters of reference for Johannes Northausen who spent some time as a field preacher to a German regiment in the Netherlands in the late 1570s.²³⁹ The Johannes a Lasco Bibliothek in Emden holds some of his personal documents that provide a rare insight into the obligations of Northausen’s civilian and military appointments.²⁴⁰ In a reference dated August 31st, 1579, Northausen’s former commanding officer, *Rittmeister* Friedrich von Wehren, described the chaplain’s performance and gave an assessment of his character.²⁴¹ Northausen had “preached God’s Word in the pure form”, administered “the Christian and most venerable Sacraments according to Christ’s pure institute” and had proven to be of good, Christian moral conduct.²⁴² Again, the description of a field preacher’s duties seems identical with those of a regular cleric but in Northausen’s case, we can directly compare his military reference with a civilian one. After his army stint he became a pastor in Greussen, county Schwarzburg, where he ran into problems after about eighteen months and was dismissed from his position over doctrinal disputes.²⁴³ His superiors accused him of “unbearably gross wrongdoing and impure doctrine” and

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ For example Fiedler, *Kriegswesen*, 75; Tallett, *War and Society*, 127.

²³⁹ For biographical details on Northausen see Johann F.G. Goeters, ‘Magister Johann Northausen, Bonns reformierter Pastor in der Zeit des Truchsessischen Krieges, und seine Gemeinde’, in: Manfred van Rey and Norbert Schloßmacher (eds.), *Bonn und das Rheinland – Beiträge zur Geschichte und Kultur einer Region*. (Bonner Geschichtsblätter 42), 171-195, 172ff.

²⁴⁰ Arch JALB 503, Nr.15.

²⁴¹ Arch JALB 503, Nr.15, fol.15.

²⁴² Arch JALB 503, Nr.15, fol.15R

²⁴³ Goeters, *Magister*, 173.

removed him from his position without knowledge or consent of his parishioners.²⁴⁴ Fearing that the unjust treatment and especially the lack of a reference would obstruct his future career, he sent a letter to the pastors in the neighbouring parishes asking them for a reference and to attest to the purity of his doctrine and conduct. His colleagues obliged and wrote:

“Thus, we declare and attest that [...] he fulfilled his office faithfully and assiduously, handled his doctrine correctly and that he conducted himself modestly and irreproachably in his lifestyle, which is amply confirmed by his parishioners and everyone else”.²⁴⁵

On the verso side, five of his colleagues gave brief individual statements. Martin Pottin, pastor in Kirchheiligen, for example attested to his ‘unadulterated doctrine and blameless lifestyle’ (*doctrina non vulgari vitaq[ue] inculpata*). This shows us that field preachers and parish clergy had to meet the same criteria, purity of doctrine and blameless moral conduct. In addition, regular theological training seems to have been sufficient preparation for an appointment in the military.

We can speculate that finding clerics willing to serve in the army would have been a greater problem because – if the pay lists in military manuals reflect reality – chaplains were not remunerated particularly well. Fronsperger suggested 12 gulden pay for the chaplain in the Provost-General’s retinue, the same pay grade as the drummer or a blacksmith.²⁴⁶ This was good money compared to what a regular colonel’s chaplain earned: 8 gulden.²⁴⁷ Reinhard von Solms accorded the chaplain the second lowest pay grade at double the pay of an ordinary soldier; in comparison, the executioner earned twice as much.²⁴⁸ Quoting an imperial patent, Wilhelm Dillich’s *Kriegßbuch* advised paying chaplains – if they were present – a generous 24 gulden, the same amount an ensign earned.²⁴⁹ The generally low pay combined with the hardship of military life suggest that becoming a field preacher was not an aspiration for many clerics and a shortage of military pastoral staff seems to have been endemic.²⁵⁰ Kirchhof lamented the chronic lack of field chaplains and the unavailability of spiritual care for the

²⁴⁴ Arch JALB 503, Nr.15, fol.13^R.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Fronsperger, *Keyserlichem Kriegßbrechten*, XXXVII^V.

²⁴⁷ Ibid. XXXVIII^R.

²⁴⁸ Solms, *Kriegsbuch*, vol. 1, 64^R.

²⁴⁹ Wilhelm Dillich, *KriegßBuch*, Kassel 1608, 131, 211.

²⁵⁰ For example Anon, *Kurtze Relation*, Biiii^V; Heinrich von Weseken, *Chronik*, in: Klaus Bambauer and Hermann Kleinholz (eds.), *Geusen und Spanier am Niederrhein. Die Ereignisse der Jahre 1586-1632 nach den zeitgenössischen Chroniken der Weseler Bürger Arnold von Anrath und Heinrich von Weseken*, Wesel 1992, 259-399; Maurus Friesenegger, *Tagebuch aus dem 30jährigen Krieg*, ed. Willibald Mathäser, Munich 2007, 37; Hümmer, *Bamberg im Schwedenkriege*, 59.

soldiers.²⁵¹ General Tilly had to send begging letters to Maximilian of Bavaria in June 1621, asking for at least one, ideally two Jesuits so that masses, sermons and confessions could resume again and he and his men were no longer rendered ‘helpless’ in spiritual matters.²⁵² It has to be considered, however, that the chaplains usually seem to have negotiated their appointments directly with the colonels or their staff, so that their actual pay could have been higher than the military manuals suggest. Furthermore, many officers were aristocrats who employed court preachers so that it is likely that many of the men that appear in the sources as ‘field preachers’ were in fact court preachers who had joined their master on campaign and that the pay suggestions in the military manuals did not apply to them.

Leonhard Fronsperger’s low esteem of field preachers has been noted and there is more evidence that a certain stigma surrounded clerics who were willing to cater to soldiers. Apart from the poor pay, concerns about their reputation may therefore have precluded many clerics from joining the army. That suspicions concerning their moral integrity affected field preachers becomes apparent in the dedication of a sermon held at Pilsen in 1618 by Zacharias Theobald, who catered to two infantry regiments under captain Wolff Friedrich Lammingner.²⁵³ Theobald described how his decision to preach in the army had caused talk among friends and enemies alike and that doubts had been voiced whether it was befitting a pastor to join an army in the field.²⁵⁴ He stressed that he had followed the *vocation* of captain Lammingner and had therefore been officially appointed. He employed biblical examples to suggest that Joshua and Elijah had been ‘field preachers’ and rejected insinuations of inappropriate adventurousness. Theobald’s justification for his decision to become a field preacher was that it was the duty of a cleric who took his position seriously to preach and teach where he was needed and he argued that soldiers required pastoral care like everyone else. He called upon captain Lammingner and all the other officers to attest to his good conduct in order to counter imputations concerning his character and lifestyle. Theobald’s self-justifications suggest a concern that his current appointment would jeopardize his good reputation.

Attempts to preclude speculation regarding Johann Northausen’s decision to become a field preacher are also noticeable in his military reference cited above. It

²⁵¹ Kirchhof, *Militaris Disciplina*, 179.

²⁵² Kaiser, *Ars moriendi*, 332.

²⁵³ Zacharias Theobald Jr., *Heerpredigt. Auß dem schönen Gebet deß theuren Feld Obristen Judæ Maccabæi*, Friedberg 1618.

²⁵⁴ Ibid. Ai^v.

stated clearly that Northausen had joined the regiment following a ‘formally issued *volation*’ (*uff ordentliche beschehne Volation*), a circumstance that Northausen himself was eager to stress, and that he had left the regiment, again, after having received a formal appointment elsewhere.²⁵⁵ The suspicion in early modern culture towards vagrants and those who left their home, as has been noted in the previous chapter, is the most likely explanation for these comments. They implied that Northausen was an upright and responsible man of the cloth who lived and worked in ordered circumstances and with official appointments. In other words, the document confirmed that he was not a dissolute vagrant who was running away from a shady past and hiding in the alleged *demi-monde* of the army.

On the grounds of the evidence examined, it appears that the negative representations of field chaplains may be yet another stereotypical image, like others associated with the military. Matthias Rogg has described woodcuts in which army clerics are represented in an incriminating manner and while he could be right in conjecturing that some clerics may have found it difficult to withstand the immoral lures of army life, verifying such a claim is a different matter altogether.²⁵⁶ It should be mentioned that whilst Fronsperger was singularly outspoken in his negative estimation of army chaplains, other writers did not comment on field preachers’ morals. Clerics and moralists were the most vocal denouncers of alleged military dissolution but they never commented on or criticized the moral integrity of their colleagues who undertook the supposedly Herculean task of ministering to soldiers. There are reports of isolated encounters between civilian pastors and their military counterparts but they present conflicting evidence with regards to field preachers’ qualities. Christoph Thodaenus, a Lutheran pastor who was rescued from the carnage of the Sack of Magdeburg by a Spanish colonel, had a few inimical encounters with the Spaniard’s Catholic chaplain.²⁵⁷ If Thodaenus as a Lutheran pastor needed proof of a Catholic cleric’s inability and worthlessness, he found it over dinner: the padre spoke no Latin, the language he was supposed to use in his religious ceremonies. Thodaenus also noted that the chaplain failed to say a prayer after dinner. Henceforth, the Spaniard was only referred to as a “base beast” (*rudus pecus*), “the *sacrificulus*” (a pagan sacrificing priest) or ironically as

²⁵⁵ Arch JALB 503, Nr.15, fol.15^R; Northausen, *Erbermliche [...] anzeig*, s.l. 1584, 2.

²⁵⁶ Rogg, *Landsknechte*, 144.

²⁵⁷ Christoph Thodaenus, *Threni Magdæburgi*, Hamburg 1632, Kiiii^R.

“the holy *Herr Pater*”.²⁵⁸ These comments on the priest’s ability were based on personal antipathy and confessional prejudice, however, not on the specific circumstance that the Spaniard was a field-preacher. Thodaenus was not prejudiced against military clerics *per se* as he wrote amiably about a fellow Lutheran who served as a field preacher in Caspar von Potthausen’s regiment which stood in imperial service at the time.²⁵⁹ In other situations, encounters between field preachers and parish clergy could be cordial, even across confessional boundaries. Samuel Gerlach, a Lutheran field preacher in Swedish services, was billeted with the Catholic priest in Öttingen and their relationship seems to have been thoroughly genial. When Gerlach’s unit moved on, the priest wrote his motto ‘I pray and fast’ with the addition ‘In pleasant memory’ in Gerlach’s friendship book (*Stammbuch*).²⁶⁰

While we consequently cannot rule out that some field preachers, like other clergymen elsewhere, may have been wanting in terms of personal piety and training, the individuals that have been treated here do not appear to have been ‘worse’ clerics than their civilian counterparts. That the stereotype and suspicions that surrounded soldiers regarding their motivations for joining the army also seems to have affected the clergy who catered to them should consequently be considered when statements about their ‘quality’ are made.

The Swedish field consistory in theory and praxis

The Swedish articles of war of 1621/32 for the army in Germany were, as was mentioned above, exceptionally clear regarding the chaplaincy’s duties and its organisation, which were treated in five articles under *titulus* III.²⁶¹ The intention was to ensure that chaplains were attached to every regiment and that they had received the necessary training and met the requirements of clean doctrine and lifestyle expected from a pastor. Article XV stipulated that only formally ordained preachers were eligible for the position and stressed that the chaplains were to be assigned centrally to the regiments, not hired privately by the respective officers. The next article described the aforementioned *consistorium ecclesiasticum* under the presidency of the oldest court-

²⁵⁸ Ibid. Li^R.

²⁵⁹ Ibid. Lii^R. The fact that a Lutheran field preacher served in Tilly’s army calls into question the absoluteness of Peter Burschel’s assessment that chaplains in the armies of the Thirty Years’ War all shared the creed of the warlord (*Söldner*, 164), which has been echoed by Kaiser (*Cuius exercitus*, 319) and Nowosadtko (*Schulbildung*, 293).

²⁶⁰ Autenrieth, *Gerlach*, 34.

²⁶¹ Sweden, *Schwedisches Kriegs=Recht*, 7f.

and field preacher. Article XVII returned to the apparent problem of officers employing their own chaplains. It reiterated the prohibition of hiring preachers privately and forbade officers to discharge chaplains assigned to them without the knowledge and consent of the *consistorium* and their colonel. Chaplains who proved “godless and reprobate” were to be tried before the *consistorium* and dismissed from service should the allegations prove true (§XVIII). Finally, the consistory was given the power to prosecute wayward chaplains without them being reported by their officers in order to ensure that any offences were punished.²⁶² The purpose of having chaplains in the army was, after all, to set a good example to the common soldiery.²⁶³

The Swedish articles of war addressed the long lamented issues, namely the chronic lack of chaplains and the poor training and wanting piety of chaplains that were available (whether such allegations were true or not). In this sense, the Swedish model seems groundbreaking in its level of attention. Bernd Autenrieth’s biography of Samuel Gerlach, who served as a chaplain in the Swedish army, however, suggests how difficult it was to translate the high aims of the Swedish articles into reality. Gerlach’s career in the Swedish army violated the regulations at every turn. Gerlach graduated from the University of Tübingen in 1629 and worked as a private tutor for a patrician family until they could no longer afford him and recommended him to a relative, Friedrich Ludwig Chanovsky von Langendorff, a colonel in the Swedish army, who hired him as his field-preacher in 1631.²⁶⁴ Gerlach found himself in an unhappy situation, because the colonel was often away from the regiment and his new field preacher apparently lacked in authority without his backing. However, after the Sack of Augsburg (April 1632), he met Jacob Fabricius, Gustavus Adolphus’ court preacher, who took him into the royal camp.²⁶⁵ A few things should be pointed out before we proceed. As we have seen, the Swedish articles of war forbade officers to hire their own field preachers. They also stated that only clerics who were formally ordained were eligible for that position and had to be assigned to the regiments by the consistory. None of this was observed in Gerlach’s case: he was hired privately by Chanovsky, it is uncertain if he had been ordained at that point and it seems that he got into contact with Fabricius (and through him possibly with the consistory) more by accident than by following due course.

²⁶² Ibid. 8.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Autenrieth, *Gerlach*,. 30f. On Chanovsky von Langendorf see: <http://www.30jaehrigerkrieg.de/chanovsky-chanowsky-canoffsky-kanofsky-von-langendorf-friedrich-ludwig-2/> (last accessed 26/9/2011).

²⁶⁵ Autenrieth, *Gerlach*, 31.

The religious structures in the army contingents that were under direct command of the Swedish king were in no better shape than they were in the army under Field-Marshal Horn to which Chanovsky's regiment belonged. Three out of four court-preacher positions were vacant and the Swedish Master of the Horse Albrecht von der Schulenburg was delighted to take Gerlach as his field preacher because the new arrival meant that he could send the inexperienced young man he was currently employing back to university.²⁶⁶ Only in mid-July was Gerlach finally ordained as field preacher of the *Altgrün* regiment under the Calvinist colonel Adam von Pfuel with whom he soon clashed over doctrinal matters.²⁶⁷ Pfuel also began to interfere with Gerlach's preaching, a presumption that greatly offended the Lutheran preacher as he considered his commander to be an insolent Calvinist *parvenu*. After a few months Gerlach secured the prestigious position as field preacher of Field-Marshal Horn's personal cavalry regiment (*Leibregiment*) and served there until his health began to deteriorate. Horn then made him the first and only Lutheran pastor of Dahlenfeld near Neckarsulm, but Gerlach fled the town after the Swedish defeat at Nördlingen and had to become a field preacher again, this time in a cavalry regiment in Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar's army.²⁶⁸ After Sweden and France became allies in 1635, Gerlach resigned from his position, according to his biographer Autenrieth seemingly because he was not willing to serve the French crown.²⁶⁹

As Gerlach's case shows, the Swedish legal code was ambitious on paper but evidently failed in praxis. The Swedish system could not provide nearly enough field preachers, nor did the organisational structure it tried to impose seem to work even remotely. Colonel Chanovsky simply ignored the articles of war when he privately hired Gerlach and even in the royal army, under the auspices of the king, the court preacher Fabricius and the field consistory, the informal hiring and swapping of chaplains seems to have been common practice. That the Lutheran Gerlach was assigned to the Calvinist von Pfuel's regiment may indicate that the consistory was trying to prevent the colonel from hiring his own reformed preacher but this is speculative. Gerlach's doctrinal clashes with Pfuel (and to a lesser degree his experiences in Chanovsky's regiment) show clearly, though, how integral good cooperation between preacher and commander was. In this sense, the private appointment of preachers probably worked better because

²⁶⁶ Ibid. 31.

²⁶⁷ Ibid. 35.

²⁶⁸ Ibid. 36f.

²⁶⁹ See *ibid.* 89, for a timeline of Gerlach's life.

the colonel could hire someone that suited him doctrinally. It is fair to assume that Gerlach himself solicited his position in Horn's personal regiment and that he had the support of the Lutheran Field-Marshal, as his two years in this regiment appear to have been rather comfortable. Inversely, the fact that Pfuel tried to interfere with the way Gerlach preached also shows that individual officers took the pastoral care for their troops seriously.

Worship in war

The examination of the chaplaincy has shown that military pastoral care was not necessarily treated with indifference. The evidence implies that generally field preachers were not given much attention in military legal and theoretical texts because their duties in the military and outside were considered to be identical, making specific regulation superfluous. This has wider implications for our growing sense of military religiosity, as it shows that military authors, authorities and colonels saw no conceptual difference between the requirements of military and civilian religion. We have also seen that the negative stereotype surrounding soldiers seems to have threatened the reputations of military chaplains, as they seemed anxious to divert suspicions of dissolution that could arise from their association with the soldiery. This potential for stigma as well as the low pay may account for the unwillingness of clerics to serve in the military. The Swedish crown tried to institutionalize and standardize its military chaplaincy, which may be considered an attempt at confessionalization despite the fact that it appears to have been shambolic in praxis.

The chronic lack of chaplains ultimately raises questions regarding the possibilities for the common soldiery to receive pastoral care and what shape military worship took. The practical limitations of religious practice in the field should be considered first. Camp services had to be held in the open, an unfavourable acoustic setting. While the parish cleric's voice carried and resonated from the walls of a church, it drifted into the open air in the field so that only a limited number of people would have been able to hear what was said. The reliance on the spoken word in Protestant worship may consequently have been a problem but communal hymn and psalm singing and collective prayer provided a valuable mode of inclusion for the individual. The references to the 'usual' hymns, psalms and liturgy in the military handbooks and other

texts take on a great importance in this respect as the soldiers already knew the hymns from their civilian lives.

Soldiers' participation in field services was witnessed by the nun Maria Anna Junius on two occasions.²⁷⁰ The first field service was held on a Sunday for the sappers building fortifications around the Heilig Grab cloister and although the level of solemnity among the trenchers was rather low that day – Sister Junius thought their behaviour “worse than [in] a Jewish school” – we get a sense of the process.²⁷¹ The preacher began to sing a hymn and then said a prayer for “his little pack of devils”, followed by another hymn.²⁷² The second service Junius witnessed, however, met even her approval: “Tuesday the 19th [July 1633] early at four o'clock the soldiers began to sing very beautifully again, afterwards their preacher gave them a sermon, when it was over they sang again, these [soldiers] were certainly very devout”.²⁷³ Junius does not record which hymns were sung or give any details of the prayer and sermon but her descriptions elucidate the proceedings of a field service.

Another report of a noteworthy religious ‘service’ exists for the army of Ernst von Mansfeld. After the long siege and eventual sack of Pilsen in November 1618, the victors held a Protestant service in the main Catholic church St. Bartholomaei. After the congregation of officers, soldiers and interested Pilseners had sung Luther's hymn *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*, Ernst von Mansfeld's field preacher Johann Jacob Heylmann gave a long sermon, followed by prayers and the hymn *Maintain us, Lord, in Thy Word*.²⁷⁴ The church was far too small to hold all the common soldiers who wanted to partake in the official victory service and no provision had been made for the units guarding the city gates. Some soldiers outside the church began to sing *Vater unser im Himmelreich*, the hymn version of the Lord's Prayer, in thanks for His protection during the assault in which several hundred comrades had died, and the singing spread among the soldiers throughout the town.²⁷⁵ The troops then sang psalm 42 (‘As the hart panteth after the water brooks...’) and when cannons were fired after the sermon in St. Bartholomaei, the soldiers across town also discharged their weapons in jubilation, shattering the Pilseners' windowpanes. This episode shows how the singing of familiar

²⁷⁰ Hümmer, *Bamberg im Schwedenkriege*, 49f; 142f.

²⁷¹ Ibid. 49.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid. 142f.

²⁷⁴ Anon, *Warhaffter Bericht / Von der Belägerung vnd mit gestürmter hand Eroberung der Stadt Pilsen inn Behem*, s.l., 1618, 53.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

psalms and hymns enabled soldiers to cope with difficult spatial situations and the lack of chaplains. The spontaneous nature of this improvised act of worship also betrays the apparent desire of the soldiery to thank God for the victory and protecting them.

Inclusion in worship through hymn singing was not an option for Catholic troops, as church music “was performed by part of the body on behalf of the whole” by clergy and trained singers.²⁷⁶ Singing was used to bolster morale in isolated instances, for example at White Mountain when the Irish Jesuit Henry Fitzsimon intoned the *Salve Regina*, as the infantry began to march towards the enemy.²⁷⁷ MacCulloch’s characterization of the hymn as the “secret weapon” of Protestantism thus takes on a new dimension when considering the use of devotional singing in the military.²⁷⁸ Apart from the religious iconography on military banners that is described below, the material and visual elements of the Catholic rite may in some ways have provided an equivalent mode of inclusion in Catholic armies. Matthias Rogg has described a painting of a pre-battle scene in which two Dominicans elevate the host whilst standing on dung heaps, thereby making the miracle of transubstantiation visible across distance and blessing the men from afar.²⁷⁹ While this was a drastically curtailed version of Catholic rites from a liturgical standpoint, there is evidence that suggests that ordinary Catholics quite commonly considered only the miracle of transubstantiation and the Elevation of the Host to be of interest, so that a digest version of the mass that only provided the ‘highlight’ may actually have been welcome.²⁸⁰ Similarly, Catholic commanders tended to issue religious battle cries (*Santa Maria!*, *Jesus Maria!*) which succinctly combined dedication with imploration.

Field services consequently appear to have been pragmatic versions of regular liturgy. For Protestants, the widespread practice of hymn singing made communal worship somewhat easier. As we have seen in the descriptions of Protestant field services, even Catholics commented positively on the fact that soldiers sang, and apparently sang well. The hymns also provided a means by which soldiers could give thanks to their God even in the absence of a central meeting place and without the direction of field preachers. In the Catholic context, the great prominence given to the visual could compensate for the absence of congregational singing as central sacred

²⁷⁶ Reginald Box, *Make Music to Our God. How We Sing the Psalms*, London 1996, 6.

²⁷⁷ Chaline, *Battaille*, 311.

²⁷⁸ MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 36.

²⁷⁹ Rogg, *Landsknechte*, 146.

²⁸⁰ Forster, *Catholic Germany*, 77.

rites, such as the Elevation of the Host could be witnessed by large groups and from a distance.

Military religious literature

Religious literature aimed at soldiers that stemmed from the military itself is barely existent in the period up to the end of Thirty Years' War. Theological and propagandistic tracts that addressed soldiers were published sporadically but the vast majority of titles were written by theologians, moralists and other authors who usually had strong opinions on how the soldiery should behave but had no military background themselves.²⁸¹ The previous chapter has already discussed the two most cited theological works published in German in the 16th century by Martin Luther and Andreas Musculus.²⁸² While they outlined an ideal of pious soldier life, it seems doubtful that they were of much practical use in the military everyday. Written more in a pastoral rather than an accusatory tone, Wolfgang Musculus's ten-page pamphlet entitled *Admonition to the German and Evangelical Soldier* reminded Protestant patriots who fought the Papal Antichrist of their religious duties.²⁸³ It can also be categorized as cheap print so that it may have been affordable to common soldiers. We know that Leonhart Fronsperger's works were widely read so that his *Geistliche KriegßOrdnung* (1565) may have reached those military men who could afford his books, especially after the tract became a fixture of the numerous editions of Fronsperger's military handbooks.²⁸⁴ Fronsperger had compiled the *Geistliche KriegßOrdnung* from other theological texts without changing their arguments in the hope that soldiers would better themselves.²⁸⁵ The result was essentially an adaptation of Luther's line of reasoning interspersed with references to Erasmus and other humanists, and, like Wolfgang Musculus' text, more explanatory than condemnatory in tone. An early prayer book explicitly aimed at soldiers was published in 1616 by Stephan Puchner, who only

²⁸¹ For example Tileman Breul, *MILES CHRISTIANVS. Christlicher Kriegsman*, s.l. 1573.

²⁸² Luther, *Soldiers*; Musculus, *Beruff vnd stand*.

²⁸³ Wolfgang Musculus, *Vermanung and den Teütschen vnnd Evangelischen Kriegßman*, s.l. 1546.

²⁸⁴ Fronsperger, *Geistliche KriegßOrdnung*. The text was printed as a separate publication in 1565 although the inclusion of a register for Fronsperger's *Von Kayserlichem Kriegsrechten*, which was also printed by Georg Rabe in the same year, indicates that it was intended to be part of the military handbook. The 1566 edition of *Von Kayserlichem Kriegsrechten*, for example, included the *Geistliche KriegßOrdnung* on pages CCXXXVI^Rff.

²⁸⁵ Ibid. II^V.

identified himself as a citizen of Landsberg an der Warthe.²⁸⁶ Puchner's book marks a departure in religious literature aimed at the military in so far as it was meant as a practical spiritual aid and its explicit emphasis lay on the provision of spiritual comfort to soldiers who often had no access to a preacher in their time of need.²⁸⁷ He hoped that soldiers would find edification and solace by reading his book, or, if they were illiterate, having others read it to them.²⁸⁸

Although it contained a few but rare pointed remarks against the papacy, like the articles of war and the guidelines for the chaplains, the tenor was not markedly Protestant but explicitly 'Christian', used as an adjective in the titles of the prayers and as a noun to denote the speaker and those prayed for. The ecumenical phrasing of the articles of war was thus, if imperfectly, also present in Puchner's book and the majority of the prayers could be said by adherents of all confessions.

The first religious tract that at least claimed to have come from within the military was published in 1620 by an anonymous author who identified himself only as an evangelical field preacher.²⁸⁹ The author repeated the standard exhortations to piety, modesty, humility, soberness and mercy and interspersed these sections with a variety of comments that justified the war the Protestant powers were waging against Catholic tyranny and assured his Protestant readers that God was on their side. Apart from the author's self-identification as a field preacher, which may have been pretence to increase his credibility, the tract has little to add to the picture of military religious structures.

Again, it was the Swedish crown that published the first prayer books to be used in its army. The first was a forty-page booklet written by the president of the field consistorium Johannes Botvidi and published contemporaneously with the Swedish invasion of Germany in the summer of 1630.²⁹⁰ It is noticeable that the majority of the prayers were neither very bellicose nor distinctly Protestant in tone or content. Prayers addressed the general affliction of Christianity, asked for the forgiveness of sins, for protection of king and army and to avert evil and pestilence. Anti-Catholic attitudes are only noticeable in one prayer which asked for the protection of all Protestants and to

²⁸⁶ Stephan Puchner, *Christliche / Heilsame vnnd sehr nützliche Gebetlein / Neben einem bericht / wie ein Kriegsman sich verhalten sol damit er Christlich leben vnd selig Sterben könne*, Berlin 1616.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.^V.

²⁸⁸ Ibid. Aiv^R.

²⁸⁹ Anon, *Auffrichtiger Teutscher Soldaten Regul, Oder Kurtze Erinnerung an den Teutschen Evangelischen Kriegßmann*, s.l. 1620.

²⁹⁰ Johannes Botvidi, *Etliche Gebete / Welche im Schwedischen Kriegslager gebräuchlich*, s.l. 1630. The book only has sporadic pagination, all page references are my own, counting the title page as page 1.

safeguard the purity of God's Word and the sacraments from the attacks of "heretics and wrong doctrine: especially against the papists" but such confessional statements are absent from all the other prayers.²⁹¹ The book also contained three prayers against the enemy; one appears to have been specifically written, the other two were adaptations of King Asa's and Judas Maccabee's biblical prayers.²⁹² While confessional bias in the Old Testament prayers would be a surprising find indeed, it is noteworthy that Botvidi's own prayer also did not contain any reference to contemporary confessional strife.

Two years later, a new, expanded prayer book was published, this time written by the royal chaplain Jacob Fabricius.²⁹³ Fabricius's book specified in the title that the prayers it contained were to be used by Swedish field preachers. The title stated that these prayers were to complement the Psalms and the usual litany so that the cross-reference to civilian devotion observed above was also present in this instance. The Swedish court preacher and, by extension, the Swedish crown, thus envisaged field services adhering to regular church litany and supplementing it on occasion with the prayers from Fabricius's book. Again, explicitly martial prayers or passages are rarely found. The first sixty-one pages were dedicated to morning and evening prayers as well as four prayers that addressed the "general affliction of Christianity".²⁹⁴ They contained supplications for guidance, forgiveness and correction of sinners, the protection of oneself, the royal army, the royal family and other Christian sovereigns, of widows and orphans, pregnant women and young mothers.²⁹⁵ The prayers invoked God to avert danger, hunger, pestilence, bad weather and a bad death and in one instance even asked for God's mercy and forgiveness on behalf of the enemy.²⁹⁶ The general tenor of the updated Swedish military prayer book thus remained not very distinctly military but contained supplications that are thinkable in any ecclesiastical context. Only three prayers were directed against the enemy. The first one contained a confessional remark when it asked for protection against the enemies of the Gospel and "the Pope's atrocity and idolatry".²⁹⁷ The other two battle prayers were less explicit in their confessional attitude and it is likely that the more ambiguous prayers were at least partly informed by

²⁹¹ Ibid. 12, 15.

²⁹² Ibid. 29ff.

²⁹³ Jacob Fabricius, *Etliche Gebet / so Königl. Majest. Zu Schweden Kriegsheer neben den Psalmen Davids vnnnd der Christlichen Litaney / von den Feld Predigern gebrauchet / vnd der Soldatesca fürgebettet werden*, Augsburg 1632.

²⁹⁴ Ibid. 1ff; 40ff.

²⁹⁵ Ibid. 1, 5, 23, 49, 51.

²⁹⁶ Ibid. 51.

²⁹⁷ Ibid. 62f.

military expediency.²⁹⁸ Gustavus Adolphus quickly had to abandon the vision of a homogeneously Protestant army. By the time he entered Germany in July 1630, about half of his force consisted of Germans and Scots. 46% of the Swedes and Finns died within six months and by the end of 1631 the Swedish army only counted 13,000 Swedes and Finns, about 28% of the overall force.²⁹⁹ The *indelningsverk*, Sweden's early conscription system, led to a critical depletion of the male population in many regions – Geoffrey Parker has characterized enlistment as a virtual “sentence of death” – but it could not nearly provide adequate numbers of recruits to counterbalance the devastating rate at which men died in Germany.³⁰⁰ Lutherans, Calvinists and adherents of the Presbyterian Kirk had fought on the Swedish side from the beginning but the necessity to supplement depleted ranks with whatever manpower was available meant that an ever-increasing number of Catholics would be hearing Fabricius's prayers.

We cannot determine if and how the Swedish army chaplains used the prayer books. Yet again, their existence shows the aspirations on behalf of the Swedish king and his staff to provide the army with a comprehensive and standardized system of pastoral care. It is important to re-emphasize that the kind of prayers included in this and the other prayer books surveyed are not indicative of a putative ‘military’ religion. Individual prayers were included for occasions that were specific to the military context but in general, the prayers do not communicate bellicosity. On the contrary, especially with view of the explicit reference to the regular church litany in the title of the 1632 version, they represent an attempt to preserve and foster fundamental Christian virtues such as charity and forbearance. *Christian* values, however, not decidedly *Protestant* ones, as apart from isolated, short anti-Papal barbs, the prayer books were not confessionally distinctive in either tone or content. They, like the legal framework of the armies, accommodated adherents of all Christian creeds.

Religious motives on military banners

In view of the scarcity of written documentation, military banners as a material source gain importance in ascertaining commanders' confessional views. The banner was the symbol of regimental honour and its virtues, real or imagined. The fact that infantry

²⁹⁸ Ibid. 67; 71f.

²⁹⁹ Ericson, Lars, ‘The Swedish Army and Navy during the Thirty Years’ War: From a National to a Multi-National Force’, in: Bussmann and Schilling (eds.), *1648*, vol.1, 301-307, 483ff.

³⁰⁰ Geoffrey Parker, ‘The Universal Soldier’, in: idem (ed.), *Thirty Years War*, 171-186, 173; Asch, *Thirty Years War*, 183.

companies were frequently simply referred to as *Fähnlein* and cavalry squadrons as *Cornet* shows how thoroughly the banner represented its unit. Banners were the visual and ideological focal point of the regiment and its companies. They were of tactical and strategic importance because they provided orientation for soldiers and commanders in battle and could be used to signal movements in the fracas but their symbolic value is of importance here.³⁰¹

The banner itself was imbued with sacral worth.³⁰² Banners had been consecrated at least since the 10th century, a tradition that continued in the Catholic context of the early modern period and provided troops with a quasi-relic to take into battle.³⁰³ Consequently, the banner itself could be seen to signify and provide divine protection for the soldiers and was a source of pride and courage but also comfort. The patrons depicted on military banners lent additional protection and while God bestowed victory, aligning oneself to the saints and securing their intercession was hoped to influence God's judgement. The banner also provided the owner of the regiment with the opportunity to symbolically communicate the way in which he wanted his regiment to be perceived, what his cause was, whose heavenly patronage he hoped to secure, and what virtues he expected from his soldiers. The rectangular infantry banners offered ample space for iconography and slogans as their longer side measured about 2.5-3 meters.³⁰⁴ The versions for the cavalry (*Cornet*), although considerably smaller (usually 50-70 centimetres square) were still big enough to make their designs visible over some distance.

The very importance placed on the banners also made them desirable trophies and since the Middle Ages, captured banners had been offered to heavenly benefactors, most frequently the Virgin Mary, in thanks for a victory.³⁰⁵ In Rome, the Carmelites rededicated their newly built church St. Paul to the victorious Virgin (*Santa Maria della Vittoria*) after the Catholic victory at White Mountain and requested (and received) banners won that day to present to the Queen of Heaven in thanks for her help.³⁰⁶ The

³⁰¹ On their strictly military importance see Malte Prietzel, *Kriegführung im Mittelalter. Handlungen, Erinnerungen, Bedeutungen*, Paderborn 2006, 205f, 210f.

³⁰² Möller, *Regiment*, 63ff.

³⁰³ Prietzel, *Kriegführung*, 201.

³⁰⁴ Junkelmann, "'In diesem Zeichen wirst Du siegen'" –Feldzeichen im Dreißigjährigen Krieg', in: idem (ed.), *Tilly*, 81-82, 81.

³⁰⁵ Contamine, *War*, 301

³⁰⁶ Klaus Schreiner, *Maria. Leben, Legenden, Symbole*, Munich 2003, 104; Junkelmann, *Zeichen*, 81.

Swedes sent captured banners back to Stockholm, where many have survived in the royal trophy collection now housed in the Swedish Army Museum.³⁰⁷

Catholic warriors had a formidable champion in Heaven: the Virgin Mary herself.³⁰⁸ Throughout the Middle Ages and into the early modern period, the Blessed Virgin was credited with active intervention in battles and thus assumed the role of a veritable “war goddess”³⁰⁹. From the late 15th century onwards, Mary became more specifically associated with the Catholic struggle against infidels and heretics. During the battle of Kappeln (1531), in which Huldrych Zwingli lost his life, the Virgin appeared over the banners of the Catholic host and bestowed victory over the ‘heretics’ on the defenders of orthodoxy.³¹⁰ The decisive and celebrated victory at Lepanto (1571) was also directly attributed to the Virgin’s intercession.³¹¹ Few contemporaries went as far in their ascription of her direct activity as the painter of the *Madonna ‘bombardiera’*, a commemorative fresco in the church of Santa Maria in Pregassona, Lugano, which shows the Mother of God, the infant Jesus and a helpful putto dropping bombs on the Turkish fleet.³¹² That the victory at Lepanto was the work of the Blessed Virgin, however, was proclaimed *unisono* throughout Catholic Europe. It was widely held that victory had been solicited through the intense Marian devotion and not least through the banner that the commander of the Christian fleet, Don Juan de Austria, had hoisted on his ship. It bore the supplication *Sancta Maria succurre miseris* (‘Saint Mary, come to the aid of the miserable’) and the Virgin had indeed succoured.³¹³

Maximilian I of Bavaria’s main banner, consecrated before the Battle of White Mountain by the charismatic Carmelite mystic Dominicus a Jesu-Maria, was adorned with her image.³¹⁴ Each side bore a different inscription: one displayed the plea *Da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos* (‘Give me strength against your enemies’), while the other side quoted another martial line from the Song of Songs: *Terribilis ut castrorum acies*

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*, 159ff.

³⁰⁹ Tyerman, *God’s War*, 687.

³¹⁰ Ulrich Gähler, *Huldrych Zwingli Leben und Werk*, Zurich 2004 [1983], 134; Klaus Schreiner, *Märtyrer, Schlachtenhelfer, Friedenstifter. Krieg und Frieden im Spiegel mittelalterlicher und frühneuzeitlicher Heiligenverehrung*, Opladen 2000, 105.

³¹¹ For an in-depth study of Lepanto and its wider importance see Hugh Bicheno, *Crescent and Cross – The Battle of Lepanto 1571*, London 2003.

³¹² Werner Meyer, ‘Religiös-magisches Denken und Verhalten im eidgenössischen Kriegerum des ausgehenden Mittelalters’, in: Kaiser and Kroll (eds.), *Militär und Religiosität*, 21-32, 23.

³¹³ Schreiner, *Märtyrer*, 105.

³¹⁴ Junkelmann, *Zeichen*, 81.

bene ordianta.³¹⁵ Catholic agitators maintained that Mary had a vested interest in the outcome of the battle since an image of her had fallen into the hands of Bohemian iconoclasts at Strakonice. Dominicus a Jesu-Maria took the mutilated painting and, according to Olivier Chaline, used it to influence the events twice.³¹⁶ First, he swayed the hesitant war council towards battle by pointing out the violence that had been done to the Virgin at Strakonice. Secondly, he may have shaped the outcome of the battle itself at a crucial moment by charging through the gunpowder clouds with the violated image in one hand and his crucifix in the other, presenting an apparition that seems to have instilled new courage and pious fury in the soldiers that turned the near defeat into a victory.³¹⁷

During the Thirty Years War the Virgin featured prominently on Catholic banners. The banners of the Catholic League often depicted the ‘black’ Madonna of Altötting, the patron saint of Bavaria to whom both Elector Maximilian and General Tilly were deeply devoted. Several of the banners were reproduced on the occasion of a Tilly exhibition in 2007 and they are depicted in the accompanying publication.³¹⁸ One banner showed the Madonna and the infant Jesus in a mandorla above the Altötting chapel.³¹⁹ A cavalry cornet depicts Mary on one side and St. Sebastian on the other.³²⁰ Another cornet portrayed a dragoon standing next to his horse with the caption *Ad utrumque paratus* (‘Prepared for both’), presumably referring to the function of the dragoon as a soldier who could fight on horseback as well as on foot.³²¹ The other side shows Fortuna spanning the sail that carries her and her favours from one beneficiary to the next, and the phrase *Hoffnung Erhelt mich* (‘Hope sustains me’). The Virgin is also present on each side in the top corner, next to the staff. The banner of the Jung-Tilly regiment was adorned with the Mother of God and her son as well as John the Baptist and a lamb and an adaptation of the aforementioned line from the Song of Songs: *TERRIBILIS · ACIES · CASTRORUM · MRA* [Maria Regina] · *DOMUS · ET · REFUGIUM · SIS · CHRISTIANORUM* (‘terrifying like a battle line, Queen Mary, be a house and refuge to Christians’).³²² Two banners use more abstract references instead of the representational depictions of the Virgin, one showing the Jesus and Mary monograms (*IHS* and *MRA*),

³¹⁵ Schreiner, *Märtyrer*, 107.

³¹⁶ Chaline, *Bataille*, 217ff.

³¹⁷ Ibid. 196.

³¹⁸ Junkelmann, *Tilly*, 158ff.

³¹⁹ Ibid. 159, figs. 72, 73.

³²⁰ Ibid. 162, figs. 78 a-d.

³²¹ Ibid. 161, figs. 77 a-d.

³²² Ibid. 160, figs. 75 a,b.

while the other is embroidered with a crown, the *auspice Maria*, and the motto *SUB TUUM PRESIDIUM* ('Under your protection').³²³ While these banners were issued by the Catholic League, the confessionally ambiguous imperial policy that we have observed in the context of the articles of war did not always extend to the banners under which the emperor sent his troops into battle. At least one imperial standard from 1630 was embroidered with the imperial eagle on one side and the Mother of God on the other.³²⁴

It is noticeable that the wider pantheon of saints is conspicuously absent from military banners. This near exclusivity is symptomatic of the importance that Mary gained in Catholicism in the late medieval and early modern periods. Warrior saints like Saint George, Saint Martin of Tours or Saint Jacob, in whose name the *conquistadores* fought in the New World, were widely supplanted by the Virgin as the pre-eminent battle patron, a development that is clearly reflected in the banners with which Catholic armies went to war.³²⁵

The intentions on behalf of the commanders who issued these banners appear straightforward. By dedicating their banners to the Blessed Virgin they not only tried to secure her intercession but probably also intended to bolster morale. We can only speculate what effect the banners' promise of Mary's protection had but that the maternal patron had a comforting effect in times of affliction and impending death may be assumed. The widely used battle cry 'Santa Maria' and variants thereof provided the final link between the Virgin in Heaven, the icon on the banner, and the men who shouted it as they went into battle: they fought, won or died in her name.

The ambiguous attitude of Lutheranism towards images and Calvinist iconophobia placed evangelical commanders at a certain disadvantage when they wanted to emblemize their religious convictions on their banners.³²⁶ A universally recognizable iconic champion like the Holy Virgin was not available in the Protestant context. Protestant commanders thus tended to resort to the wider repertoire of classical symbolism and expressed religious content in mottos, often in Latin. The banner given to a company of horse that was raised by the Palatinate city of Frankenthal bore the town's heraldic symbol, a triangular diamond, and the slogan *PRO CHRISTO ET PRINCIPE*, thus explicating the beneficiaries of the unit, Christ and the Elector Frederick, the

³²³ Ibid. figs. 76 a,b; 159, figs. 74 a,b.

³²⁴ The banner is reproduced with an explanatory text in: Bussmann and Schilling (eds.), *1648*, vol.3, 112, fig. 335.

³²⁵ Schreiner, *Märtyrer*, 75ff.

³²⁶ For the inner-Lutheran discussion surrounding the use of images see Kaufmann, 'Die Bilderfrage im frühneuzeitlichen Luthertum', in: Blickle et al., *Macht und Ohnmacht*, 407-451.

‘Winter King’.³²⁷ Christian of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, ‘The Mad Halberstädter’, showed his dedication to the Protestant cause and that of Elizabeth Stuart – NB not her husband, Frederick – on his banners through the motto *Pour Dieu et pour elle*.³²⁸ Ernst von Mansfeld’s white banner, called the ‘Devil’s Flag’ (*Teuffelsfahnen*) by his enemies, bore the motto *Pro religione & libertate*.³²⁹

The lack of employable obvious religious iconography alongside the combined use of Latin and French slogans must have meant that the resulting designs and their intended message were more difficult to understand by common soldiers compared to the comforting imagery of the orthodox banners. The Augsburg schoolteacher Caspar Augustin recognized this problem and set out to explicate the symbolism of the two cornets and twenty-three banners of the companies levied in and around Augsburg in 1632.³³⁰ Augustin explained that each company received their emblem and slogan “not without God’s guidance” and that these had important hidden meanings.³³¹ As it could not be assumed that the men serving under these banners could decode and interpret the emblems and mottos to their full edifying potential, Augustin had taken it upon himself to write a religious exegesis of the banners for the benefit of the soldiers and other interested readers. The religious significance of many of the banners was indeed not immediately recognizable: one banner, for example, depicted a rose that bloomed between two onions and bore the motto *PER OPPOSITA*.³³² After explaining the general pleasantness and medical beneficence of the rose and the unpleasantness and adverse properties of the onion, Augustin proceeded to compare the two plants to the true and the false church. Just as the onion poisoned its surrounds with its stench, it was “the greatest joy on earth” for the false, Catholic, church to “darken and spoil both the bodily and the spiritual eye of the true church and of its true members with her injurious smell, false doctrine, hypocrisy, man made dogma and other, things [that are] not pleasing to God”.³³³ According to Augustin’s religious interpretation, the soldiers of Augsburg therefore were the champions of the Protestant rose, which had set out to fight the agents of the Catholic onions.

³²⁷ Anon, *Franckenthalische Belägerung*, s.l. 1621, 12.

³²⁸ Wedgwood, *Thirty Years War*, 146. The banner of the 8th company of his *Leibregiment* was also reconstructed for the 2007 Tilly exhibition at Altötting: Junkelmann, *Tilly*, 137.

³²⁹ Anon, *Warhaffter Bericht / Von der Belägerung [...] der Stadt Pilsen inn Behem*, s.l. (1618?).

³³⁰ Caspar Augustin, *Der neuen Cornet vnd Fahnen / welche in Augspurg der Außgewählten Burgerschafft gegeben worden*, Augsburg 1633

³³¹ Ibid. Bi^v.

³³² Ibid. 18.

³³³ Ibid. 20.

Other banners symbolised steadfastness and the willingness to endure hardship. One banner showed a rock in the midst of a raging sea with the motto *SEMPER IDEM* ('always the same'), another depicted two obelisks superscripted with *NEC CITRA NEC ULTRA* ('Not hither, not thither'), a third simply bore an anvil and the word *DURABO* ('I will endure'). All of these images received a spiritual interpretation through Augustin.³³⁴ There was only one cavalry cornet and two infantry banners whose mottos had a direct reference to God. The cornet depicted a lion raising a sword in its left paw and resting his right on the Augsburg escutcheon.³³⁵ Each side bore a rhymed motto in German, one encouraging the onlooker to show heroic valour in times of calamity and have faith in God, the other assuring the soldiers that "When you are in the greatest adversity / The highest God will come and help".³³⁶ The infantry banners again employed Latin phrases. One had a castle with a strong tower on it and the words *NOMEN DOMINI ASYLUM* ('The name of the Lord is a refuge'), symbolism reminiscent of the Lutheran hymn "A Mighty Fortress is Our God".³³⁷ The other banner showed two arms reaching out of clouds, each holding a bundle of arrows with the heads pointed upwards and bore the motto *DEO STATUENTE* ('God orders it' or 'God causes it to stand')³³⁸. While the arrows were an aptly martial symbol, the deeper meaning of the banner lay in the fact that it was a bundle of arrows, unbreakable in its united strength and held together by the powerful hand of God. Augustin's book, while being a valuable – if rather unknown – source for historians, shows that the symbolism of Protestant banners was less clear in its religious content compared to the banners Catholic commanders issued, but that they could be interpreted in religious terms. The mere existence of the book, however, also shows that it took learning and pious imagination to decode the edifying content of the designs.

Banners such as these had symbolic value and purpose. The Catholic banners aimed at procuring heavenly assistance, communicating religious allegiance and assuring their soldiers of heavenly protection. Protestant banners may have had a similar function but the religious designs were not as readily decipherable as the Catholic ones. Importantly, whereas the stipulations of the articles of war and guidelines for the chaplaincy display very few confessional traits, this doctrinal vagueness did not extend

³³⁴ Ibid. 40, 47f., 61.

³³⁵ Ibid. 9.

³³⁶ Ibid. 8.

³³⁷ Ibid. 26.

³³⁸ Ibid. 45.

to religious military banners which were specific to the individual regimental proprietor and his religious convictions. Banners could be used to take a decided confessional stand in the designs chosen and it may be assumed that such banners were given to regiments that displayed high levels of confessional homogeneity or, if they were confessionally mixed, could be trusted to overlook such confessional symbolism. As the next chapter will show in detail, soldiers seem to have overlooked confessional differences rather effortlessly and were bound to their commanding officers through loyalty and trust rather than mutual religious convictions so that even a confessionally explicit banner may not have mattered greatly as long as relations were otherwise intact.

Conclusion

The guiding questions of this chapter regarded the extent to which military religious structures differed from those in the civilian realm, whether confessional policies characterized the religious structures in the military and whether the tolerant attitude that has been described for the period from the middle of the 17th century onwards was also a military trait of the 16th and early 17th century. The analysis of the articles of war has shown that warlords were rather wary of introducing confessional stipulations into the legal codes and that isolated confessional elements that can be found in articles before c.1550 were expurgated later on. In other words, ‘confessionalization’ from above apparently did not occur in the military. The reason for this, it has been suggested, was the inability to create confessionally homogeneous armies as the availability of capable personnel had to take precedence over respective creeds. That warlords apparently could not afford to pursue confessional policies without risking alienating their troops is an indicator that soldiers were not indifferent towards religion. On the contrary, there seems to have been the potential for confessional conflict that the warlords were anxious not to incite by introducing religiously biased legislation. The study of the chaplaincy has shown that in contrast to commonly held views about early modern field preachers, they were neither necessarily of lower ‘quality’ than their civilian colleagues, nor were they expected to perform different duties in the regiment and in the parish. Chaplains were open to some suspicion regarding their motives to cater to the ‘godless’ soldiery but other examples have shown that this was not the predominant way in which field preachers were seen. Evidence has been presented that suggests that there were no significant differences between worship in the military and

the civilian realm. Apart from the similitude of military and civilian clerics, the values transported in the prayer books were also essentially the same as those that were promoted in civilian contexts. One important observation has to be emphasized, namely that military law codes and devotional literature aimed at soldiers were by and large religiously inclusive in tone and content as they were generally phrased in confessionally unmarked terms and transported universal Christian values. The examination of military banners presented a different picture, as confessionally marked imagery was at times employed. While the rationale behind aligning a unit with a particular patron or God himself seems straightforward it remains unclear what effect, if any, religiously partisan banners had on confessionally heterogeneous contingents.

This leads us to the question of toleration. If we distinguish between ‘toleration’ as denoting a resentful accommodation of the undesirable and ‘tolerance’ as indicating permissiveness, ‘toleration’ might be the term to choose for the attitudes of military authorities described in this chapter. It has been shown that at various points in time, warlords did try to purge their armies from adherents of other creeds but that they were forced to abandon such plans out of military expediency. It was therefore not indifference towards religious matters that prevented more resolute confessional policies but pragmatism. It remains to be seen in how far such ‘tolerant’ attitudes are detectable also among the soldiers themselves, a question that will guide the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Religion, Morality and Military Everyday Life

“One often notices that if a person plans to excel in military life, he not only immediately changes his way of dressing but also his habits, his customs, his voice, thus setting him apart from every civilian custom.”

Machiavelli, *Preface to The Book of the Art of War*³³⁹

This chapter seeks to establish a profile of military religious, moral and confessional attitudes mainly on the basis of autobiographical accounts. For this purpose, we will rely on fifteen autobiographical accounts written by soldiers covering the period between the 1480s to the late 1640s.³⁴⁰ The accounts were written either by Germans or mercenaries who worked in Germany. They have been chosen in a deliberately loose manner in this respect to capture the potential for variety of spiritual attitudes that men from different cultural backgrounds brought into the military in different locations and at different points in time. The autobiographical accounts have been used by other historians but are read here with new questions in mind and in the light of the new findings of the previous chapters. The examination of the topos of military irreligion has raised questions regarding the accuracy of these descriptions and thereby removed a fundamental obstacle in approaching military spirituality more objectively. The previous chapter has shown that military authorities phrased legal

³³⁹ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Book of the Art of War*, London 1979, 1.

³⁴⁰ W.J.A. von Tettau (ed.), ‘Erlebnisse eines deutschen Landsknechts (1484-1493) von ihm selbst beschrieben’, in: *Mittheilungen des Vereins für die Geschichte und Alterthumskunde von Erfurt* 4, Erfurt 1869, 1-51; Götz von Berlichingen, ‘Mein Gottfriden von Berlichingen zw Hornberg Vhedt vnd Handlungen’, ed. Helgard Ulmschneider: *Götz von Berlichingen. Mein Fehd und Handlungen*, Sigmaringen 1981; Ottmar F.H. Schönhuth, (ed.), *Leben und Thaten des weiland wohlledlen und gestrengen Herrn Sebastian Schertlin von Burtenbach, durch ihn selbst deutsch beschrieben*, Münster 1858; Burkhardt Stickel, *Tagebuch*, in: H. Christian (ed.), *Schwäbische Landsknechte*, Heidenheim 1972, 117-144; Bei der Wieden (ed.), *Leben*; Hans Staden, *Wahrhafftig Historia vnnnd beschreibung einer Landschafft [...] in der Newen welt America*, Frankfurt a.M. 1557; Reinhold Schottin (ed.), *Tagebuch des Erich Lassota von Steblau. Nach einer Handschrift der von Gersdorff-Weicha’schen Bibliothek zu Bautzen herausgegeben und mit einer Einleitung und Bemerkungen begleitet*, Halle 1866; Holger Th. Gräf, *Söldnerleben am Vorabend des Dreißigjährigen Krieges. Lebenslauf und Kriegstagebuch 1617 des hessischen Obristen Caspar von Widmarckter*, (Beiträge zur Hessischen Geschichte 16), Marburg 2000; Westenrieder (ed.), ‘Tagebuch des Augustin von Fritsch (Obersten und Commendanten der Stadt Weyden) von seinen Thaten und Schicksalen im dreyßigjährigen Kriege’, *Beyträge zur vaterländischen Historie, Geographie, Staatistik, und Landwirthschaft*, (8 vols.), Munich 1788-1806, IV (1792), 105-91; Robert Volkholz (ed.), *Jürgen Ackermann. Kapitän beim Regiment Alt-Pappenheim*, Halberstadt 1895; Jan Peters, *Ein Söldnerleben im Dreißigjährigen Krieg*, Berlin 1993; Sydnam Poyntz, *The Relation of Sydnam Poyntz*, ed. A.T.S. Goodrick, London 1908; Robert Monroe, *Monro His Expedition With the Worthy Scots Regiment*, London 1637; James Turner, *Memoirs of his own life and times*, Edinburgh 1829; Thomas Raymond, *Autobiography of Thomas Raymond and Memoirs of the Family of Guise of Elmore, Gloucestershire*, ed. G. Davies, London 1917.

codes in universally Christian, rather than confessional terms, and that religious literature aimed at soldiers also predominantly conveyed common Christian values. It remains to be seen in how far these ecumenical principles translated to soldiers' life experiences.

The historiography presents contradictory evaluations of such questions. On the one hand, we can remind ourselves of the negative postulates regarding military religiosity that have been reviewed in the introduction. The general consensus maintains that religion did not concern soldiers, that they were morally substandard and even that the military milieu had a 'de-Christianizing' effect on soldiers.³⁴¹ On the other hand, Johannes Burkhardt has claimed that confession was a strong motivator for the armies of the Thirty Years War.³⁴² A number of historians including Burkhardt von Bonin, Peter Burschel, Reinhard Baumann and Michael Kaiser considered confessional tensions to have been latent in the armies.³⁴³ As we have seen, military authorities generally tried to gloss over confessional differences and that expediency took priority over confessional issues. This allows us to deduce two things: firstly, there appears to have existed enough confessional sentiment among soldiers to make such latitudinarian legislation necessary. Secondly, the defusing of conflict potential seems to have worked from an authoritarian perspective. The argument for high confessional tensions rests on circumstantial evidence, however. As will be shown in detail throughout this chapter, there is little to indicate that confessional tensions had much of an impact on military everyday life. Bonin deduced confessional strife from stipulations in martial law, not from reports of actual events. Reinhard Baumann based the assertion that the "different creeds of the soldiers posed a significant problem of order" on Bonin's earlier statement.³⁴⁴ Kaiser similarly argued for the existence of confessional conflict on the basis of articles of war that forbade religious disputations.³⁴⁵ Burschel, finally, does not provide an example of *confessional* conflict but cites a case in which it seems that *national* discord led to a mass brawl between Spanish and German troops. In short, there is little direct evidence that soldiers of the same force argued over confessional matters.

Ralf Pröve's observations that confessional intolerance was branded as 'un-Christian' in the military context in the later 17th and 18th century were already

³⁴¹ Tallett, *War and Society*, 128.

³⁴² Burkhardt, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, 134

³⁴³ Bonin, *Rechtsverfassung*, 61; Baumann, *Landsknechte*, 195; Burschel, *Söldner*, 161; Kaiser, *Cuius exercitus*, 319.

³⁴⁴ Baumann, *Landsknechte*, 195; Bonin, *Rechtsverfassung*, 61.

³⁴⁵ Kaiser, *Cuius exercitus*, 319.

introduced and they stand in opposition to assertions of critical confessional tensions.³⁴⁶ This chapter argues that these tolerant attitudes in fact existed throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, not just in un-confessional military structures but also in everyday life. Confessional thinking – or the absence thereof – is related to soldiers’ attitudes towards the enemy in general, a dimension of army life that has yet to be studied in greater detail for the Central European military context. Civilian perceptions of war and atrocities have been thoroughly researched and a few articles have addressed the military perspective but our understanding of soldiers’ attitudes towards the enemy remains rudimentary.³⁴⁷ Barbara Donagan has examined the ‘Web of Honour’ that bound enemies to mutually honourable treatment for the specific context of the English Civil War.³⁴⁸ She has found that despite confessional and political differences, “shared standards of honour survived between military enemies” who treated one another as honourable gentlemen and Christians, not as Parliamentarians or Royalists.³⁴⁹ Notions of enmity therefore have to be studied to provide the context for the findings on confessional attitudes. Studies from the field of behavioural psychology will be used to highlight the fundamental differences between pre-modern and modern killing in war. The specific conditions of early modern warfare, it is argued, help to account for the widely unemotional nature of enmity in the period. Finally, we will examine two stereotypical allegations laid against soldiers, blasphemy and sexual (mis)conduct, in order to ascertain whether these can be considered indicative of specifically military religious and moral deviance.

³⁴⁶ Pröve, *Reichweiten*, 82ff.

³⁴⁷ On the civilian perspective see the contributions in Markus Meumann and Dirk Niefanger (eds.), *Ein Schauplatz Herber Angst: Wahrnehmung und Darstellung von Gewalt im 17. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 1997; Krusenstjern, Benigna von, Hand Medick and Patrice Veit (eds.), *Zwischen Alltag und Katastrophe. Der Dreißigjährige Krieg aus der Nähe*, Göttingen 1999; Matthias Asche, and Anton Schindling (eds.), *Das Strafgericht Gottes. Kriegserfahrungen und Religion im Heiligen Römischen Reich Deutscher Nation im Zeitalter des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, Münster 2001 and with particular attention to religion, Greyerz and Siebenhüner (eds.), *Religion und Gewalt*. See also, Bernd Roeck, ‘Der Dreißigjährige Krieg und die Menschen im Reich. Überlegungen zu den Formen psychischer Krisenbewältigung in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts’, in: Kroener and Pröve (eds.), *Krieg und Frieden*, 265-279. The military perspective is studied by: Kaiser, *Ärger als der Türck*; Peter Burschel, ‘Himmelreich und Hölle, Ein Söldner, sein Tagebuch und die Ordnungen des Krieges’, in: Krusenstjern and Medick, *Alltag und Katastrophe*, 181-194; Ralf Pröve, ‘Violentia und Potestas. Perzeptionsprobleme von Gewalt in Söldnertagebüchern des 17. Jahrhunderts’, in: Meumann and Niefanger, *Schauplatz Herber Angst*, 24-42.

³⁴⁸ Barbara Donagan, ‘The Web of Honour: Soldiers, Christians, and Gentlemen in the English Civil War’, *The Historical Journal* 44 (2001), 365-389.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 388.

Christian soldiers

In most soldiers' accounts, religious views are framed in a language that is 'Christian' rather than confessionally marked. God featured in soldiers' life accounts in typical early modern fashion as a helper, arbiter and punisher and the authors habitually invoked God's grace and gave thanks for His protection.³⁵⁰ Augustin von Fritsch began his account by thanking God for protecting him "like a father for 31 years" in his military career.³⁵¹ After the carnage at Nördlingen (1634), Peter Hagendorf noted that "the Almighty" had protected him "especially, so that I have to thank God for it in the highest [terms] for the rest of my life".³⁵² He was the only one in his regiment who had not been wounded or killed. When recording his second marriage he asked God to grant the couple "long lasting health" and he marked a happy return after a long separation as follows: "I returned to my love in good health. Dear Lord be thanks for this, may he give his grace further".³⁵³

Soldiers directly attributed good and bad fortune to God's providence. During the Sack of Magdeburg (1633), a plunderer rescued the Frieze family from the burning city.³⁵⁴ His wife berated him for filling their hut with a horde of children and their parents instead of bringing loot, but the soldier expressed his confidence that God would reward him for his charitable deed. When he returned from a looting trip the next day laden with goods, he explicitly correlated this outcome to his saving the Frieses. Peter Hagendorf, who thanked God for his protection numerous times, also recorded how God afflicted him with a severe skin condition.³⁵⁵ He did not consider all good turns of events to be God's work but seems to have praised Him in situations that turned out positively against the odds. He did not thank God for his wife's convalescence after a long disease, for example, as credit was due to the healing skills of the Ingolstadt executioner's wife and to his purse, as he noted that the treatment had been expensive.³⁵⁶

God was also invoked when the authors recognized their own impotence. The anonymous former mercenary who committed his experiences to paper around 1530 is

³⁵⁰ See for example Berlichingen, *Vhedt vnd Handlungen*, 52; 56; 67; 76f; 140f; Staden, *Historia*, passim; Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 139; 146; 160.

³⁵¹ Westenrieder, *Fritsch*, 105.

³⁵² Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 146.

³⁵³ Ibid. 148, 160.

³⁵⁴ Friedrich Wilhelm Hoffmann, *Geschichte der Stadt Magdeburg nach den Quellen bearbeitet*, vol.3, Magdeburg 1850, 177.

³⁵⁵ Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 174.

³⁵⁶ Ibid. 170, 175.

such an example. He had been a soldier in the *Schwarze Heer*, a mercenary band that had served the Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus in the 1480s and 1490s and was betrayed by his successor Vladislav.³⁵⁷ The mercenaries had refused to fight for the new king until the pay arrears were settled but had ultimately been coaxed into a campaign against the Ottomans only to be attacked, hunted down and hanged by their new commander and his army. When relating these events, the soldier expressed his hopes that God would punish the traitors and “take pity and have mercy” on his dead comrades.³⁵⁸ He ended his account as follows:

“So the *Schwarze Heer* was murdered and annihilated [...] They are gone, God comfort them. AMEN. [...] I then [...] went to my father and thanked God that he protected me like this, that I helped fight such great battles and got away with a straight body [...] God give [me] longer [life]”³⁵⁹

It is noticeable that the old soldier invoked God whenever he reached a point in his narrative that brought home to him human helplessness, like the treason of the Hungarian king and his nobles, the massacre of his friends and the hope that God would punish the wicked and comfort the murdered in the next life. It seems that he, like most of contemporaries, viewed God as the ultimate arbiter of justice, a belief that compensated for his very real experiences of powerlessness.

That soldiers asked God for protection and the ultimate administration of justice and thought His providence to be at work in their lives would be unspectacular if it were not for their reputation to be ‘irreligious’ and ‘godless’. The examples show that this was not the case. On the contrary, the writers were very much in dialogue with the deity in what may be considered a ‘normal’ early modern manner. Other historians are more sceptical in this respect. Jan Peters, the editor of Peter Hagendorf’s diary, has taken the absence of deeper religious contemplations in the text and the soldiers’ formulaic implorations of God to indicate that his piety was “little more than an outward norm of behaviour”.³⁶⁰ Peter Burschel has also commented on the fact that his religiosity did not extend beyond brief religious formulas interspersed in the text.³⁶¹ However, we ought to bear in mind that, if the diary was at all intended to be read by others, it was probably written for his family and friends who did not have to be told about his religious views nor

³⁵⁷ W.J.A. von Tettau (ed.), ‘Erlebnisse eines deutschen Landsknechts (1484-1493) von ihm selbst beschrieben’, in: *Mittheilungen des Vereins für die Geschichte und Alterthumskunde von Erfurt* 4, Erfurt 1869, 1-51, 43ff.

³⁵⁸ Ibid. 9, 16.

³⁵⁹ Ibid. 17.

³⁶⁰ Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 233.

³⁶¹ Burschel, *Himmelreich und Hölle*, 191.

his name, which he did not record either. Benigna von Krusenstjern has cautioned that formulaic invocations of God should not be read dismissively as mere linguistic conventions but as indicators of the writers' struggle for composure.³⁶² Furthermore, she has pointed out that these expressions were prayer-formulas, identified as such by the frequent addendum 'Amen'. The formulas Hagendorf used when recording the deaths of his children or his wife fit this format. When his first child was born prematurely, he noted: "my wife gave birth but the child was not mature yet and died immediately. God grant him a good resurrection. † It was a young son".³⁶³ Hagendorf mentioned the "blessed Christian baptism" of all his children, apart from the three babies who died during or soon after birth, presumably because no cleric was at hand to baptize them.³⁶⁴ He also marked the deaths of eight of his children, his first wife and his second mother in law with crosses in the text and the formula "God grant him/her a good resurrection".³⁶⁵ If we compare the formulas used by Hagendorf to those of his contemporaries, we find very little difference indeed. The nobleman Christoph von Bismarck for example recorded the deaths of his relatives mostly without any prayer formulas but when he did, in a situation where three of his children died within seven days, he wrote: "God grant them all a happy resurrection".³⁶⁶ The war commissary Hans Conrad Lang used a slightly more elaborate formula in which he asked for the joyous resurrection of the deceased and for God's grace and providence in bestowing a good death on "us all and everyone".³⁶⁷ Neither of the two civilian diarists detailed their religious convictions and their religious integrity has not been called into question as a consequence. To doubt Hagendorf's spiritual sincerity on this basis – and presumably that of his profession – therefore seems unwarranted. That God was invoked in the face of danger and death should not be regarded as a lower degree of piety. These instances marked decisive moments in soldiers' lives in which their own helplessness became often devastatingly apparent. In dangerous situations, God proved his providence by protecting them and when loved ones and friends died, God was the last source of hope. In this respect, soldiers did not differ at all from other contemporaries.

³⁶² Krusenstjern, *Seliges Sterben*, 471f.

³⁶³ Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 136.

³⁶⁴ Ibid. 136, 142, 151, 162.

³⁶⁵ Ibid. (twice), 139, 142, 151, 156, 162, 170, 183.

³⁶⁶ Georg Schmidt (ed.), 'Das Tagebuch des Christoph von Bismarck aus den Jahren 1625-1640', *Thüringisch-Sächsische Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kunst*, 5 (1915), 68-98, 74.

³⁶⁷ Karl Pfeilsticker (ed.), *Tagebuch des Hans Conrad Lang, Bürgers von Isny und Beisitzers von Biberach, Ulm und Memmingen, weiland Kriegskommissär in kaiserlichen, schwedischen und spanischen Diensten aus den Jahren 1601-1659*, Isny 1930 for example 7, 10, 11, 12, 14.

There is more to suggest that Hagendorf's religious sensibilities were by no means abnormal. His confession is, as been variously observed, indeterminable.³⁶⁸ He simply referred to the baptisms of his children as "Christian" and although he sometimes remarked on which confession was predominant in a particular region, he never expressed preference or distaste.³⁶⁹ Similarly, he mentioned churches and cloisters and pilgrimage sites neutrally.³⁷⁰ Despite its confessional ambiguity, Hagendorf's diary presents him as a man whose experience was shaped by and expressed in religious terms. Supernatural events were sometimes factually reported, for example, when three blaspheming gamblers were struck by lightning, when the devil appeared at another gambling table, or when the regiment marched past the Heuberg, a reputed gathering place for witches in the Swabian Alps.³⁷¹ On the other hand, he expressed his scepticism of a miraculous candle that had allegedly burned for centuries and a hint of doubt is detectable when he mentioned the execution of a pretty eighteen-year-old witch in Lippstadt.³⁷²

Hagendorf used the church year by way of dating and also used it to reveal the absurdities of military life: "On Good Friday we had bread and meat in abundance, and on the holy Easter day we did not have a mouthful of bread".³⁷³ He also used biblical imagery: when his wife fell ill and he had to transport her on horseback, he wrote for example "I came here like Joseph travelled in Egypt"; when he picked up his only surviving son Melchert Christoff from a schoolmaster in Altheim after the war, he expressed his happiness in another biblical image: "Thus I fetched my son out of Egypt".³⁷⁴ It seems that he went to church when he had the chance and on one occasion commented on the beauty of the church music in Mühlhausen.³⁷⁵ Mühlhausen had been one of the centres of Lutheran church music since the 16th century and continued to be into the 18th century, when the town gave an up and coming musician named Johann Sebastian Bach his first more prestigious position.³⁷⁶ Amidst the turmoil of war, such musical splendour was a memorable experience. The comment not only reveals that he appreciated the rare musical treat but it may indeed be added to the fragments of

³⁶⁸ Peters, *Söldnerleben* 233, 241; Kaiser, *Cuius Exercitus*, 342; Burschel, *Himmelreich*, 191.

³⁶⁹ Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 172, 174, 186.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.* for example 142, 161, 186.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.* 148, 163, 167.

³⁷² *Ibid.* 156, 137.

³⁷³ *Ibid.* 136, 157.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 170, 187.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 172.

³⁷⁶ Christoph Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach - The Learned Musician*, Oxford 2001, 104f.

evidence that suggest he may have been a Protestant.³⁷⁷ Hagendorf noted the celebrations after the Peace of Westphalia in a somewhat askance manner (“as if it was Easter or Pentecost”) yet recalled the details of the sermon including the Bible passage and its content.³⁷⁸ He therefore does not seem to have been irreligious in any way but followed a Christian life as best as circumstances allowed.

Soldiers further appear in the sources in diverse religious contexts: reading devotional literature, singing hymns, saving and christening foundlings, celebrating Christmas and so forth.³⁷⁹ Wealthier soldiers invested in their local churches. Influenced by a narrow escape from the hands of a mob, Caspar von Widmarckter obtained a “comfortable chair” in his local church to hear God’s word and “not be distracted from the eternal by the temporal”.³⁸⁰ Three years after he had left the military, Colonel Fritsch endowed an altar in a local chapel “In praise and the glory of the most holy undivided Trinity, God Father, God Son and God the Holy Ghost” for having protected him in “31 years of faithfully rendered military service”.³⁸¹ Both the Protestant Widmarckter and the Catholic Fritsch therefore not only considered God as the ultimate protector in their professional lives, but also invested parts of their revenue in church furnishings.

The evidence provided in this section calls into question the characterization of soldiers as irreligious. The attitudes towards the sacred expressed in the diaries suggest that soldiers hardly differed from their civilian contemporaries. The notion that military life ipso facto had a de-Christianizing effect consequently cannot be sustained, as Christian modes of thinking also clearly characterize soldiers’ life-accounts. The next section will proceed to examine to what extent military religiosity was further characterized by confessional modes of thinking.

The role of confession

Whether implicitly or explicitly, fighting for one’s confession is commonly considered to be a significant criterion in establishing soldiers’ religious sensibilities. As the introduction has shown, the lack of evidence indicating that this was often the

³⁷⁷ As proposed by von Müller, *Leben*, 48f.

³⁷⁸ Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 187.

³⁷⁹ Hümmer, *Bamberg im Schwedenkriege*, 142f, 155; Volkholz, *Ackermann*, 43; Friesenegger, *Tagebuch*, 23.

³⁸⁰ Gräf, *Söldnerleben*, 93.

³⁸¹ Westenrieder, *Fritsch*, 187.

case has contributed to the impression of soldiers' irreligion. Civilian commentators rather consistently understood the events and the soldiers involved in confessional terms, an interpretation that was affirmed and fostered in popular print and propaganda, which constructed the reality of war around confessional interpretive patterns.³⁸² The Wesel chronicler Arnold von Anrath, for example, wrote short valedictions to the Protestant Dutch army in his chronicle and prayed that God would send a "great disease" over the Spanish troops.³⁸³ He also recorded the re-Catholization of the city in detail. We get a strong sense that the army not merely protected these efforts but that the soldiers themselves were actively involved. Anrath describes a series of processions in which soldiers marched and reports a veritable invasion of holy statues and small devotional altars that soldiers erected across the town.³⁸⁴ The Spanish troops knew that their 'idolatry' was provocative to the Protestant inhabitants and Anrath sarcastically reports that a lieutenant who had helped erect a devotional shrine housing several saint statues had to deploy six cuirassiers to "guard the blind guests so that they did not go walkabouts".³⁸⁵ In front of another altar that was decorated with "pretty idols hanging from the cross" and statues of the Virgin, a soldier "guarded the sanctuary with bravery", Anrath scathingly noted.³⁸⁶ If we cut through the confessional bias, the Spanish troops appear as devout Catholics who invested time and effort in turning the 'heretic' city into a place of Catholic worship.

Similarly, the Bamberg nun Maria Anna Junius regarded the Swedish soldiers primarily as Protestants and therefore as enemies of her faith. While she often used the possessive pronoun 'our' in reference to imperial and Bavarian troops ("our troops", "our cavalry", "our Croats") she referred to the Swedes as "heretics".³⁸⁷ There is evidence in Junius' diary that the nuns and their servants got used to the Swedes over time. When imperial troops attacked in September 1633, about one and a half years after the Swedes' first arrival, Junius reported without malice how one Swede was captured whilst reading in his prayer book and one of the convent servants even hid a

³⁸² See for example: Anton Schindling, 'Das Strafgericht Gottes. Kriegserfahrungen und Religion im Heiligen Römischen Reich Deutscher Nation im Zeitalter des Dreissigjährigen Krieges. Erfahrungsgeschichte und Konfessionalisierung', in: Asche and Schindling (eds.), *Das Strafgericht Gottes*, 11-51, 29.

³⁸³ Arnold von Anrath, *Chronik*, in: Bambauer and Kleinholz (eds.), *Geusen und Spanier*, 1-257, 247.

³⁸⁴ Ibid. 42, 93, 114, 145f, 159, 240.

³⁸⁵ Ibid. 94.

³⁸⁶ Ibid. 95.

³⁸⁷ Hümmer, *Bamberg im Schwedenkriege*, 52, 48, 88.

Swedish soldier from the imperialists.³⁸⁸ Junius concluded her account by defending both the honour of the convent and that of the ‘heretics’. She stressed that “not the least befell a single sister that was contrary to her virgin state” and that the Swedes “behaved chastely and respectfully”;³⁸⁹ although some soldiers initially acted “like ferocious lions and bears”, they soon turned into “patient and meek lambs”.

Such confessional perceptions of persons and events are generally absent from military autobiographical accounts, a fact that seems to have contributed to the impression among historians that soldiers’ spiritualities were ‘pragmatic’, ‘un-ideological’ (*ideologiefren*) and ‘mechanistic’.³⁹⁰ As we have seen in the previous section, the tenor seems to be one of disappointment over the fact that military autobiographers did not commit more explicit religious statements to paper and did not gnaw more overtly on the doctrinal bones of contention between the churches. Focusing on manifestations of religious thinking rather than confessionalism, however, yields a different picture as the absence of confessional modes of thinking does not necessarily indicate a lack of religiosity. As the introduction has shown, recent research into the confessional landscape of 16th and 17th century Germany stresses its complexity and highlights negotiation, compromise and coexistence, dynamics that – as the second chapter argued – also characterized policies of military authorities. To make a determinant confessional identity and perception the litmus test for military religiosity therefore seems to place unrealistic expectations in military religiosity, especially of the lower ranks.

The situation is to some extent different for officers. Brage Bei der Wieden has shown that some lower-Saxon Lutheran mercenary leaders managed to negotiate a semi-official clause with Maragret of Parma, the Spanish governor in the Netherlands, exempting them from fighting co-religionists.³⁹¹ However, such confessional conscientiousness is mostly extremely difficult to prove because contracts were overwhelmingly concerned with military, financial and logistical matters. It may have been the case that confession was a factor in mercenary leaders’ choice of employer but such considerations are not reflected in the documents. Kaiser has described cases in which officers converted to their employers’ confession, seemingly to further their

³⁸⁸ Ibid. 155.

³⁸⁹ Ibid. 222.

³⁹⁰ Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 233; Müller, *Leben*, 49, Tallett, *War and Society*, 128.

³⁹¹ Brage Bei der Wieden, ‘Zur Konfessionalisierung des landsässigen Adels zwischen Weser, Harz und Elbe’, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 89 (1998), 310-319, 311f.

careers, but these instances indicate a *lack* of confessional allegiance and therefore the inversion of the type of behaviour Bei der Wieden describes.³⁹² Pangs of conscience resulting from fighting coreligionists rarely manifest themselves and Albrecht von Freiberger's mutiny is an exceptional case. The Lutheran Freiberger served as *Obristleutnant* in Wallenstein's army and in March 1634 mutinied and tried to reform Troppau (Oppava, Moravia-Silesia).³⁹³ Freiberger had finally become convinced that the emperor sought to exterminate Protestantism – after eighteen years in imperial service.

There is scarce and mostly incidental evidence for confessional thinking in soldiers' autobiographies. Captain Georg Niede composed a poem on the *Augsburg Interim* (1548), the "whore-child" as he and other dissatisfied Lutherans called it. But this explication of his views on imperial religious policies was not part of his autobiographical account in which he merely mentions the *Interim*.³⁹⁴ Confessional sentiment is otherwise entirely absent in the description of his military life. English and Scottish mercenaries who fought in the Thirty Years War are exceptional in so far as they all commented on the confessional dimension of the conflict. Sydnam Poyntz deliberated at some length about his religious convictions but the reason for this candour seems to have been that his biography was rather exceptional. He was raised a Protestant, spent 5-6 years in Ottoman captivity, converted to Catholicism upon his escape, fought in Germany first on the Protestant side, then for the Emperor and was scouting for employment at home when he wrote his life account in 1636/37.³⁹⁵ There were considerable twists in Poyntz's career and if we read his *Relation* as the self-advertisement of a Catholic mercenary looking for employment in late 1630s Britain, he was well advised to explain himself. Poyntz described his conversion in some detail. Former Ottoman slaves were open to the suspicion of having converted to Islam in order to alleviate their conditions. The Viennese Franciscans who sheltered Poyntz after his escape were no exception and tried to ascertain if he still "had any sparke of

³⁹² Kaiser, *Cuius exercitus*, 327.

³⁹³ Golo Mann, *Wallenstein*, Hamburg 2006/2007 [¹1971], 1100f; Polišenský, *Thirty Years War*, 200f.; See also Kaiser, *Cuius exercitus*, 329f.

³⁹⁴ Bei der Wieden, *Leben*, 62f.

³⁹⁵ Poyntz, *Relation*, passim. Poyntz stated his unsuccessful attempts of finding employment on page 130. Regarding the suspicion of conversion to Islam towards former Turkish slaves see: Ulbrich, Claudia, "Hat man also bald ein solches Blutbad, Würgen und Wüten in der Stadt gehört und gesehen, daß mich solches jammert wider zu gedencken..." Religion und Gewalt in Michael Heberer von Brettens »Ægyptiaca Servitus« (1610)', in: Greyerz and Siebenhüner (eds.), *Religion und Gewalt*, 85-108, 96.

Christianity” in him or if he had become “a Turke”.³⁹⁶ He had not, but while his Protestant prayers had sustained him in servitude, the friars’ “wonderfull humility and charity” moved him to convert to Catholicism “wherein by Gods grace” he intended to die.³⁹⁷ Poyntz’s account of his conversion is to the point and seems to have been consciously written for an English readership with its anti-Catholic bias. He acknowledged the prejudice by referring to the Roman Church as “Papistry” but explained his conversion by the friars’ humility and charity, virtues in every Christian context although ones Protestants did not generally associate with Catholics. He thus presented his attraction and dedication to Catholicism purely as a matter of pious practice and avoided the delicate subject of Catholic politics.

The Scotsman James Turner described his decision to fight in the German wars in religious terms. He spent a year learning about doctrinal differences between Catholicism and Presbyterianism with the declared intent to fortify himself in his faith.³⁹⁸ He also seems to have consciously chosen the Swedish/Protestant cause when he procured an ensignship in James Lumsdaine’s regiment, which was levied for the “thrice famous Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sueden” in 1632.³⁹⁹ Robert Monro gave a rather thorough confessional interpretation of the war in Germany in several instances.⁴⁰⁰ Words like ‘papist’ are used frequently and the Protestant cause is highlighted throughout.⁴⁰¹ Of the diaries examined here, Monro’s work is most consciously written for a Protestant audience, so that the clear confessional stance may have resulted from this circumstance. His confessional comments usually pertain to political situations and the main actors, Gustavus Adolphus II, the emperor, General Tilly. Confession also highlights individual depravity in this account. Field Marshal Holk’s “barbarous crueltie”, for instance, is emphasized by stating that the Protestant commander made “no conscience of Religion” and “shewed lesse compassion then the *Papists* did”.⁴⁰² When talking about strictly military affairs and his personal encounters with the enemy, however, confessional commentary is absent.

These examples are exceptional, as affirmations of confessional identity and motivation are rare in military autobiographies. Götz von Berlichingen did not mention

³⁹⁶ Poyntz, *Relation*, 54.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Turner, *Memoirs*, 3.

³⁹⁹ Ibid. 4.

⁴⁰⁰ Monro, *Expedition*, for example: part II, 67f; 77; 86; 89; 94; 106; 114f; 116; 119; 122; 124; 126; 136; 154; 156; 164; 168.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid. II, 89; 94; 100; 100; 104; 106; 114.

⁴⁰² Ibid. 156.

the confessional upheavals of his time at all; he even related his controversial involvement in the Peasants War without mentioning the Schism.⁴⁰³ Nothing in his memoirs betrays the fact that he was one of the first German nobles who introduced the reformation in his estates as early as 1522.⁴⁰⁴ The only allusion to his Lutheranism was made in connection to his trial by five councillors of the Swabian League, whom he thought biased because they were “not of [his] faith”.⁴⁰⁵ It is difficult to extrapolate religious convictions from the gunner Hans Staden’s account of his captivity by the Tupinambá tribe in Brazil.⁴⁰⁶ The whole narrative is a “homily of redemption and faith” and was revised and “improved” by a Lutheran professor of medicine, Dr. Johannes Dryander, on Staden’s request.⁴⁰⁷ The account is littered with references to and implorations of God’s grace and protection but it is indeterminable whether these reflect Staden’s actual behaviour or were added either by himself or his godly editor Dryander. Despite the latter’s involvement, however, there are no confessional comments. We can infer that Staden was a solitary Protestant among Catholic sailors and colonists but there is no indication that this caused any problems. Moreover, he repeatedly mentioned joining in communal Catholic prayer and that he prayed with other Christians during his captivity, yet he never commented on confessional issues. The young noble soldier Erich Lassota’s religious views are a conundrum. His account of the Spanish campaign in Spain and Portugal (1580-83) reads like testimony of a pilgrimage. He mentions a vast number of devotional sites around Santiago de Compostela and elsewhere, describes the interiors of dozens of Catholic churches, explains the legends behind religious sites and miraculous statues, he travelled with his colonel’s Catholic chaplain and went to confession, all of which seems to indicate a fervent Catholic.⁴⁰⁸ Yet, he later remarked that his Swedish captors *mistook* him for a Catholic, which implies that he identified as a Protestant.⁴⁰⁹ Caspar von Widmarckter’s account is a last case in point. The only time he makes an overtly confessional remark is in relation to a dispute with his “papist” neighbours at home.⁴¹⁰ Without this single remark, evidence for Widmarckter’s Protestantism would be entirely circumstantial. As these examples

⁴⁰³ Berlichingen, *Vhedt vnd Handlungen*, 122ff.

⁴⁰⁴ On Berlichingen’s Lutheranism see Franz, *Bauernkrieg*, 194.

⁴⁰⁵ Berlichingen, *Vhedt vnd Handlungen*, 133.

⁴⁰⁶ Staden, *Historia*, Cii^V, Div^V.

⁴⁰⁷ Neil L. Whitehead and Michael Harbsmeier (eds. and transl.), *Hans Staden’s True History. An Account of Cannibal Captivity in Brazil*, Durham / London 2008, XXI; Staden, *Historia*, Aiii^R.

⁴⁰⁸ Schottin, *Lassotta*, 41ff; 50ff;

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid. 147.

⁴¹⁰ Gräf, *Söldnerleben*, 102.

suggest, confessional self-identification or comment in military autobiographical accounts is mostly random, almost accidental.

So, while non-military commentators clearly perceived soldiers in confessional terms, confessional self-identification and in fact any confessional commentary is generally and saliently absent in military narratives. The same observation holds for confessional conflict among soldiers, as none of the diaries provides any evidence for internal arguments over confession. We may suppose that the silence can be partially explained by the nature of the genre as it recorded military lives rather than spiritual journeys. Yet, we find seemingly random comments, for instance, on the fashion among Polish nobles to gel their hair with eggs, on marmot behaviour and women's goitres in the Alps, Westphalian beer, witches and pumpernickel, the abundance of rosemary in the Champagne or the construction of a Würzburg mill.⁴¹¹ All of this makes the silence surrounding confessional matters even more pronounced.

Another partial explanation can be inferred from the research into confessional identities cited above, which has found that a pronounced confessional way of thinking became widespread only in later 17th century and later. That the British mercenaries described confessional differences more pronouncedly than their German counterparts does not have to be entirely due to the British readership at least Monro and Poyntz were writing for. Given their rather homogeneously Protestant backgrounds, it is not impossible that they experienced confessional differences differently from the Germans who were more accustomed to confessional heterogeneity both within and outside of the army. For the German soldiers, multi-confessional milieux were a fact of life that may have been too common to comment on. There remains, however, a clear discrepancy in the way wars were presented in propaganda and experienced by civilians on the one hand, namely in confessional terms, and in the way most soldiers described the same events: merely as 'war'. This difference in perception has to be accounted for and it seems that it arose from the military experience itself.

Motivation and unemotional enmity

This section will show that the lines between friend and enemy were inherently blurry and ideological categories became widely meaningless amidst the ever-changing fortunes of war. In order to understand this phenomenon better, we should consider

⁴¹¹ Berlichingen, *Vhedt vnd Handlungen*, 57; Gräf, *Söldnerleben*, 126; Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 137; 153, 165.

military mentalities in a wider context, especially with view of motivation and enmity. James Turner is the only soldier from the sample who described that he was enticed at least partly to fight for the Protestant cause by the propaganda he had read at home. He also wrote candidly about how his experience in Germany changed his ideological outlook. When he returned to Britain in the early 1640s political and religious categories were apparently no longer important to Turner and he joined the Covenanter army rather by accident but “without any reluctance of mind”.⁴¹² Turner explained that he had internalised “a very dangerous maxime” in Germany, “which was that so we serve our master honnestlie, it is no matter what master we serve”. He had developed a ‘mercenary’ mentality and fought “without examination of the justice of the quarrel, or regard of my duetie to either prince or countrey”.⁴¹³ He never swore the Covenant although he “wold have made no bones to take, sueare and signe it and observe it, too”.⁴¹⁴ He was never asked to do so. His experiences on the Continent had convinced him that he could do whatever his masters asked without it affecting his conscience.⁴¹⁵ Turner’s admission is a valuable insight into soldier mentalities for its frankness. With hindsight, it seems, Turner was mildly uncomfortable with his younger self’s loss of ideological investment, yet the matter-of-factness with which he explained himself suggests that he was not necessarily ashamed of this period in his life.

Other soldiers, if they provided insight into their motivation to follow the drum at all, had more mundane reasons. Burschel has shown that the rank and file were predominantly recruited from the urban and rural under classes and he comes to the concise conclusion that “destitution made the mercenary” (*Not machte den Söldner*).⁴¹⁶ In light of the diaries we may add ‘dissatisfaction’ with one’s present situation to the motives. Georg Niedege seems to have wanted to escape the stuffiness of the Marburg faculty of theology, as we have already seen. Wayward Werner von Bert, an embarrassing relative of the Wesel chronicler Heinrich von Weseken, wanted to escape an apprenticeship that did not suit him.⁴¹⁷ Sydnam Poyntz also deemed his apprenticeship “little better than a dogs life” and he ran away from his master thinking

⁴¹² Turner, *Memoirs*, 14.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid. 16.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ See Burschel’s detailed discussion of the social composition of armies in *Söldner*, 54-87. On motivation see also Huntebrinker, *Fromme Knechte*, 92ff.

⁴¹⁷ Weseken, *Chronik*, 324.

that “to live and dy a souldier would bee as noble in death as Life”.⁴¹⁸ A romantically naïve view of military life, fantasies of glory and riches and the wish to improve one’s lot in life therefore seem to have played a large role in many young men’s decisions to enlist. The Englishman Thomas Raymond, who had joined the army of the States General and briefly served in the Rhineland, soon had his fill of soldiering as “the life of a private or comon soldier is the most miserable in the world”.⁴¹⁹ Raymond loved a comfortable bed and dryness, both in short supply in the army, but for a while a military career seemed his only option: “seeing no other way to make out a fortune, being a yonger brother [...], I buckled my selfe to the profession”.⁴²⁰ Raymond had to make a living, ideally a “fortune”, and the army seemed to promise him just that.

These pragmatic reasons to enlist are also reflected by the fact that changing sides was mostly described as a matter of course. Jürgen Ackermann had served for about six years under the Protestant commanders Halberstadt and Mansfeld when he decided to change sides.⁴²¹ After his unit surrendered Wolfenbüttel to Count Pappenheim’s regiment in 1627, Ackermann switched sides and his former captain even helped him to secure a post with the enemy. Nothing in his account implies that the Protestant Ackermann felt any compunction about deserting the Protestant cause. He had fought for years without being paid and after the imperialists had chased his regiment through half of Central Europe, he decided that changing sides offered better prospects. Peter Hagendorf fought in Venetian service against Pappenheim’s regiment in 1625 and although Hagendorf’s side sustained heavy casualties from the enemy’s artillery, this earned his professional respect rather than hatred. The Pappenheimer were clearly a good regiment to serve in and Hagendorf joined its ranks two years later in Ulm.⁴²² In 1633, his unit had to surrender Straubing to the Swedes and the lower ranks were pressed into Swedish service. Nothing indicates that Hagendorf thought this turn of events important: the narrative seamlessly continues in the first person plural, only the names of his new commanding officers are mentioned.⁴²³ Henceforth, ‘we’ denotes his Swedish regiment, while his former employers are the ‘imperialists’ or

⁴¹⁸ Poyntz, *Relation*, 45.

⁴¹⁹ Thomas Raymond, *Autobiography of Thomas Raymond and Memoirs of the Family of Guise of Elmore, Gloucestershire*, ed. G. Davies (Royal Historical Society Publications Camden Third Series, Vol. XXVIII), London 1917, 43.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.* 44.

⁴²¹ Volkholz, *Ackermann*, 10f.

⁴²² Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 132, 135.

⁴²³ *Ibid.* 143.

‘Bavarians’.⁴²⁴ After the Swedish defeat at Nördlingen in 1634, Hagendorf and his boy simply returned to Pappenheim’s regiment and his old captain reinstated him to his rank of corporal.⁴²⁵ The captain had also been captured at Straubing and was probably ransomed or exchanged. There seems to have been no resentment over the fact that Hagendorf had fought on the other side in the meantime; it was a reality of military life. Hagendorf’s career is typical for the experience of the rank and file in that it was often fate that determined on which side soldiers found themselves. This fact of 16th and 17th century warfare seems to have precluded sustained loyalty to a particular side and its official cause and apparently led to a perception of ‘friend’ and ‘foe’ as transitional alliances.

Nobles, and to a degree officers, often found themselves fighting acquaintances, friends and relatives who served the enemy. During the War of the Bavarian Succession (1504), Götz von Berlichingen was grudgingly obliged by patronage to fight on the Bavarian side, although he would have preferred to serve with two of his brothers in the Palatinate’s army.⁴²⁶ Still, the fact that the brothers were fighting in opposing armies neither caused Götz to dishonour his obligations nor does it appear to have caused him moral discomfort. Erich Lassota was captured when he served the Polish king elect Maximilian in his ill-fated campaign to gain the Polish throne. After he and other nobles were paroled, two companies of horse escorted them out of Poland, one of which was commanded by a cousin of Lassota’s.⁴²⁷ Family bonds therefore extended across enemy lines.

The diaries confirm Burschel’s observation that soldiers generally saw the enemy as a “purely factual category”.⁴²⁸ In addition, they indicate that Barbara Donagan’s analysis of the un-political and un-confessional nature of honour as a moral imperative among British military men is also generally applicable to the German context.⁴²⁹ Violence was considered legitimate within the limits of what was strictly necessary to obtain victory but avoidable brutality and breach of bipartisan trust was condemned as illegitimate.⁴³⁰ However fluid such notions may have been, military professionals had a keen sense of what constituted appropriate use of force and conduct

⁴²⁴ See for example Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 145.

⁴²⁵ Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 146.

⁴²⁶ Berlichingen, *Vhedt vnd Handlungen*, 74.

⁴²⁷ Lassota, *Tagebuch*, 108.

⁴²⁸ Burschel, *Himmelreich und Hölle*, 191

⁴²⁹ Donagan, *Web of Honour*, passim, esp. 367, 387f.

⁴³⁰ See Prüve, *Violentia und Potestas*, esp. 40f.

in war. Given that both sides heeded the imperative to fight honourably and fairly, the enemy was treated with a degree of consideration that can be baffling to the modern observer.⁴³¹ We frequently find references to accords and quarter. Taking the example of Augustin von Fritsch, he frequently asked enemies to surrender *before* fighting began, evidently with the intention to limit violence through negotiation.⁴³² Fighting in war is characterized in the diaries as a professional, unemotional encounter that entailed a certain amount of violence but within clear boundaries. By and large, it seems, soldiers succeeded in limiting violence by fostering a professional, objective and pragmatic attitude.⁴³³ Importantly, these notions were not limited to the nobility but were apparently shared by common soldiers. The only occasion, for example, on which Hagendorf expressed hatred of enemy soldiers in a string of insults was when he recalled how the Spanish troops gave no quarter after the battle of Nördlingen (1634).⁴³⁴ The Spaniards killed with a relentlessness that was alien to him and did not stop after the battle was won. He disapproved of unnecessary violence and it is telling that one of the few instances he did not relate violence euphemistically was when he recounted how he badly injured another NCO in a fight.⁴³⁵ Such frankness is singular in Hagendorf's account and suggests that in this context he could not justify his behaviour through his professional capacity as a soldier. He had seriously wounded a comrade in a stupid brawl, a circumstance that could not be palliated.

Fair conduct in war included sparing surrendering troops and individuals and it appears that this convention was generally honoured in the international military community regardless of confessional or confessional allegiance. This pragmatic principle was mutually beneficial: the vanquished kept their lives and the victors could speedily and cheaply replenish their ranks.⁴³⁶ For individual units it was important to have a reputation of honouring this convention so that their enemies accorded them the same consideration when necessary. This rationale becomes evident when Augustin von Fritsch related how his unit besieged a contingent of French and German troops.⁴³⁷ An

⁴³¹ See Fiedler, *Kriegswesen*, 166.

⁴³² Westenrieder, *Fritsch*, 142, 143, 144,

⁴³³ See also Donagan, *Web of Honour*, passim.

⁴³⁴ Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 146.

⁴³⁵ Ibid. 165.

⁴³⁶ See Bernhard R. Kroener, 'Der Soldat als Ware. Kriegsgefangenenschicksale im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert', in: H. Duchardt, P. Veit, P. Monnet (eds.), *Krieg und Frieden im Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit. Theorie – Praxis – Bilder (Guerre et Paix du Moyen Age auf Temps Modernes. Théories – Pratiques – Représentations)*, Mainz 2000, 271-295. On the practice of impressing prisoners see Redlich, *Military Enterpriser*, I, 480ff; Burschel, *Söldner*, 158ff., Tallett, *War and Society*, 128ff.

⁴³⁷ Westenrieder, *Fritsch*, 152ff.

honourable surrender was negotiated but when the enemy was about to pull out of the fortification, Fritsch's superiors declared the accord void and ordered the execution of the unwitting enemy.⁴³⁸ Fritsch and his men refused as they anticipated being employed at the siege of French-occupied Koblenz and feared that the French there would avenge the atrocity.⁴³⁹ They managed to save the lives of the German prisoners by impressing them into the regiment but could not prevent the execution of two officers or the massacre of the French rank and file by cavalry troops. Fritsch and his men's worries were justified. They were sent to Koblenz where the French captured a captain who would have been hanged had he not been able to convince his captors that his unit had refused to massacre their compatriots.⁴⁴⁰

This episode elucidates some crucial aspects of military attitudes towards the enemy: the attempts to avoid unnecessary bloodshed have already been noted but here, the importance of honouring martial customs and the necessity of a unit to maintain its reputation become evident. The reaction of the French towards the captured captain shows that they did not consider all imperial troops to be collectively responsible for the actions of a particular detachment. Their thirst for vengeance was directed only against those that had carried out the massacre. Massacres of prisoners were recognized as an atrocity also by those who committed them, as can be seen from the example of an imperial soldier who had been involved in the slaughter of Swedish deserters that had tried to join the imperial force at Forchheim in summer 1634.⁴⁴¹ The reasons behind this stark violation of military custom are unclear but as it was a time of famine, the imperial commander may have been unable to feed additional men. Whatever his motives, the event caused revulsion among his own troops. In conversation with the nun Maria Anna Junius, one of the men struggled to defend himself for obeying the order to "cut down so many valiant men who begged so piteously for their life and said how long they had served the Emperor but had been captured by the Swedes".⁴⁴² The soldier could not justify the atrocity by the victims' status as 'enemy' deserters: the blame lay squarely with his colonel and he tried to exculpate himself by pointing towards the consequences for his own life had he disobeyed orders.

⁴³⁸ Ibid. 153.

⁴³⁹ Ibid. 154.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid. 158.

⁴⁴¹ Hümmer, *Bamberg im Schwedenkriege*, 190f.

⁴⁴² Ibid. 191.

The pragmatic imperatives to limit violence also kept emotions low and while this is a valid generalization, the occasions in which these norms were violated were revenged mercilessly. Garrisons that did not surrender and thereby forced the besiegers into suicidal assaults could not expect mercy.⁴⁴³ Colonel Monro described the taking of Bredenburg castle after which the enemy killed the Scottish defenders and everyone within in a murderous fury.⁴⁴⁴ Monro characterized the event as a “monstrous and prodigious massacre” and admonished his readers “to forbear the like” as revenge could be taken “in a Christian manner, without making Beasts of ourselves”.⁴⁴⁵ However, Monro held the garrison commander Dunbar’s unreasonable refusal to surrender directly responsible for the escalation of violence. This interplay of behaviour is more explicit when he relates the failed last minute attempt of General Major Kniphausen to surrender Brandenburg after he had previously rejected the offer of an accord.⁴⁴⁶ Kniphausen’s surrender came “too late” and many of his men were put to the sword. Monro commented on the “crueltie and inhumanitie” of the conquerors but stated that Kniphausen’s lack of judgement had “brought himselfe and others to the slaughter”.⁴⁴⁷

While these pragmatic and unemotional notions of enmity have so far been described in cultural terms, modern psychological studies suggest further explanations for the apparent reluctance to kill outright and the fatal importance of situational build-up of aggression in early modern warfare. The psychologist and former Army Ranger Dave Grossman has identified four mechanisms that facilitate the emotional withdrawal necessary for killing efficiently:

- “Cultural distance, such as racial and ethnic differences, which permit the killer to dehumanize the victim.
- Moral distance, which takes into consideration the kind of intense belief in moral superiority and vengeful/vigilante actions associated with civil wars.
- Social distance, which considers the impact of a lifetime of practice in thinking of a particular class as less than human in a socially stratified environment.
- Mechanical distance, which includes the sterile Nintendo-game unreality of killing through a TV screen, a thermal sight, a sniper sight, or some other kind of mechanical buffer that permits the killer to deny the humanity of his victim”.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴³ For similar observations for the English Civil War see Donagan, *Web of Honour*, 368ff.

⁴⁴⁴ Monro, *Expedition*, I, 39f.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid. II, 27f.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid. 28.

⁴⁴⁸ Dave Grossman, *On Killing. The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, New York / Boston 1995, 160.

Considering the nature of early modern warfare it becomes apparent that most of these distancing elements were not – or not consistently – present in the period. Cultural distance between soldiers was often negligible and diminished quickly. The vast majority of soldiers came from similar cultural backgrounds and despite doctrinal differences, they shared common Christian values as we have seen. Given the international makeup of the armies, we also find surprisingly little evidence for communication problems. Soldiers apparently quickly learned to adapt to changing linguistic situations, be it by the use of a dictionary, by learning the language from locals, or out of sheer necessity that forced Sydnam Poyntz to learn Turkish and almost forget his English.⁴⁴⁹ Ethnic distance may have played a role and we frequently find references to ethnic backgrounds of troops. However, as we have seen in the massacre of the French POWs above, soldiers of different ethnicities also fought together in the same units. The un-ideological mindset that has been described and the awareness that the changing fortunes of war meant that the categories of ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’ were inherently ambiguous precluded an *a priori* moral distance.⁴⁵⁰ It developed, as we have seen, when military ethics were breached. Illegitimate acts of violence and the deaths of comrades created personal enmity and a moral gulf, which manifested itself, for example, in the wholesale slaughter of obstinate garrisons described above. Social distance, the third factor Grossman cites, existed primarily vertically in the military hierarchy but less so horizontally between combatants who met on the battlefield. On the other hand, the predominance of men from the higher social strata in the cavalry and the prevalence of commoners in the infantry did constitute a social differentiation. Regarding the execution of the French POWs described by Fritsch, it may therefore be telling that the infantry troops refused to massacre other foot soldiers – their own ‘kind’, as it were – while the horsemen apparently readily obeyed the order.⁴⁵¹ Social distance was probably more effective in facilitating killing downward the social ladder rather than upward, as the potentially gratifying act of killing a social superior was

⁴⁴⁹ Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 131; Turner, *Memoirs*, 6; Poyntz, *The True Relation*, 53f. The owner of the copy of Johann Jacob Wallhausen’s *Manuale Militari* held at the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden also amended and extended the glossary of military technical terms at the end of the book and began his personal dictionary on the blank pages. Pastor Thodaenus mentioned that a soldier he encountered spoke only broken German, but this did not hamper communication (Thodaenus, *Threni Magdæburgici*, Ki^v).

⁴⁵⁰ See Kroener, *Kriegsgurgeln*, 60.

⁴⁵¹ Redlich has described a very similar case (*German Military Enterpriser*, I, 481)

counterbalanced by the prospect of a hefty ransom if the life was spared. Low ranking commoners' were literally worthless.⁴⁵²

The modern technologies that create mechanical distance between the killer and the target were not available to early modern soldiers who had to dispatch the enemy mostly at close quarters. The small elite of gunners and their assistants fought from the greatest distance and even they struggled with guilt.⁴⁵³ Arquebuses and muskets had an effective range of c.150 meters in the 16th century and about 215 meters during the Thirty Years War.⁴⁵⁴ Psychologically, firing these guns may be considered relatively easy as the soldier shot at the enemy from a distance and aiming with precision was next to impossible. Pike formations clashed at a distance of about 4-5 meters, so that the opponent was clearly visible.⁴⁵⁵ Part of the pike techniques involved thrusting the pike into the face, neck or other unprotected parts of the opponents' bodies, which not only involved strength and skill but also required to overcome a deep human resistance to stab another person.⁴⁵⁶ Beyond the reach of the pike, soldiers had to engage in hand-to-hand combat, which is the most intimate and potentially traumatizing way of killing. The more intimate, the greater the psychological resistance to kill another human being. The situation is different when soldiers experience a 'combat high', the release of large amounts of adrenaline that causes extreme exhilaration and often entails uninhibited killing.⁴⁵⁷ But combat high arises during battle – when the strategies to limit violence had failed – and under these circumstances, men had to kill or die, whether they were 'high' or not.

The nature of early modern warfare thus generally precluded a dehumanization of the enemy, which is crucial in creating the psychological distance that allows sane individuals to kill efficiently. Simultaneously, the absence of dehumanization helps to account for the great importance placed on surrendering and giving quarter, as these practices prevented the use of potentially traumatic violence. Enemy relations do not even appear to have been generally characterized by hatred; on the contrary, it seems that enemies were united in a bipartisan interest in limiting violence, which manifested itself in pragmatic and widely unemotional attitudes and behaviours. Political and

⁴⁵² Contamine, *War*, 257

⁴⁵³ See: Rainer Leng, 'Gründe für berufliches Töten. Büchsenmeister und Kriegshauptleute zwischen Berufsethos und Gewissensnot', in: Brunner (ed.), *Krieg im Mittelalter*, 307-348.

⁴⁵⁴ Georg Ortenburg, *Waffe und Waffengebrauch im Zeitalter der Landsknechte*, Koblenz 1984, 55f.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid. 45.

⁴⁵⁶ Grossman, *On Killing*, 121ff. Humans prefer to slash or bludgeon.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid. 234f. Due to the taboo surrounding the joy of killing, it is difficult to gauge how common combat high is but as a neuro-biological process we can assume that it is and was not uncommon.

religious categories also widely lost meaning for the military men and consequently confessional considerations mattered little if at all in this professional setting. Huntebrinker has observed that relationships and loyalties were built between the soldiery, their officers and the field commanders and were widely detached from warlords or their professed ideological causes.⁴⁵⁸ It seems that enemies treated one another in much the same way, so that what mattered was fair *conduct* of war not its causes. It is important to underline that this unemotional attitude not only extended across confessional boundaries but could include non-Christians as well. Jürgen Luh has shown that the same conventions described here were also mutually observed between Christians and Muslims in Eastern Europe.⁴⁵⁹ Refuting notions that the Ottoman wars were informed by an “ideology of annihilation”, Luh argues that Christian propaganda of the ‘barbarous Turk’ had no measurable impact on the way Central European soldiers dealt with their Ottoman counterparts. The ‘Web of Honour’, to borrow Barbara Donagan’s term again, therefore indeed seems to have been part of a European military culture that bound soldiers across religious and political fault lines.⁴⁶⁰

This insight helps to account for the un-confessional tenor of soldiers’ autobiographical accounts: they apparently recorded their experiences in the same way they conducted war, according to principles that were detached from confession. Finally, it also suggests why authors mostly mentioned their confessional identity incidentally or not at all; it may have mattered to them personally, but it was irrelevant to experience they recorded.

Religious Coexistence

Given the absence of sufficient direct evidence in the diaries and other sources, it is impossible to reconstruct the dynamics of religious co-existence in the armies to a satisfactory degree. It seems that religious co-existence was too unproblematic to produce a paper trail outside of the articles of war, which is an important insight in its own right. However, it is rather frustrating for historians who rely on records. The following discussion suggests how the specific context of the military may have facilitated confessional coexistence. The scholarship of civilian religious coexistence

⁴⁵⁸ Huntebrinker, *Fromme Knechte*, 288.

⁴⁵⁹ Jürgen Luh, ‘Religion und Türkenkrieg (1683-1699) – neu bewertet’, in: Kaiser and Kroll (eds.), *Militär und Religiosität*, 193-206.

⁴⁶⁰ Donagan, *Web of Honour*.

and conflict provide some valuable clues as to why confessional plurality may not have posed a great problem in the military.⁴⁶¹ Religious coexistence was a fact of life and in many German urban and rural communities, two or more confessions lived together in a predominantly peaceful if not always happy manner. Conceptualizing Reformation Europe and Europeans on the basis of confessional division is frequent yet inaccurate, as confessional plurality did not inevitably cause irreconcilable conflict among communities. Scribner described ordinary peoples' "tolerance of practical rationality"; they simply accepted confessional diversity as a fact of life.⁴⁶² Similarly, Dixon has recently discussed the "practical philosophy of tolerance", the latitudinarian "beliefs and attitudes of the people in the cities, towns and villages who actually experienced religious diversity at firsthand".⁴⁶³ Confessional zealotry was mostly outweighed by the universal Christian imperatives of neighbourliness and charity and the ideal of the common good, maxims that bound members of a community "in relations of solidarity and mutual dependence that were dangerous as well as painful to break".⁴⁶⁴ If these precepts were important in settled communities, they were vital in the chronically endangered military community. In living circumstances characterised by instability and unpredictability, hunger, cold and violence, the necessity of maintaining group cohesion had to override confessional divisions. We can also assume that conflict potential abated as personal relationships were established and acquaintance, friendship and shared experiences created a bond. While downplaying confessional divisions was therefore a matter of survival for soldiers, one major factor facilitated this latitudinarian mindset: the absence of confessionally divisive policies. Thomas A. Brady has argued that in civilian contexts, the "primary agents of religious violence [...] were not the religious communities but the rulers who tried to coerce their subjects into religious conformity".⁴⁶⁵ As the previous chapter has shown, this source of conflict was absent in the military, as authorities anxiously avoided policies that highlighted confessional differences and might breed dissent. Military communities were therefore widely left to

⁴⁶¹ On confessional coexistence see: Greyerz et al. (eds.) *Interkonfessionalität*; Kaplan, *Divided By Faith*; Dixon et al. (eds.), *Religious Diversity*; Dixon, 'Urban Order' and Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, 38ff.

⁴⁶² Bob Scribner, 'Preconditions of tolerance and intolerance in sixteenth-century Germany', in: Grell and Scribner (eds.), *Tolerance and Intolerance*, 32-47, 38.

⁴⁶³ C. Scott Dixon, 'Introduction: Living with diversity in early modern Europe', in: Dixon et al., *Living With Diversity*, 1-20, 9.

⁴⁶⁴ Kaplan, *Divided by Faith*, 76.

⁴⁶⁵ Thomas A. Brady Jr., 'Limits of Religious Violence in Early Modern Europe', in: Greyerz and Siebenhüner, *Religion und Gewalt*, 125-151, 141.

their own devices in negotiating confessional diversity and it seems that they did so successfully.

A few situations in which confessional differences were overcome peacefully may prove enlightening. The Scottish mercenary Robert Monro's clearest self-identification as a member of the Presbyterian Kirk is couched in an anecdote in which he and the Swedish chancellor Axel Oxenstierna debated the worth of the different confessions on the basis of the alcohol they produced.⁴⁶⁶ After the consumption of Seebester beer, the atmosphere became increasingly merry. The beer was a Calvinist product and Monro's favourite, as it was "the wholsomost for the body, and clearest from all filth or barme, as their Religion is best for the soule, and clearest from the dregs of superstition".⁴⁶⁷ Monro told the Lutheran chancellor as much, and he replied: "no wonder it taste well to your palat, being it is the good beere of your ill religion".⁴⁶⁸ They then debated "the good wine of a worse religion" that was produced in the Catholic region around Mainz and Oxenstierna quipped that "he liked the wine and the beere better than both the Religions". Monro agreed on the excellence of 'Papist' viticulture and mused that living in the Calvinist Palatinate would allow him to keep his religion *and* "drinke good Rhinish wine" for the rest of his life. In Monro's long account this is the only point at which confessional differences are a subject of discussion, or rather, drunken banter. The Lutheran Oxenstierna and the Presbyterian Monro were conscious of their doctrinal differences but this did not hamper their bonhomie. They did not avoid the potentially awkward topic, nor did Monro show much deference to the chancellor in this matter; they joked about their religious differences. Both positioned themselves clearly, Oxenstierna even referred to Monro's "ill religion" but they defused the topic through humour.

The nuns of the Heilig Grab Kloster witnessed that soldiers' love of music could also bridge the confessional divide. In late February 1633, they were visited by Wilhelm von Lohausen, a Calvinist general-major in the Swedish army, who arrived with a number of officers and the prior of the Bamberg Carmelite cloister. After lunch, Lohausen asked the nuns to sing compline for him but much to the nuns' astonishment, he did not just listen like the other officers but came into the choir and sang the whole

⁴⁶⁶ Monro, *Expedition*, II, 47f.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid. 48.

compline with them.⁴⁶⁹ The Calvinist general greatly enjoyed himself but asked the nuns to spare him the *Salve Regina*, as the Marian hymn was “too much” for him to stomach. A Calvinist soldier joining nuns in singing Catholic liturgy is a remarkable contravention of confessional dichotomies. It seems that Lohausen appreciated the beauty of the music and apparently also the spiritual content of the lyrics except for the *Salve Regina* and its overt focus on Marian devotion. Lohausen also commented on the nuns’ piety and their impeccable *imitatio Christi* and therefore recognized common Christian ideals despite their devotion to the Holy Virgin.⁴⁷⁰

A few months later, a unit of Swedish horse was detailed to guard the convent. When the nuns celebrated their evening service, a placid battle of the hymns ensued: “As we sang the *Salve Regina*, [the soldiers] also began to sing, their preacher stood in their midst, and all the soldiers around him thus sang their Lutheran songs very beautifully”.⁴⁷¹ That the Protestant soldiers intoned their Lutheran hymns while the sisters sang the *Salve Regina* does not seem coincidental but it appears that the Marian hymn prompted the soldiers to answer the Lutheran way. That the soldiers, or at least their preacher, recognized the *Salve* shows that practices of the religious other were still common cultural currency in the first half of the 17th century. The episode also illustrates how confessional identity could be asserted in a non-violent, not even markedly antipathetic, manner. Sister Junius, finally, could acknowledge the ‘heretics’ devotion and appreciate the beauty of Luther’s hymns, just as the Calvinist Lohausen had enjoyed compline.

What do these scenes tell us about religious coexistence? As such situations were rarely recorded it must remain uncertain in how far the behaviour of the soldiers in these instances can be regarded as representative. Heuristically speaking, conflict is much more present in the human memory than peaceful encounters and the sources are inherently imbalanced in so far as conflict situations are more likely to be recorded than peaceful encounters.⁴⁷² If we consider, however, that hundreds of thousands of soldiers dealt with religious diversity on a daily basis over one and a half centuries, both amongst themselves and in encounters with the population without confessional conflict erupting, it seems that confession was mostly offset by other norms and necessities in everyday life. We reach epistemological limitations when trying to assess behaviours

⁴⁶⁹ Hümmer, *Bamberg im Schwedenkriege*, 115.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid. 118.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid. 142.

⁴⁷² Kaiser, *Söldner*, 81.

that were not recorded but the absence of confessional conflict among soldiers in the military diaries speaks loudly. This section has suggested factors that may have facilitated confessional coexistence. The guiding interest in group cohesion and survival certainly counterbalanced doctrinal division and the absence of divisive interference from above gave troops the freedom to negotiate confessional diversity. The scenes described point towards modes of behaviour that could defuse the potential for conflict. These included humour, focussing on universal Christian values rather than divisive doctrinal elements, appreciating the other confession's worship, or asserting a confessional identity in a non-confrontational manner, for example by singing. There were consequently a number of ways by which soldiers could and did avoid confessional strife.

The latitudinarian values that Ralf Pröve has described for the later 17th and 18th centuries are therefore already detectable earlier. There is also evidence that this characteristic of the military experience had a lasting effect on former soldiers. Jürgen Ackermann, for example, retired from his military career in Protestant and Catholic service around 1636 and bought a farm in Kroppenstedt, south-west of Magdeburg. With his military experience and connections, Ackermann was frequently sent to negotiate with military authorities and deal with passing troops on behalf of the small town.⁴⁷³ While the townspeople appreciated and depended on his negotiating skills, his un-confessional pragmatism also caused problems at least once. Ackermann had arduously but successfully negotiated a safeguard for the community with imperial commanders and returned only to have his efforts slighted by the mayor, who sourly remarked that the privilege had been accorded by Catholics. Ackermann snapped "even if they were Turks and they wanted to do us good, why wouldn't one accept it".⁴⁷⁴ Here, civilian and ex-military notions regarding the importance of confession clashed. The mayor's exact objections remain unclear but they concerned striking a deal with Catholics while all that mattered to the veteran Ackermann was the protection of the community's livelihood. He had little patience with the mayor's confessional quibbling.

Blasphemy

Arguably the most immediately religious transgression associated with the soldiery was their alleged penchant for blasphemy. This section will consider the role of blasphemy

⁴⁷³ Volkholz, *Ackermann*, 47, 49f, 51f.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 52.

in military life and raise the question of whether blasphemous speech can be indicative of potential religious deviance. The study of early modern blasphemy has produced a number of monographs in recent years.⁴⁷⁵ Schwerhoff and Loetz's studies have provided new insights into the pragmatics of blasphemy by applying speech act theory to uncover its communicative goals and they have identified situations in which blasphemous speech was likely to be uttered. Schwerhoff describes blasphemy as a "theatrical self-dramatization" (*theatralische Selbstinszenierung*).⁴⁷⁶ The profanation of the sacred was often a means to a different communicative end and its purpose was to present the speaker in a certain light. As a linguistic strategy, blasphemy was characteristic of conflict situations and intended to intimidate opponents by imparting fearlessness and power in an ostentatious display of disrespect towards the sacred.⁴⁷⁷ Cabantous has shown that about half of the blasphemy cases he studied in Paris also entailed physical violence and Loetz has identified blasphemy as an integral element of honour conflicts.⁴⁷⁸ In the military context, such linguistic self-aggrandizing and posturing could therefore have served a purpose as a complementation to weapons, wild beards, daring attire, physical strength and belligerent bearing. There is evidence that conflict situations led soldiers to blaspheme. It is not without a certain irony that the blasphemous curses of a soldier prevented the Hessian pastor Georg Herdenius from being left stark naked by a looting party. The soldiers had already taken the pastor's cloak and one of them began to strip him off his trousers, when another soldier intervened and shouted "may God's hundred-thousand sacraments defile you".⁴⁷⁹ This outburst made his comrade back off. Here, the purpose of the soldier's blasphemous use of language was to intimidate his comrade into behaving himself. Maria Anna Junius recorded a similar, although not strictly blasphemous, attempt at verbal intimidation. When Swedish troops threatened to pillage the cloister, one soldier tried to force the nuns to give him alcohol. The nuns had established close connections to Swedish

⁴⁷⁵ Alain Cabantous, *Blasphemy: Impious Speech in the West from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century*, New York 1998; Francisca Loetz, *Mit Gott handeln – Von den Zürcher Gotteslästerern der Frühen Neuzeit zu einer Kulturgeschichte des Religiösen*, Göttingen 2002; Gerd Schwerhoff, *Zungen wie Schwerter – Blasphemie in alteuropäischen Gesellschaften 1200-1650*, Konstanz 2005; David Nash, *Blasphemy in the Christian World – A History*, Oxford 2007.

⁴⁷⁶ Gerd Schwerhoff, "Starke Worte. Blasphemie als theatralische Inszenierung von Männlichkeit an der Wende vom Mittelalter zur Frühen Neuzeit", in: Martin Dinges (ed.), *Hausväter, Priester, Kastraten – Zur Konstruktion von Männlichkeit in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Göttingen 1998, 237-263, 248; idem, *Zungen wie Schwerter*, 279ff.

⁴⁷⁷ Schwerhoff, *Zungen wie Schwerter*, 221, 259; Loetz, *Mit Gott handeln*, 272ff, 284.

⁴⁷⁸ Cabantous, *Blasphemy*, 107; 114f.

⁴⁷⁹ Georg Herdenius, letter to superintendent Konrad Dieterich (1622), in: F. Herrmann (ed.), *Aus tiefer Not. Hessische Briefe und Berichte aus der Zeit des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, Friedberg 1916, 52.

commanders so they asked the soldier who his colonel was, presumably to denounce him later on. “The devil” was his reply.⁴⁸⁰ In both instances, blasphemous, or at any rate threatening speech was employed by soldiers to intimidate interlocutors, both times with the intended results: pastor Herdenius kept his trousers and the invader got his alcohol.

Unfavourable providence and bad luck also frequently provoked blasphemous utterances that accused Him of unfairness and favouritism.⁴⁸¹ This type of blasphemy was often heard around the gambling table and that this ‘godless’ behaviour could provoke God’s rage was also acknowledged in the military. Peter Hagendorf recalled a situation in the army camp near Löffingen when lightning killed three soldiers while they gambled and blasphemed.⁴⁸² Hagendorf did not explicitly make the connection between the soldiers’ blasphemy and the divine retribution per lightning but the implicit linkage is telling in its own right. Such stories were staples of early modern paranesis and no explanation was necessary, as everybody knew who had killed the sinners and why.⁴⁸³

Other motivations for blasphemous curses were provocation and amusement.⁴⁸⁴ Francisca Loetz has studied several cases in which blasphemous speech among men appeared to be a linguistic code of male bonding: the blasphemers wanted to impress their peers with their outrageously disrespectful quips about the sacred.⁴⁸⁵ An instance for this type of blasphemy is found in a literary source. In Grimmelshausen’s *Simplicissimus*, the hero witnesses the meeting between two soldiers after a long separation. One of them expresses his joy by saying: “The hail may strike you dead! [...] God’s fuckrament (*Potz Fickermant*), how does the devil bring us together here”.⁴⁸⁶ While Grimmelshausen illustrated the alleged indecent speech habits of the soldiery in this instance, the scene also exhibits the bonding element of blasphemous utterances. It was strong language with which the soldiers expressed their joy of being reunited and

⁴⁸⁰ Hümmer, *Bamberg im Schwedenkriege*, 213f. There was a colonel by the name of Teuffel in Swedish services, but he had died three years previously at Breitenfeld. Other officers with that name fought in the imperial army, see the relevant entries here: <http://www.30jaehrigerkrieg.de/tag/t/page/4/> (last accessed 11th August 2011).

⁴⁸¹ Loetz, *Mit Gott handeln*, 452.

⁴⁸² Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 148.

⁴⁸³ See for example Schwerhoff, *Zungen wie Schwerter*, 59ff; Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, Oxford 1999, 78ff.

⁴⁸⁴ Loetz, *Mit Gott Handeln*, 340ff.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid. 332, 340f, 347ff.

⁴⁸⁶ Hans Jacob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, *Simplicissimus Teutsch*, ed. Dieter Breuer, Frankfurt a.M. 2005, 96.

the hilariously over the top expletive “God’s fuckrament” seems to be emphatic rather than blasphemous. Emphatic strong language invoking the devil rather than God is recorded also in soldiers’ diaries. In Sweden, Erich Lassota and his travelling companions met an expatriate soldier from Lübeck, who told them to get onboard his boat “in the devil’s name” when he realized that he was talking to Germans.⁴⁸⁷

Augustin von Fritsch in one instance charged after an enemy not realizing that his horse had been badly wounded when a comrade warned, “lieutenant, by a hundred devils, back, your horse is shot”.⁴⁸⁸

These examples of blasphemous and irreverent speech point towards more complex attitudes to the sacred than the unambiguous positions evident in contemporary moralist literature suggest. The regulations against blasphemy in the articles of war are of importance in this context. As we have seen in Chapter 2, 16th century articles of war generally simply stated that blasphemy was to be avoided or criminalized it outright. While the uniformity and brevity of the respective articles allows for little detailed insights into military authorities’ attitudes towards blasphemy, the notion that blasphemous curses could be excusable as slips of the tongue can be detected in some instances. A field ordinance from the early 16th century (c.1510-20), for example, characterized blasphemy as impious, and therefore undesirable but did not condemn it outright. It stated that the soldiers were to refrain from blasphemy “as much as possible”, therefore leaving room for occasional gaffes.⁴⁸⁹ In the 17th century, the more elaborate regulations that the crowns of Denmark and Sweden issued for their troops in Germany also left interpretative leeway and distinguished between grades of severity according to the object of blasphemous attacks and intent. The Danish articles of war stated that soldiers were to “refrain entirely from the abuse of God’s holy name and His word and [from] un-Christian and inappropriate swearing”.⁴⁹⁰ Common offenders should receive warnings but if they continued to blaspheme their pay should be cut and they could face gaol. Should this not implement linguistic constraint, the culprit was to be stripped down to his shirt and discharged.⁴⁹¹ A more serious form of blasphemy was defined as “intentional disdain and derision of God, His Word and servants”.⁴⁹² This deliberate blasphemy entailed public humiliation (*Ehrenstrafe*) and/or corporal

⁴⁸⁷ Schottin, *Lassotta*, 134.

⁴⁸⁸ Westenrieder, *Fritsch*, 123.

⁴⁸⁹ Beck, *Artikelsbriefe*, 113ff.

⁴⁹⁰ Denmark, *Articulsbrieff Aii*^V.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

punishment. Similarly, the Swedish articles of war acknowledged different degrees of blasphemy and intent. Article II stated that soldiers, drunk or sober, who showed contempt for the Bible or spoke of it in a calumnious or derisive manner should be sentenced to death if two witnesses could confirm the allegation.⁴⁹³ While this was seemingly unambiguous, the following articles differentiated between circumstances and clarified procedures. Should the defendant be found guilty of severe blasphemy, the *consistorium ecclesiasticum* was given power to pass a death sentence.⁴⁹⁴ If the blasphemous utterance had been the result of linguistic carelessness or levity, the first two offences entailed a fortnight in gaol and a fine for the benefit of infirm soldiers; on the third offence the soldier faced the firing squad. The fifth article acknowledged that verbal transgressions could be prompted by “rash haste” or *Amptszorn*, which literally translates as the ‘ire of (the) office’.⁴⁹⁵ If these mitigating factors applied, the culprit was to put money into a poor relief fund or could be publicly impounded. The final variant of blasphemous talk was defined as an intentional but frivolous abuse of God’s name, which again incurred a fine but was sharpened by public penitence before the whole regiment during service. Despite the length at which they were discussed in the articles of war, the distinctions between the various kinds of blasphemy remain somewhat opaque. Two main factors seem to have influenced the judgment: the severity of the blasphemous oath and whether the utterance could be considered a slip of the tongue or indicated genuine disdain for the sacred.

I have not been able to find a case from the period in which a soldier was punished for blasphemy in the military context and it seems that the prohibitions in the articles of war were more a formality. The apparent absence of the prosecution of blasphemy in the military becomes more readily explicable if we compare it to trial statistics from the civilian realm: convictions purely on the grounds of blasphemy were generally rare.⁴⁹⁶ Between 1562 and 1692, six blasphemers in Frankfurt underwent corporal punishment or were executed, about one in every twenty-two years. In Nuremberg (1503-1743) it was one conviction in every twenty-five years, in Danzig (1558-1731) one in every thirty-five years. In Zurich, exceptional in its strictness, corporal punishment and death sentences for blasphemy occurred about once every one

⁴⁹³ Sweden, *Schwedisches Kriegs=Recht*, 5.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid. 5.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ The following statistics are taken from Richard van Dülmen, ‘Wider die Ehre Gottes. Unglaube und Gotteslästerung in der frühen Neuzeit’, *Historische Anthropologie*, 2 (1994) 1, 20-38, 25.

and a half years between 1562 and 1639. Whether a blasphemer ended up in court depended on denunciations and the laity seem to have been more thick-skinned when it came to these verbal outbreaks than the tracts of their moralizing contemporaries would lead us to believe.⁴⁹⁷ Moralists and theologians warned incessantly that tolerating blasphemy would incur God's wrath over the entire community but they were simultaneously aware that most people did not consider blasphemy to be particularly disturbing. Andreas Musculus was representative of his colleagues when he complained that no one reprimanded nor shied the company of blasphemers and that secular authorities were too lax in enforcing the law in this respect.⁴⁹⁸

Maureen Flynn has found in her study of blasphemy in Spain that moralists thought speech to give "access to the moral centre of the human being" so that for "heuristic purposes [...] speech was carefully heeded by moral authorities in order to fathom the depths of the human psyche".⁴⁹⁹ The offenders, however, did not think that their brains and mouths were that intimately connected and drunkenness, anger, levity or habit were accepted as valid excuses for blasphemy in court.⁵⁰⁰ A rather unagitated attitude towards the curses as such therefore seems to have been prevalent among ordinary people. It was maybe annoying and often anti-social, but few seem to have taken the threat of God's wrath seriously or seem to have considered the sacred dimension of the blasphemous utterance important.⁵⁰¹ Ultimately, it apparently was a small step from abhorrence to excusing blasphemy as a glitch or even an "endearing foible".⁵⁰²

Moralists not only lamented the laxness with which blasphemy was prosecuted, but they also perceived it to be endemic throughout society and the list of people that were considered likely to blaspheme could be astonishingly inclusive.⁵⁰³ The moralist author Caspar Brunmüller, for example, declared the "horrifying vice" to be common among "rich and poor, young and old, great and small, clerical and secular, woman and man", in short, everyone.⁵⁰⁴ The same estimation can be found in military literature.

⁴⁹⁷ Schwerhoff, *Zungen wie Schwerter*, 138f; Loetz, *Mit Gott handeln*, 327ff.

⁴⁹⁸ Andreas Musculus, *Vom Gotslestern*, Frankfurt a.d.O. 1556, in: Stambaugh, *Teufelbücher*, 33-79, 61, 69, 76.

⁴⁹⁹ Maureen Flynn, 'Blasphemy and the Play of Anger in sixteenth century Spain', *Past and Present* 149 (1995), 29-56, 34f.

⁵⁰⁰ Loetz, *Mit Gott Handeln*, 329.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid. 298; 327.

⁵⁰² Schwerhoff, *Zungen wie Schwerter*, 53.

⁵⁰³ Cabantous, *Blasphemy*, 82.

⁵⁰⁴ Caspar Brunmüller, *Von dem Erschrockenlichen [...] laster dem Gotslestern*, s.l. 1560, v-vi.

Count von Solms was especially worried about the blasphemous speech habits of the soldiery but he too considered this to be a problem of society in general.⁵⁰⁵ Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof stressed that blasphemy was not just a problem of the common soldiers but even more prevalent among their superiors and that although articles of war uniformly banned it, no rule was held in “less esteem and remains inviolate”.⁵⁰⁶ Although examples of soldiers’ blasphemous curses were rarely recorded verbatim, the moralist authors may well have been right to suspect soldiers of shameless linguistic habits. A seasoned warrior like Götz von Berlichingen, for example, had no problem recording one of his own blasphemous utterances in an only slightly bowdlerized way: “May God’s this and that defile you in one heap”.⁵⁰⁷ A former soldier who had to defend himself for blasphemy in the Zurich court did so without any trace of guilt. He claimed that such language was entirely normal in the army and that the Zurich authorities violated his rights by prosecuting him.⁵⁰⁸ The soldier’s statement contains an important piece of evidence other than his apparent guilt-free conscience: blasphemy was common and accepted in the military and his outrage at being prosecuted for cursing by the civilian authorities’ suggests that he had not experienced similar strictness in the military.

Thus, while blasphemy was a punishable offence in military and civil law, the willingness to excuse blasphemous speech seems to have been widespread.⁵⁰⁹ But how can the seeming absence of convictions for blasphemy in the military be accounted for? As the analysis of the blasphemy clauses in the articles of war has shown, the prohibition was ubiquitous but at least in the 17th century, different registers of blasphemy were acknowledged. Throughout the period the responsibility for the prosecution lay with the colonels and their legal staff. We therefore have to assume a *laissez faire* attitude on their behalf, similar to the leniency of their civilian counterparts. A singular piece of evidence that individual colonels may have tried to improve their troops’ speech habits stems from Kirchhof’s collection of humorous anecdotes and therefore has to be taken *cum grano salis*. He claimed to have witnessed how Colonel Ludwig von Deben, who had a reputation for piety, exhorted his men to refrain from blasphemy when a soldier accidentally discharged his hackbut right behind him.

⁵⁰⁵ Solms, *Kriegsbuch*, 15^Vff, 18^R.

⁵⁰⁶ Kirchhof, *Militaris Disciplina*, 67f.

⁵⁰⁷ Berlichingen, *Vhedt vnd Handlungen*, 126.

⁵⁰⁸ Loetz, *Mit Gott Handeln*, 317.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid. 298,

Infuriated, von Deben turned around and snapped, “may God’s thousand sacraments defile you, scoundrel”.⁵¹⁰ According to Kirchhof, the colonel’s manifest inability to live up to his own ideals caused the soldiers to continue in their blasphemy.

Blasphemy is likely to have been common among soldiers – as, indeed, it seems to have been throughout society – despite the fact that we find few verbatim quotations. Depending on the setting, the ostentatious disrespect had a wide range of communicative functions that ranged from intimidation to amusement. It cannot be answered whether soldiers were more prone to blaspheme than their contemporaries, but the findings from the civilian realm indicate that as a linguistic strategy blasphemy could have been of use in the rough and ready life of a soldier. That this perceivable penchant for irreverent speech is indicative of religious deviance seems unlikely, however. It was maybe impious but due to its frequency should be regarded as a common way of expression in certain situational contexts, not as a sign of religious abnormality.

Marriage and sexual (mis)conduct

Part of a Christian life was an orderly sexual conduct and in this soldiers were thought to be chronically wanting. Of primary interest in the context of this chapter are three issues: firstly, soldiers’ attitudes towards sex and marriage. Secondly, given soldiers’ reputation for unreliability, what led women to enter relationships with soldiers at all? And thirdly, what role religious considerations had in the conduct of sexual affairs?

The role of women in early modern armies has received a good deal of scholarly attention so that the topic can be treated in brevity here.⁵¹¹ Women played a pivotal role in the functioning of the army: they cooked, washed and mended, cared for the sick and wounded, they trenched, plundered and sometimes fought, they were lovers, mothers

⁵¹⁰ Kirchhof, *Wendunmuth*, I, 53, 63f.

⁵¹¹ Most recently and at length: John A. Lynn II, *Women, Armies and Warfare in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 2008. See also Karen Hagemann and Ralf Pröve’s edited collection of essays which provides a varied overview of many aspects of military gender relations (*Landsknechte, Soldatenfrauen und Nationalkrieger. Militär, Krieg und Geschlechterordnung im historischen Wandel*, Frankfurt / New York 1998). See also Franz Irsigler and Arnold Lassotta, *Bettler und Gaukler, Dirnen und Henker. Außenseiter in einer mittelalterlichen Stadt*, Munich 1989, 210ff; Ulinka Rublack, ‘Wench and Maiden: Women, War and the Pictorial Function of the Feminine in German Cities in the Early Modern Period’, *History Workshop Journal*, 44 (1997), 1-21, esp. 11ff.; Beate Engelen, ‘Warum heiratete man einen Soldaten? Soldatenfrauen in der ländlichen Gesellschaft Brandenburg-Preußens im 18. Jahrhundert’, in: Kroll and Krüger (eds.), *Militär und ländliche Gesellschaft*, 251-273; Karin Jansson, ‘Soldaten und Vergewaltigung im Schweden des 17. Jahrhunderts’, in: Krusenstjern and Medick (eds.), *Zwischen Alltag und Katastrophe*, 195-225.

and prostitutes.⁵¹² We have to distinguish primarily between three statuses of women in military society: ‘wife’, ‘whore’ and ‘prostitute’. While the first and the third category are rather straightforward, ‘whores’ were often difficult to define. John A. Lynn has recently described them as “exclusive to one partner without the sanction of a formal marriage”.⁵¹³ This is a good working definition but the military legal literature suggests that the issue was more complex. We have seen in the previous chapter that the articles of war uniformly banned ‘whores’ from the camp and the train. Military legal manuals, however, made provisions for ‘informal’ marriages.⁵¹⁴ As late as 1630 a legal tract detailing the *Privileges and Liberties of the Soldatesca* stated explicitly that soldiers were free to “marry and court without religious rites (*Solennitet*) and customs”.⁵¹⁵ Marital law also granted the ‘whores’ rather liberal rights to inherit their partners’ possessions. As long as the soldier did not have a lawful wife elsewhere, a pregnant ‘whore’ was entitled to his inheritance.⁵¹⁶ The legal status of soldiers’ ‘whores’ was therefore ambiguous: while these women were not supposed to exist in the first place, informal marriages were considered legitimate by some legal theorists. What is more, marriage was treated exclusively in secular terms, not religious ones.

Such leniency seems rather out of the ordinary in the historical context. Since the 15th century, questions of sexuality and, concomitantly, marriage customs, had commanded the attention of moralists and authorities alike, a trend that gained momentum in the wake of the Reformation.⁵¹⁷ Late medieval marriage had largely been a secular affair and marriage only became a sacrament in 1439 and a priest’s involvement in the rites became officially mandatory for Catholic couples only as late as 1563.⁵¹⁸ Parental involvement and sanction became a precondition for both Protestant and Catholic marriages, but clandestine marriages, which were not solemnized before witnesses and often performed without the consent of the spouses’ parents, were a

⁵¹² See Bernhard R. Kroener, “... und ist der jammer nit zu beschreiben” Geschlechterbeziehungen und Überlebensstrategien in der Lagergesellschaft des Dreißigjährigen Krieges’, in: Hagemann and Pröve, *Landsknechte, Soldatenfrauen*, 279-296, 286f; Lynn, *Women, Armies and Warfare*, 118ff.

⁵¹³ Lynn, *Women, Armies and Warfare*, 67.

⁵¹⁴ Kirchhof described regular marriages held at churches or by the field preacher when a soldier wanted to wed a dead comrade’s widow or “another wench” (*Dierne*). Kirchhof, *Militaris Disciplina*, 133.

⁵¹⁵ Andreas Rennemann, *Privilegia Vnd Freyheiten der Soldatescha*, s.l. 1630, 17.

⁵¹⁶ Junghans von der Olnitz, *KriegsOrdnung*, I^V; Anon, *Regiments Capitulation Und Bestallungs Brieff Der Cavalleria [...] Benebens Der Infanterien*, Erfurt 1632, K^R.

⁵¹⁷ On the ‘reformation’ of the household see Roper, *Holy Household*. With view of marital discipline esp. chapter 4. See also: Robisheaux, *Rural Society*, 95ff; Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. Cambridge 2005, 37ff; Greyerz, *Religion und Kultur*, 182ff.

⁵¹⁸ Muir, *Ritual*, 37.

persistent custom.⁵¹⁹ For many young people, marriage promises were sufficient to have sex. This practice could of course lead to severe difficulties for the women if pregnancy ensued and the father denied his promise.⁵²⁰ This attitude towards premarital sex was widespread and one of the elements of popular ‘sinfulness’ disciplinarians were especially eager to eradicate, albeit with modest success. For the city of Augsburg, Lyndal Roper has shown that the pre-Reformation ecclesiastical and the reformed civic marriage court were busily occupied with disputed marriage promises, which gives an indication of the unreliability of such arrangements on the one hand, and of the importance the affected parties placed in rectifying the situation on the other.⁵²¹ Women who got involved with local men had the relative advantage that the unwilling ‘husbands’ could be apprehended and taken to courts. Those women who entered relationships with journeymen or soldiers found themselves in an even more precarious situation due to the professional mobility of their sex-partners.

An exceptional archival find that Fritz Wolf presented in 1997 provides unique insights into relationships between soldiers and local women. It comprises 54 letters written to soldiers in Tilly’s army in the summer of 1625 by inhabitants of the towns of Allendorf, Schmalkalden, Eschwege and Witzenhausen, in the border region of Thuringia and Hesse.⁵²² Some of the letters were written by soldiers to the locals. Several letters give insights into the predicament of women who had trusted soldiers’ marriage promises. Anna Immick of Allendorf wrote to Batzer Wahs as she was getting anxious when she had not received word from him and was worried to be exposed to the ridicule of her friends should the soldier let her down.⁵²³ More critically, Anna had children – whether they were Batzer’s is unclear – and the local *Schultheiss* had threatened her with expulsion. Her future and that of her children depended on Batzer keeping his word. A woman called Catharina had a bastard child with a soldier named Henß All and the young mother was in dire straits.⁵²⁴ She had found shelter with her godmother (*gevatter*) in Schmalkalden but this was only a temporary solution. She tried to return to her mother in nearby Wasungen but the authorities there had demanded twenty reichstaler to allow her into the village; a utopian sum when she was struggling

⁵¹⁹ Roper, *Holy Household*, 159ff; Greyerz, *Kultur und Religion*, 184.

⁵²⁰ Ulinka Rublack, *Magd, Metz’ oder Mörderin. Frauen vor frühneuzeitlichen Gerichten*, Frankfurt a.M. 1998, 200.

⁵²¹ Roper, *Holy Household*, 157ff.

⁵²² Huntbrinker (*Fromme Knechte*, 268ff.) seems to be the only historian since Wolf who has used the letters.

⁵²³ StA Marburg Best. M 1 Nr. 275, fol.9^R.

⁵²⁴ Ibid. fol.62^R.

to feed herself and the baby. She was also suffering the rejection of the community: she was “despised and considered worthless by everyone”.⁵²⁵ All she had to rely on was the hope that the soldier would honour his promise: “I am of comforting hope and confidence [...] that you will honour your pledge and lead me to the church on the soonest [possible] day and not leave me completely stuck in squalor”. She urged him to send cash as soon as possible.⁵²⁶

Anna and Catharina’s situation was especially grim because they were single mothers. In this respect, Lene Möllerin from Schmalkalden was comparatively lucky as she does not mention a pregnancy or a baby when she wrote to her “dearest lover” (*liebsten Bulen*) Ebertt.⁵²⁷ Lene reminded Ebertt of their vows, confirmed that she still stood by her word and expected an equally clear answer from him. In contrast to the other women, Lene does not seem to have been overly distressed. She did not beg Ebertt to keep his word and ignored his request for a love token, flatly stating that the occasion did not permit it. All she wanted was clarity. Maria Braunß, on the other hand, was bitterly disappointed by Hanß Thomas von Kalbach’s behaviour: he, too, had promised marriage but did not even say goodbye or leave a love token.⁵²⁸ Another woman was left heartbroken after “Monsieur Rischardt” had stopped to write, which she took to mean that he had “locked her out of his heart”.⁵²⁹ There is no indication that these women suffered social ostracization for their relationships with the soldiers but the letters are reminders that relationships were not just economic and social arrangements but also had an emotional dimension.

A girl called Liese, however, was harassed for her relationship with the imperial horseman Hans Merdt, who apparently had been billeted in her father’s house in Schmalkalden.⁵³⁰ After the imperial troops had left about two months previously, the enemy, the Danish crown and Ernst von Mansfeld’s army, had begun recruiting infantry in the region. A letter from Merdt to Liese had fallen into the hands of several young men drinking in a tavern, many of whom had just enlisted for the enemy. The new recruits practiced being foot soldiers by shooting off their mouths, one wished that “the devil would throw away all horsemen”, another hoped that no imperial horseman would

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ Ibid. fol. 53^R.

⁵²⁸ Ibid. fol. 68^R.

⁵²⁹ Ibid. fol. 51^R.

⁵³⁰ Ibid. fol. 66^Rff.

ever lay eyes on the town of Schmalkalden again.⁵³¹ One even came to Liese's door and tried to intimidate her. Local women also picked on her: one Anna Borggräffin said that she would rather see a "sheep dog" than a horseman.⁵³² Someone else mocked that Merdt should have prayed a rosary rather than write letters, seemingly a pointed comment about him serving in a Catholic army. The situation in Schmalkalden had therefore changed comprehensively within a few months: had the Schmalkaldeners lived with the imperial troops in apparent harmony for about two years, the departure of Tilly's troops and the arrival of the Danish and Mansfeldian recruiters created a different climate. The local men who joined the ranks began to hassle those who were associated with their new 'enemies' and women like Liese bore the brunt of their drunken belligerence.

Contrary to the common trope, it was not just 'silly' or 'wanton' girls who were duped by soldiers' promises. Entire families were deceived. One unnamed man sent an enraged letter to Johannes Klein, a soldier who had in all likelihood promised marriage to the sender's sister and was the father of her child.⁵³³ The family and indeed the whole community knew of the relationship, as the lovers had "run all over town and courted in the park". The engagement must have been rather official because the soldier is addressed as *Gevatter*, a term used to indicate a close relationship between non-blood relatives, for example godparents. Certain details are missing from the letter but it seems that Klein had taken the woman with him and she had given birth outside of the city boundaries and now was refused re-entry by the authorities. This is suggested by the brother's indignant remark that he and his family could have cared for mother and child had she stayed at home, implying that this was not an option now. Klein's behaviour was reprehensible in any case but what seems to have infuriated the brother especially was that the soldier had fooled everyone with his pretences. Had Klein only wanted sex, the brother wrote, he could have sought out the local prostitutes. Instead, he had abused friendship and trust and turned his sister into a "bawd" (*dirn*). In this case, no one accused the young mother for misconduct or wantonness. Johannes Klein had betrayed them all and the brother swore that he would shout his accusations on Judgement Day.

⁵³¹ Ibid. fol.67^R.

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ Ibid. fol. 50^R.

These hard luck stories raise the question why women entered into relationships with soldiers when they were apparently rather unreliable partners. Ulinka Rublack has emphasized “the violence that soldiers, more than other men, employed in their wooing of women”.⁵³⁴ Her sources, trial records, certainly contribute to the impression that sexual violence was predominant but violence cannot account for voluntary liaisons between soldiers and local women. None of the letters studied here indicates that the women were under pressure, let alone forced into having intimate relations. While the emphasis on male violence underplays women’s agency in the matter, it also ignores potential appeals a relationship with a soldier could have. For some women, marrying a soldier promised a way out of unhappy family or employment situations. In one of the letters, a woman asked her husband to send her a passport so she could join him on campaign because she could no longer bear the “heartache” that her parents were causing her.⁵³⁵ Gercke Hoffmeyer’s daughter Maria seems to have eloped with a lieutenant after she had caused strife in the family.⁵³⁶ The letter is unclear in many respects but it seems that Maria had scammed money from her brothers Thomas and Otto. Her father informed her that she had “fallen from grace” with her brothers and that God’s grace was her last resort now. In this situation, entering a relationship with a soldier seems to have allowed the young woman to escape the mess she had created. A case recorded in Wesel suggests that soldiers could represent a way out of an unhappy marriage. Evert von Hesen’s wife eloped with a soldier and stole money from her husband before she left.⁵³⁷ While we do not learn details about the circumstances it is fair to assume that the marriage was not happy and that the new lover’s professional mobility provided an opportunity to escape.

Finally, the letters also suggest a less calculating reason why women got involved with soldiers, namely love. Many letters do not speak of hardships other than the pains of separation from the beloved.⁵³⁸ One woman wrote: “*Ach*, my dearest darling and sustainment (*auffenthaltung*) of my young life, I know not when I will see you again, but I ask you, my dearest darling, that you will keep my heart secluded in yours, as only to you I have utterly and completely surrendered myself”.⁵³⁹ Love is also evidenced in the letters written by soldiers. From the army camp near Bielefeld, Hanns

⁵³⁴ Rublack, *Wench and Maiden*, 12.

⁵³⁵ StA Marburg Best. M 1 Nr. 275, fol.25^R.

⁵³⁶ Ibid. fol.7^R.

⁵³⁷ Weseken, *Chronik*, 345.

⁵³⁸ StA Marburg Best. M 1 Nr. 275, fols. 52^R, 54^R, 65^R

⁵³⁹ Ibid. fol.45^{Rf}.

Mohs wrote a love letter to his wife Catharina Hardtmann who had stayed behind with her family. He implored his “dearest” wife to write as soon as possible because he was pitifully lovesick. “My dearest darling, I had not thought that the love was so great”, he wrote, “I will nevermore be happy until I can come to you”.⁵⁴⁰ He also asked her to greet her family and everyone he knew in Allendorf and sent her his love “9000000000000000 hundred thousand times”. Catharina’s equally passionate reply has also been preserved and she expressed her love and the anguish of separation in a poem:

“*Ach* God, what must those who love suffer [...] and must not tell anyone what suffering they carry in their heart [...] You I have chosen for myself no one I like better in my heart You are my most beautiful love, that is why I write you this letter. *Ach* Gott, shall my heart not break, loving you and not being allowed to speak of it...”⁵⁴¹

Hanns and Catharina were clearly in love and the letters show that the soldier had been welcomed into the family and integrated into the community.

While the letters provide valuable snapshots, diaries allow us to follow soldiers’ relationships over time. Peter Hagendorf was married twice, first to Anna Stadlerin and after her death in 1633 to Anna Maria Buchlerin.⁵⁴² While Hagendorf’s affection to his wives is indisputable, he also casually recorded two incidents in his time as a widower when he took girls as “loot”.⁵⁴³ It is anybody’s guess what he did or did not do to the girls but he stated in the second instance that he was “sorry to let her go because [he] did not have a wife at that time”. There is no indication that Hagendorf, who comes across as a caring and loving husband and father when he had families, thought the kidnapping of the women to be morally questionable. But the fact that he let the girls leave soon afterwards suggests that they represented only a momentary solution and two months after the second abduction he married Anna Maria in Pforzheim. With his keen sense for finance, Sydnam Poyntz seems to have valued his wives – their names he did not mention – in terms of wealth and thrift. His first wife, “a rich Merchants [sic] Daughter” who died during childbirth two years after marriage, met his approval not least because she left him a rich inheritance and “was of an humble condition and very housewifely”.⁵⁴⁴ His second wife was of a “higher birth”, which he did not mind, but

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid. fol.12^R.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid. fol.13^Rf. Catharina’s poem was not an original, however, as another letter (fol.16) contained the same poem. I have not been able to find out where the piece was borrowed from.

⁵⁴² Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 142f, 148.

⁵⁴³ Ibid. 145, 147.

⁵⁴⁴ Poyntz, *Relation*, 125.

her concomitant higher “spirit” and lifestyle he found less agreeable. She “spent at home” what he “got abroad”.⁵⁴⁵ Poyntz, who profiteered from his own plundering, experienced the “true tryall of fortunes mutabilitie” when his second wife and child were killed and his possessions pillaged by soldiers in his absence.⁵⁴⁶ Other soldiers only married after they had left the army. Aged 43, Jürgen Ackermann, for example, married Elisabeth Lambrecht, who was 22 years his junior and bore him eleven children.⁵⁴⁷

The analysis of the letters and the diaries presents a varied picture of gender relations in the military. Many letters document the profound problems that arose for women who got involved with soldiers. The unfortunates who became pregnant faced dire repercussions from the community when the fathers left and did not honour their marriage promises. Contrary to Ulinka Rublack’s case study of Konstanz, where she found evidence that merely keeping company with soldiers could call a woman’s reputation into doubt, this attitude is not noticeable in the letters.⁵⁴⁸ There is the isolated case of Liese, who became the target of ridicule and harassment for her relationship with a soldier, but in numerous instances the women’s friends and family members sent their regards and good wishes to the soldiers. This indicates that the men were well-integrated and -liked in the community. Cases in which women were duped by false promises and those that seem to suggest sincerity on behalf of the soldiers are roughly balanced in this sample. This indicates that entering a relationship with a soldier was not just motivated by desperation and that Ulinka Rublack’s estimation that soldiers “sought women for pleasure, not permanent ties” has to be qualified in its generalization.⁵⁴⁹ Some soldiers did trick – N.B: not *pressure* – women into sexual relationships but others proved to be sincere, committed and in love. That those who abused the trust of their ‘whores’ did so because they were soldiers therefore seems unlikely. Their professional mobility offered the individuals so inclined the chance to escape the consequences of their recklessness but that other soldiers formed committed relationships shows that libertinage was not contingent on profession but character.

Religious considerations or lines of argument are saliently absent from the letters. It seems, therefore, that the relationships were not conducted in the light of piety

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid. 125f.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid. 127f.

⁵⁴⁷ Volkholz, *Ackermann*, 54f.

⁵⁴⁸ Rublack, *Wench and Maiden*, 13f.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid. 11.

or sin or at least they were not negotiated in this way. The deserted women did not describe their plight in terms of spiritual anguish but mostly had very material and immediate social repercussions to deal with. God's help was at times implored but none of the women expressed her fear of having offended Him by her irregular sexual conduct. Nor did they accuse the soldiers of having violated *religious* norms but principles of common decency. The church was mentioned once but only as the place where a marriage would be officiated.⁵⁵⁰ Therefore, while marriage discipline was officially phrased and preached in religious terms and while the imperative of an orderly sex life may have been rooted in Christian values, the pressure to conform was experienced and expressed in social terms. The evidence also points towards the limited effect of 'social discipline' in the military. Nothing suggests that officers or military authorities had any role in the way the soldiers conducted their sexual life. One could have imagined requests from abandoned women asking officers for assistance in bringing the erstwhile lovers to heel but there are no such letters. It seems therefore that the women had no hopes that military authorities would care about their plight or the sexual conduct of their soldiers. All the women could do was write letters and hope.

Conclusion

The chapter set out to examine the role of religion, confession and morality in military everyday life. Confessional militancy was easy to demand and propagate for those who did not risk their lives; those who did were mainly interested in survival. The discrepancy between the demands of religious hardliners, the rhetoric of confessional propaganda and also the civilian experience of war on the one hand and the confessional indifference that characterized the mercenary armies on the other, is consequently a problem of perspective. The fact that confession played such a marginal role in soldiers' experience and conduct of war does not indicate spiritual deficiency. It only shows that confessional ideology was mostly meaningless in their professional lives, which is a fine but crucial point. Rejecting confessional thinking as a measure of religious sincerity has yielded new insights into military religiosity. The examination of military autobiographical accounts has shown that soldiers' religious modes of thinking can, in fact, be considered entirely normal for the early modern context. They perceived of the sacred in unequivocally Christian, albeit un-confessional terms. As we have seen,

⁵⁵⁰ StA Marburg Best. M 1 Nr. 275, fol. 62^R.

evidence for confessional identity or thinking is rare and mostly incidental. Distinctly military notions of enmity, it has been suggested, may help account for the subordinate role confession played in the military realm. Soldiers' attitudes towards the enemy were also free from confessional fault lines. It has been shown that the imperative to conduct war fairly in accordance with military custom compelled all Christian soldiers. Enemies generally encountered one another in this universally accepted moral framework as professional Christian soldiers, not as champions of a confessional cause.

Evidence from the field of psychology has been applied to early modern warfare, which has highlighted the fact that a dehumanization of the enemy was impeded during this period by the specific conditions of combat and the fluctuating composition of the armies in general. The intimacy of killing and the instability of the categories 'friend' and 'enemy', it has been argued, contributed to the tendency among early modern soldiers to limit bloodshed when possible. The examination of notions of enmity finally has been taken to explain why confession was widely undetectable in military diaries. It appears that confession and ideology had no impact on the experiences that were recorded and therefore these elements are not reflected. It bears repeating that this does not preclude the possibility that the authors held confessionally distinct beliefs; all we can say is that they did not write about them.

The dynamics of confessional coexistence widely elude us, mainly due the fact that sources in general are more likely to evidence conflict than unison. We therefore mainly have to argue from silence but the few instances in which the peaceful negotiation of confessional differences becomes evident imply that such fissures could be overcome with relative ease. Apart from the common interest in survival that united soldiers both in the same army and across enemy lines, humour, emphasizing common Christian values, or un-confrontational affirmations of personal beliefs made co-existence possible. Importantly, however, the absence of a biased legal framework and divisive confessional policies created a social context in which confessional coexistence could be negotiated in freedom.

Blasphemy, it has been argued, may well have been frequent among soldiers – as, indeed, it was throughout society in general – despite the fact that we only have sporadic evidence for it. Blasphemy served a variety of purposes ranging from intimidation to amusement but it was not generally indicative of religious deviance. With view of the military, the evidence from the articles of war indicates that blasphemy was a complex issue as martial law recognized different degrees of severity

and intent. It seems, however, that, similar to the situation in the civilian realm, it was generally ignored in the military context.

The section on sexual conduct has provided evidence that calls into question the view that soldiers in general were brutal sexual predators. Although they are only snapshots of relationships, the letters examined allow a more balanced view than court records, for example, as their existence did not premise that things had gone wrong and had to be settled in court. Many of the letters betray the hardship of unwed mothers who had been preyed on. Other examples indicate, however, that committed relationships could equally develop from military-civilian encounters. What is more, soldiers here appear not just as terrifying outsiders but also as men who were welcomed into families and beds. Religion, however, seems to have played a marginal role at best in the way the soldiers and the women (who wrote the majority of these letters) conducted their relationships, or at any rate wrote about them. Notions of 'sin' are noticeably absent from the letters.

Where does this leave us on our quest for military religion? With all due caution, it seems fair to consider the notion that soldiers were 'irreligious' or were 'de-Christianized' by the military environment refuted. The military experience may have had a 'de-confessionalizing' effect but it had no negative impact on Christian values or on the way soldiers perceived their relationship with God. It seems that just like any other community, the international military community functioned according to principles that were either unaffected or could be detached from confessional issues. These findings also have an impact on our perception on the age of 'confessional war', as these wars were actually fought by Christians who predominantly ignored confession. This was a general characteristic but part of the challenge of the next chapter will be to reconcile the un-confessional attitudes described so far with the occurrence of religious violence.

Chapter 4

Military Religious Violence, Confessional Thinking and the Individual⁵⁵¹

This chapter seeks to investigate acts of military religious violence and examine in particular the religious outlook of the perpetrators conveyed in their behaviour. The occurrence of religious violence stands in marked contrast to the confessional indifference described in the previous chapters as a distinctive feature of religious attitudes in the military and it therefore has to be placed and assessed in relation to it. What sort of acts of religious violence did soldiers typically commit and under what circumstances? What were the apparent motivations behind these different types of violence and what do such acts tell us about confessional self-conceptions? Finally, what role did situational contexts and the individual play in the occurrence of religious violence? These questions will be addressed in this chapter with a view to assessing general patterns of religious violence committed by soldiers and their historical significance.

Throughout the 19th and for most of the 20th century, early modern religious violence was conceptualised in ways that attributed a subordinate role to genuinely religious factors, while highlighting political and socio-economic motivations and circumstances.⁵⁵² Discussions of religious violence, in the Abrahamic religions in particular, have gained renewed currency both among academics and the general public in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001.⁵⁵³ Some scholars have gone as far as proposing universal theories of religious violence, which aim to address the issue in abstract and general terms. Regina M. Schwartz, for example, conceptualizes religious violence in monotheistic religions as a competition for ‘scarce resources’, such as land,

⁵⁵¹ I would like to thank the participants of the 17th Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar at the GHI Washington DC who provided valuable criticism and ideas on an earlier version of this chapter.

⁵⁵² For a good historiographical overview with specific focus on the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre see: David W. Sabeau, ‘Reading Sixteenth Century Religious Violence. The Historiography of St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre’, in: Greyerz and Siebenhüner (eds.), *Religion und Gewalt*, 109-123.

⁵⁵³ See for example, Greyerz and Siebenhüner, *Religion und Gewalt*; Hector Avalos, *Fighting Words. The Origins of Religious Violence*, Amherst (NY) 2005; Friedrich Schweitzer (ed.), *Religion, Politik und Gewalt*, (Kongressband des XII Europäischen Kongresses für Theologie 18.-22- September 2005 in Berlin), Gütersloh 2006; Arnold Angerendt, *Toleranz und Gewalt. Das Christentum zwischen Bibel und Schwert*, Münster 2008; Markus Meumann and Dirk Niefanger (eds.), *Ein Schauplatz Herber Angst: Wahrnehmung und Darstellung von Gewalt im 17. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 1997; J. Canning, H. Lehmann and J. Winter (eds.), *Power, Violence and Mass-Death in Pre-Modern and Modern Times*, Aldershot 2004; Stuart Carroll, *Blood and Violence in Early Modern France*, Oxford 2006.

power, favour of the one deity, and so forth, while Hector Avalos has abstracted the theory of short supply even further in an effort to make it applicable to all religions.⁵⁵⁴ Avalos identifies four main scarce resources (the respective ‘true’ scripture, sacred space, group privileging and salvation) that – in his view – are directly created by religions and ultimately generate violence.⁵⁵⁵ According to Avalos, religious violence is reprehensible because it is triggered by competition for ‘*nonexistent*’ scarce resources, created by the religions themselves and kept scarce intentionally to exert power. Guided by this cynical view of religion, he concludes that the best way to avoid religious violence “is to eliminate religion from human life altogether”.⁵⁵⁶ Such a view of religion, however, loses sight of the believers themselves, who are moved to action precisely because they *are* convinced of the transcendental reality of their beliefs and promised rewards. The implication that religions, or rather their leaders, are charlatans strategically marketing divine rewards is not only hard to prove as a general rule, but also misses the point, because such a view of religion is incompatible with faith. The abstraction of assets and circumstances and the cynicism inherent in scarce resources theory ultimately undermines the paradigm’s relevance. If the theory is hardly convincing with regard to present day religions, it is doubtful all the more if applied historically.

This chapter takes a different approach. Rather than undertaking highly theoretical conceptualizations, it employs a close reading of individual historical scenes in which confessional violence occurred. The sources employed embrace a range of documented acts of violence, from taunts to iconoclasm and to murder of adherents of a different confession. This methodology is influenced by the path breaking work of Natalie Zemon Davis and her analysis of the ‘rites of violence’ acted out in 16th century France.⁵⁵⁷ Davis departed from the then predominant interpretation that the religious riots were little more than a pretext to other motivations and that such events were in fact reflections of ‘real’ problems such as economic or social strife. She identified situations in which the religious element was the driving force behind the violence and

⁵⁵⁴ Regina M. Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism*, Chicago 1997, passim; Avalos, *Fighting Words*, esp. part 2, 91-299.

⁵⁵⁵ Avalos, *Fighting Words*, 104ff.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid. 371.

⁵⁵⁷ Natalie Zemon Davis, ‘The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France’, *Past & Present* 59 (May 1973), 51-91; Denis Richet, ‘Aspects socio-culturels des conflits religieux: Paris dans la seconde moitié du XVI^e siècle’, *Annales ESC* 32, 1977, 764-789; Denis Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu. La violence au temps des troubles de religion (vers 1525-vers 1610)*, Paris 1990; Barbara Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris*, New York, 1991.

read religious riots as events in which people took the religious purification of their community into their own hands. Importantly, she identified confessionally distinct ‘rites of violence’, which – she argued – were influenced by respectively confessional theologies.⁵⁵⁸ As Protestantism was a movement against the ‘idolatrous’ veneration of objects in Catholicism, it was primarily these objects of veneration that Protestant rioters attacked, while Catholics were more concerned with the person of the heretic and therefore typically killed people. Following – and fundamentally affirming – Davis’s early analysis, historians working on early modern France in particular, have expanded our understanding of the dynamics of religious violence in early modern Europe. Denis Crouzet, for example, has stressed the importance of an “eschatological anxiety” (*angoisse eschatologique*) fostered by an *intelligentsia moyenne* of preachers, in creating an atmosphere in which communal violence created cohesion and provided an outlet of these apocalyptic fears.⁵⁵⁹ Barbara Diefendorf provides a compelling explanation of the underlying rationale of the Catholic majority in acting out, or at least not interfering with, the violence against the Huguenots. She stresses the importance of civic, monarchical and Catholic unity for sixteenth century Parisians: “the body social, the body politic and the body of Christ were so closely intertwined as to be inseparable”.⁵⁶⁰ Huguenots, then, were perceived as a malign growth, which had to be cut out of the body of citizens, subjects and believers. Like Crouzet, Diefendorf has stressed the importance of preachers of all ecclesiastical ranks and the pervasiveness of their violent message throughout all social strata, further undermining the older notion that the violence was no more than a pressure release mechanism for the disenfranchised.⁵⁶¹ Importantly, Diefendorf has also pointed out that only a small, extremist faction of Catholics ultimately acted out violence. The vast majority of Catholics may have done nothing to stop the violence and may have condoned it but they did not join in the slaughter.⁵⁶²

Diefendorf’s observations lead us to the topic of this chapter: what were the particular characteristics not of civilian but of military religious violence, and how can we understand religious violence on behalf of military individuals and groups in view of the non-confessional and latitudinarian attitudes identified and analysed in the previous

⁵⁵⁸ Davis, *Rites*, 75ff.

⁵⁵⁹ Crouzet, *Guerriers de Dieu*, I:201, 205, 233ff, II:295ff.

⁵⁶⁰ Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross*, 48.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid. 146.

⁵⁶² Ibid. 162, 177.

chapter? What can we say about the patterns or ‘rites’ of violence in the military, and what does this reveal about the confessional outlook of the perpetrators? Acts of religious violence seem to suggest the existence of confessional sensibilities amongst the individual historical actors. If soldiers were moved to act violently against the confessional other, this may be seen to imply that they thought about themselves and their actions in religious terms, and indeed were motivated to violent behaviour by religious fervour. However while this was sometimes the case, this chapter suggests that the situation was often more complex.

Throughout this chapter, the focus will be on the military individuals and groups who acted out violence, and what their behaviour can tell us about the confessional outlook and, importantly, the knowledge of confessional differences of the historical actors - a new approach in relation to military religious violence. Historians associate the military closely with princely enforcements of confessional policies. Kaspar von Greyerz and Kim Siebenhüner have pointed out that the “main agents of religious violence were secular and ecclesiastical authorities”.⁵⁶³ In this view, soldiers feature as executors of policies but their own attitudes towards religious violence remain opaque. But was it really the case that early modern soldiers were merely carrying out orders or did they have a personal investment in their actions? The following discussion will focus on this question and analyse the motivations behind specific occurrences of religious violence. Acts of religious violence tended to be recorded in detail, so that they can often be well reconstructed but, as we will see in more detail below, printed reportage was frequently biased and relied heavily on literary topoi, which, in turn, should be taken into account when analysing confessional patterns. The sources themselves, this chapter argues, must be studied with a heightened degree of caution, particularly when it comes to depictions of religious violence. Eyewitness accounts will be the primary materials here and although many of these were written by the victims, soldiers often appear as tangible individuals in these texts, exhibiting differing attitudes towards religious violence through their actions. Through a close reading of specific situations in which religious violence occurred, we may thus encounter soldiers not just as an amorphous force executing orders, but as individual agents who shaped events through their behaviour, which in turn was influenced by their religious beliefs. The first specific event to be studied here is the well-documented case of the Sack of Rome.

⁵⁶³ Kaspar von Greyerz and Kim Siebenhüner, introduction to *Religion und Gewalt*, 19.

The Sack of Rome is a well-documented catastrophe, which produced numerous accounts from eyewitnesses. Several detailed reports allow a good reconstruction of group and individual behaviour.⁵⁶⁴ It is therefore a good place to start the present study of religious violence by individuals and groups. On the 6th of May, 1527 Emperor Charles V's army, consisting mainly of German infantry troops as well as Spanish and Italian contingents, overpowered the papal defenders and sacked the eternal city. Only ten years before, Martin Luther had sparked a heretical movement in a German backwater that had spread like wildfire and Italian commentators were already referring to the German mercenaries simply as 'Lutherans' (*Luterani*) or 'heretics' (*Eretici*).⁵⁶⁵ In the months leading up to the sack of Rome, the Landsknechte had shown their distaste for the church and its symbols in the region of Piacenza. Somewhat intrigued by the new sect, Luigi Guicciardini, a Florentine official, reported:

[...] they did no other damage, than to destroy the images in the churches and cast the holy relics to the ground along with all the sacraments except for the Eucharist. For this alone these Lutherans showed reverence. But the other things that with good reason the modern Church reveres are despised by the Lutheran sect, and they broke them to pieces and trod them underfoot.⁵⁶⁶

The commander of the imperial troops, the Duke of Bourbon, also took the Lutheran element seriously.⁵⁶⁷ Before the assault, Bourbon allegedly gave a speech in which he appealed to the anti-clericalism and anti-Catholicism of the Landsknechte by promising them "the incredible wealth of vicious and ridiculous prelates".⁵⁶⁸ Many of the Lutheran Landsknechte did not need such encouragement: they had left home to fight for the emperor and now, after months of hunger, cold and misery, they found themselves at the very seat of the papal Antichrist as the Lutheran preachers called Rome.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁴ On the Sack of Rome see: Ferdinand Gregorovius, *Geschichte der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter vom V. bis zum XVI. Jahrhundert*, Vol. 8, Stuttgart 1872, 514-557; Hans Schulz, *Der Sacco di Roma. Karls V. Truppen in Rom 1527-8*, Halle 1894; Judith Hook, *The Sack of Rome 1527*, 2nd ed. Basingstoke 2004 [1972]; André Chastel, *Le Sac de Rome, 1527, du premier maniérisme à la contre-réforme*, Paris 1984; Volker Reinhardt, *Blutiger Karneval: Der Sacco di Roma 1527 - eine politische Katastrophe*, Darmstadt 2009. Primary sources: Luigi Guicciardini, *The Sack of Rome*, transl. James H. Mc Gregor, New York 1993; Carlo Milanese, *Il sacco di Roma del MDXXVII: narrazioni di contemporanei*, Florence 1867. Adam Reißner, *Historia der Herren Georg und Kaspar von Frundsberg*, 2nd ed. Frankfurt a.M. 1572 [1568], 115^{Vff.}; Schönhuth, *Leben und Thaten*, 7f.

⁵⁶⁵ Michael Römling, *Ein Heer ist ein großes gefräßiges Tier. Soldaten in spanischen und kaiserlichen Diensten und die Bevölkerung der vom Krieg betroffenen Gebiete in Italien zwischen 1509 und 1530*, dissertation Universität Göttingen 2001, 74, footnote.

⁵⁶⁶ Guicciardini, *Sack*, 38.

⁵⁶⁷ Reinhard Baumann, *Georg von Frundsberg, der Vater der Landsknechte*, Munich 1984, 274f; 280.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 87.

⁵⁶⁹ Gregorovius, *Geschichte*, 514, 519. On the identification of Anti-Christ with the papacy and its use in popular reformation print see Bob Scribner, *For the Sake of the Simple Folk. Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation*, Oxford 1981, 148ff.

For a mercenary captain like Sebastian Schertlin, the Sack of Rome was a golden day for purely financial reasons. His description of events, void of any recognition of the religious significance or the suffering, is noteworthy for its bluntness: “The sixth day of May we took Rome by storm, struck dead about 6000 men inside, plundered the whole city, took anything we found in all churches and on the ground and husbanded strangely”.⁵⁷⁰ He also came straight to the point when he reported the arrest of Pope Clement and twelve cardinals: “What great lamentation was among them, they cried heartily, we all got rich”.⁵⁷¹

The common soldiers began to loot. Bourbon had managed to avert a mutiny among the Spanish contingents by distributing what little money he could find but the Landsknechte had not been paid in months and were starving. Ambrosius von Gumpenberg, a German merchant living in Rome, described the haunting sight of his compatriots as they entered the city. The Landsknechte “had their weapons in their right hand, in the other a piece of bread that they had taken from bakeries or houses during their entry, which they ate running, like mad beasts dying from hunger”.⁵⁷² All soldiers, regardless of confession, began to plunder churches and the cardinals’ palaces. But in the case of the Lutheran Landsknechte, their religious convictions gave their behaviour an additional dimension that manifested itself in the abuse and humiliation of clerics, iconoclasm and the purposeful defiling of churches. Not only did they treat the many relics they came across with heightened disrespect, but they also began to actively destroy or deface the material manifestations of the old faith:

They committed shameful acts on the altars and in the most sanctified places in contempt of contemporary religion. Many sacred images and sculptures that had once been worshipped with vain ceremonies were burned and broken by iron and fire. Crucifixes were shattered by shots from arquebuses and lay on the ground; the relics and calvaries of saints lay among the dung of men and animals. [...] There was no sin or villainy that these mad and impious Lutherans did not commit.⁵⁷³

While the Spaniards shocked the Romans with their uninhibited and inventive cruelty, especially when it came to the torturing of captives to extract ransoms, the Germans’ fierce attack on the church interiors and Catholic sacramentals almost caused the troops to turn against each other. Not that the Catholic soldiers had any scruples when it came to stealing liturgical vessels, reliquaries or breaking into the sarcophagi and tombs of

⁵⁷⁰ Schönhuth, *Leben und Thaten*, 7.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² As cited by Römling, *Heer*, 68.

⁵⁷³ Guicciardini, *Sack*, 114f.

popes and cardinals in search of pickings. But it seems from Guicciardini's report that Catholics perceived the behaviour of the "mad [...] impious" Lutherans not merely as plundering but as an attack on what these objects symbolised, "contemporary religion", its images and "vain" rites. These perceived intentions appear to have made the Lutherans' actions worse in the eyes of Catholics. Most relics were merely discarded as useless, others were treated as historical artefacts and taken as souvenirs. One Landsknecht affixed the Holy Lance to his pike to parade it through town; Sebastian Schertlin took the enormous rope with which Judas was thought to have hanged himself home to Schorndorff as a keepsake, and Saint Veronica's handkerchief was removed from the reliquary and appeared for sale in taverns soon afterwards.⁵⁷⁴

The Landsknechte also left an eloquent record of their religious interpretation of the events behind, for when the forces finally left Rome, the city and the Vatican were covered in Protestant graffiti. Some of the soldiers carved the name 'Luther' into walls, another exhibited his Latin skills ("*Vivat Lutherus*") while others gave clear expression to their hatred of the Pope, Rome, and all that it stood for. The portrait of Giovanni di Medici, the later Pope Leo X, suffered a pike stab to the face.⁵⁷⁵ As Volker Reinhardt has noted, making the connection between the cardinal in Rafael's fresco and Luther's early adversary and recognizing his likeness demonstrated "a lot of [skill in] iconology and genealogy".⁵⁷⁶ A fresco showing the Holy City in the Villa Farnesina had 'Babylon' written over it, echoing the reformers' identification of Rome with the Whore of Babylon and the seat of Antichrist. A soldier called Dietwart wrote "God bless you, Bourbon", presumably thanking the Duke for this chance to personally deliver a blow to orthodoxy, while an anonymous German wrote "Why should I, who's writing this, not have to laugh? The Landsknechte made the Pope run!" In these brief statements one can detect not only the professional but also the confessional pride of the Lutheran soldiers who were raging in the very heart of Catholicism.

Among the great riches that fell into the hands of the imperial troops were also the clothes of the cardinals and liturgical vestments.⁵⁷⁷ The soldiers used the vestments to impersonate and ridicule the clergy in carnivalesque performances. During the siege of Castel Sant' Angelo where the Pope and a number of cardinals had fled, a German

⁵⁷⁴ Gregorovius, *Geschichte*, 535; Hook, *Sack*, 173.

⁵⁷⁵ The graffiti are described and depicted in Chastel, *Sac*, 123ff.

⁵⁷⁶ Reinhardt, *Karneval*, 95.

⁵⁷⁷ Guicciardini, *Sack*, 113.

knight, Wilhelm von Sandizell, and his men mockingly ‘played Vatican’.⁵⁷⁸ Sandizell dressed up as the Pope, complete with the papal tiara, while his soldiers dressed in cardinals’ hats and scarlet vestments, bowing and genuflecting before him and kissing his hands and feet. The pretend pope then held up a chalice, ‘blessed’ the entourage and drank a health to Clement, which was answered by the ‘cardinals’ downing chalices of wine. They shouted that they wanted to make “right pious” (*recht fromme*) popes and cardinals now, ones who obeyed the emperor and did not start wars and cause bloodshed. Finally, they hollered in the direction of the barricaded real Pope that they wanted to put Martin Luther in his place and the entire group started chanting “Luther Bapst”.⁵⁷⁹ Processions like this, in which Landsknechte dressed up as popes or cardinals, mockingly administering blessings from communion chalices, became a regular sight for the next few weeks. In one situation, soldiers dressed a mule in clerical vestments and tried to force a priest to communicate it, killing him when he refused.⁵⁸⁰ Guicciardini and another eyewitness, Jacopo Buonaparte, report a more elaborate case of clerical abuse in a rather bizarre mock funeral. A group of German soldiers – Buonaparte stressed that they were ‘all Lutherans’ (*tutti luterani*) – dragged Cardinal Numalio from his bed and carried him through the city singing his obsequies.⁵⁸¹ They finally brought the cardinal into a church and held a funeral sermon in which they detailed Numalio’s sexual habits, a humiliation that was rejected as calumny by Buonaparte but given some credence by Guicciardini, who only refrained from using the adjective ‘criminal’ to characterize the cardinal’s inclinations out of respect for his office.⁵⁸² After the soldiers had lifted up a slab from the church floor and forced the cardinal in this ‘grave’ for a while, they either lost interest in their game or ran out of drink and returned to the cardinal’s palace to feast.

The Sack of Rome and its aftermath have been described in detail because in this event we can witness the full spectrum of religious violence that was acted out by

⁵⁷⁸ Adam Reißner gives Sandizell’s name (*Historia*, 122^R) but the events are related in greater detail in another contemporaneous report: Anon., *Wahrhafftige vnd kurtze Bericht ynn der Summa. Wie es yetzo [...] ynn eröberung der Stad Rom ergangen ist*, s.l. 1527, ci^{Rf}. According to the anonymous source, the landsknecht procession made its way through the whole city and performed these ‘rites’ in front of several houses in which high-ranking clerics were imprisoned.

⁵⁷⁹ Reißner, *Historia*, 122Rf.

⁵⁸⁰ Guicciardini, *Sack*, 109.

⁵⁸¹ Jacopo Buonaparte, *Il sacco di Roma*, in: Milanesi, *Sacco di Roma*, 245-408, 378. See also Gregorovius, *Geschichte*, 542.

⁵⁸² Guicciardini, *Sack*, 108f.

soldiers in the period before 1650. The looting of churches, iconoclasm, the mockery and parody of the other confession and the abuse and killing of its adherents all occurred, often simultaneously or in a cascade of events, in many different contexts and constellations across Europe. Most of the soldiers' energy in Rome was invested in looting churches and at this stage we should revisit the question of motivation because one has to be careful not to overstate the religious significance of such events. Plundering churches had a long tradition among Christian warriors and despite the fact that, as seen in the second chapter, the articles of war banned the practice it was a military custom that was difficult to root out.⁵⁸³ That factors other than religious zeal frequently underlay attacks on religious sites, objects or persons has to be taken into account here, avarice, hunger and destitution being the most frequent. During the Sack of Rome, half-starved mercenaries piled into the city whose first objective was to steal a piece of bread. For the context of the Thirty Years' War, Bernhard Kroener has shown that plundering mainly occurred when the military provisioning system had broken down, and it seems that this observation is more widely applicable to the phenomenon of looting.⁵⁸⁴ In Rome, it was the indiscriminate looting that unified the conquerors across national and confessional lines and much if not most of the plundering has to be attributed to non-religious incentives. Thus, while churches and clerics feature frequently as sites or victims of military violence, their religious dimension was not necessarily of primary importance.

As was the case during the Sack of Rome where Catholics and Lutherans looted side by side, there is not much evidence to indicate that soldiers spared churches of their own confession or that of their employers. Three examples from the Thirty Years War may serve as illustration: the imperial – and thus at least nominally Catholic – troops that ransacked the churches in the Bavarian villages of Aschering and Traubing in 1633 did not shrink back from the tabernacles, which they forced open to steal the holy vessels, discarding the hosts in nearby fields.⁵⁸⁵ In early August 1634, Spanish-Burgundian horsemen plundered the monastery of Andechs; “friends” as its abbot

⁵⁸³ For instances of late antique and medieval military church plundering and iconoclasm see: Norbert Schnitzler, *Ikonoklasmus-Bildersturm. Theologischer Bilderstreit und ikonoklastisches Handeln während des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1996, 91ff; Guy P. Marchal, ‘Das vieldeutige Heiligenbild. Bildersturm im Mittelalter’, in: Peter Blickle et al., *Macht und Ohnmacht der Bilder. Reformatorischer Bildersturm im Kontext der europäischen Geschichte*, Munich 2002, 320f.

⁵⁸⁴ See also Bernhard R. Kroener, ‘Kriegsgurgeln, Freireuter und Merodebrüder. Der Soldat im Dreißigjährigen Krieg. Täter und Opfer’, in: Wolfram Wette (ed.), *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes – eine Kriegsgeschichte von unten*, Munich/Zurich 1992, 51-67, 57ff.

⁵⁸⁵ Friesenegger, *Tagebuch*, 31.

Maurus Friesenegger bitterly noted.⁵⁸⁶ Likewise, Dr. Georg Herdenius, the Lutheran pastor of Echzell in Hesse, lamented the loss of a number of books after the village was plundered by Christian of Brunswick's Protestant troops.⁵⁸⁷ After they had ransacked the church, some of the soldiers turned their attention to the church library and Herdenius noted that there were many students among the Brunswick soldiers, Hessian 'compatriots' (*landsleut*) as he pointed out irately. It was these former students who stole his books. None of these instances of plundering seem to have been informed by religious hatred but by material desires or, in the case of the book-thieves, intellectual ones. What these examples indicate is that confessional allegiance or association *as such* neither exacerbated nor limited looting, which suggests that the specific situation and the individuals involved determined the outcome of the events, an assessment that will have to be developed further in the following.

Ultimately, however, a breaking up of 'religious' and 'profane' motives is an artificial endeavour and hopes for neat distinctions between contributing factors should be abandoned. For a soldier, plundering a church could simultaneously satisfy his material needs *and* offer a chance to express confessional hatred. A Catholic Polish soldier, for example, left a note in a plundered and burnt-out parsonage insulting the pastor as a "scoundrel" (*Scelm*) and a thief. He stated that the pastor did not deserve to preach in a church that had been built as a Catholic house of worship and that Lutherans had no business using it for their apostate services. The soldier ended his note with "Martinus Luther, scoundrel, *Hundsfort*, and you are [a] *Hundsfort*".⁵⁸⁸ Likewise, pastor Nikolaus Moterus' church and parsonage in Rosdorf provided ample spoils for plundering soldiers.⁵⁸⁹ While the paradisiacal abundance of food was welcome, the soldiers wanted to find the owner as well (Moterus had gone into hiding), and swore they would kill the "blasphemous Lutheran pastor" and string him up.⁵⁹⁰ Verbal intimidation like this was often heard and intended to frighten locals into submission but in this case, these were no hollow threats: while Moterus was fortunate to escape, the soldiers apprehended his colleague in the neighbouring village of Beerfelden, crushed his hip, cut off his genitals and sneered that he would not sing '*Erhalt uns*,

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid. 49.

⁵⁸⁷ Georg Herdenius, letter to superintendent Konrad Dieterich (1622), in: Herrmann, *Aus tiefer Not*, 52.

⁵⁸⁸ As quoted in: Thomas Kaufmann, *Dreißigjähriger Krieg und Westfälischer Friede: kirchengeschichtliche Studien zur lutherischen Konfessionskultur*, Tübingen 1998, 106.

⁵⁸⁹ Nikolaus Moterus, letter to Landgrave Ludwig (1621), in: Herrmann, *Aus tiefer Not*, 33f.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid. 34.

Herr, bei deinem Wort’ for much longer.⁵⁹¹ Apart from the apparent joy they gained from torturing the ‘heretic’, the soldiers here also betrayed their perception of typical Lutheran religious practice, hymn singing, and showed that they were acquainted with the title of at least one of Luther’s hymns.

Plundering and confessional violence could therefore go hand in hand, and while it is important to emphasize the possibility of different coinciding incentives, we should now approach instances that appear to have arisen from a more decidedly religious motivation. The – admittedly rough – gauge that remains is the question of how soldiers profited from acting out violence in a particular set of circumstances. Those situations where soldiers seem to have had little or nothing else to gain from their behaviour other than satisfaction of confessional hatred, where their actions would constitute an unnecessary expenditure of energy if it was not for the religious motivation, suggest that we are dealing with ‘real’ religious violence. Religious violence should be defined broadly in this context, ranging from ‘milder’ instances such as interrogation of members of another denomination to the defiling or destruction of religious sites, iconoclasm, and the torture and killing of clergy or members of a different creed. In doing so we will first examine attacks on the material manifestations of the religious ‘other’ followed by discussions of insulting, humiliation, torture and the killing of humans.

Instances of iconoclasm and the desecration of churches are less ambiguous expressions of confessional thinking than plundering. But what constitutes the difference between irreverence and desecration? Mere destruction does not seem to be a reliable criterion, because soldiers of all confessions destroyed all kinds of churches. What is needed is an element of ‘confessional malice’ to speak of desecration or iconoclasm. Churches had been customarily plundered before the schism in the Western Church occurred, i.e. before the possibility of confessional violence even arose. During the Middle Ages, troops had frequently attacked the sacred images of vanquished opponents in a demonstration of power.⁵⁹² As Guy Marchal has shown, images did not possess a universal sanctity before the Reformation but were frequently associated with

⁵⁹¹ Ibid. 30f. Such incidents were not just rumours. Another pastor only escaped an encounter with a squadron of Croats with his manhood intact because a colonel intervened (Kaufmann, *Dreißigjähriger Krieg*, 109).

⁵⁹² Schnitzler, *Ikonoelasmus*, 91ff.

particular towns or communities, so that they often became religious party symbols.⁵⁹³ In mocking and attacking these specific images, soldiers expressed not their defiance of the sacred in general but proved that *this* image was impotent as had been demonstrated by the defeat of its venerators.

As we have seen above, this tradition persisted as Catholic soldiers broke into Catholic churches to steal monstrences, reliquaries and other church treasure. Concurrent with the ostentatious display of power was a material incentive, as the soldiers mostly discarded the sacramentals, the hosts and relics, which suggests that they were after the precious containers not the contents. Contemporaries noted such irreverence with indignation but they seem to have considered this ‘normal’ church theft, which was not uncommon.⁵⁹⁴ The same kind of behaviour could cause more abhorrence, however, when it became known that the church breakers belonged to another confession as was the case with the Lutheran Landsknechte in Rome. In such an instance, it apparently was assumed that the offenders were not just thieving and destroying but had committed their trespass to insult the other religion. The difference between irreverence and desecration or iconoclasm was thus a matter of intention and sometimes only *assumed* intention. Despite the Italian commentators’ perception that the Germans were uniformly infected by Luther’s heresy, not all of them necessarily turned against the religious objects in Rome on a distinct confessional impulse; many may have sought to irreverently emphasize their power or simply to loot.

In other circumstances, the destruction of religious objects and the desecration of religious sites were more unambiguously motivated by confession and are interesting in so far as the perpetrators acted not against individuals but against *symbols* of the other confession. Aggression is consequently directed at the material manifestations of religion, which not only requires varying degrees of abstraction but also seems to have no other purpose than to express one’s subjective dislike of the religious objects one destroys. Throughout the 16th century, iconoclasm was more a symptom of radical reformations in communities and was predominantly carried out by members of these communities.⁵⁹⁵ In certain contexts, such as the Sack of Rome or the early stages of the Thirty Years’ War, however, instances of military iconoclasm were recorded. The desecration of churches was a catastrophe for the local faithful and caused abhorrence

⁵⁹³ Marchal, *Heiligenbild*, 329f.

⁵⁹⁴ See for example the matter-of-fact mentioning of the theft of holy vessels by imperial troops by the abbot Friesenegger (*Tagebuch*, 31.)

⁵⁹⁵ On iconoclasm across early modern Europe, see the contrinbutions in Peter Blickle et al. (eds.), *Macht und Ohnmacht*. See also Schnitzler, *Ikonoklasmus*.

among civilians but also within the military, where there was no consensus regarding what kind of behaviour could be justified by war custom and what constituted sacrilege. On rare occasions, troops could cause one another to retaliate for the desecration of sacred spaces and objects. One such episode is recorded between imperial and Bohemian troops during the early stages of the Thirty Years' War in the western Bohemian region of Tachov (Tachau). The author of the *Acta Mansfeldiaca* interpreted the relentless plundering of a cloister by Mansfeld's men as an act of revenge for the behaviour of an imperial detachment operating in the area that had allegedly desecrated not just every Lutheran church it came across but had also disturbed graves. It appears from the account that it was the violation of the churches and graves that provoked the Protestant soldiers to ransack the Tachov abbey and its church especially thoroughly: everything the soldiers found was carried off, including two carts of lard, the brewing pan, cartloads of books, textiles, the bells and all ornaments from the cloister and the church. The organ pipes were melted to cast ammunition.⁵⁹⁶

While they could have a discernible confessional motivation, acts of iconoclasm were not necessarily born out of mortal hatred. On the contrary, there is good evidence that soldiers had a lot of fun smashing holy objects and in many instances we find elements of levity in soldierly behaviour that are reminiscent of carnival. Many events in Rome, for example the mock processions, seem to have had their models in the rites of inversion that characterized carnival.⁵⁹⁷ Mock processions, at times so convincing that spectators mistook them for the real thing, were common in 15th and 16th century Europe, as were burlesque caricatures of church ritual and the hiding of holy objects.⁵⁹⁸ Although they were often motivated by serious misgivings, these popular traditions allowed the expression of discontent in a derisive manner, which is not to say that these occasions did not tip over into violence. Laughter and derision were ubiquitous in

⁵⁹⁶ Anon., 'Acta Mansfeldiaca post pugnam Pragensem' included in Anon., *Bayrischer Feldzug Welcher Gestalt der Hertzog in Bayern alle Flecken / Schlösser / Dörffer vnd Städt / im Ländtlein ob der Enß / Oesterreich vnd Böhemen eingenommen vnd erobert habe*, s.l. 1621, 52ff.

⁵⁹⁷ The carnival rites described by Bob Scribner are in many instances identical with the contemporaneous events in Rome (Bob Scribner, 'Reformation, carnival and the world turned upside-down', *Social History*, 3 (1978) 3, 303-329, 304ff.). The literature on carnival and the carnivalesque following, expanding on and criticizing the original ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin is too vast to recapitulate here. See Aaron Gurevich's overview of Bakhtin's studies ('Bakhtin and his Theory of Carnival', in: Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (eds.), *A Cultural History of Laughter, From Antiquity to the Present Day*, Cambridge 1997, 40-53).

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.; Norbert Schindler, *Widerspenstige Leute. Studien zur Volkskultur in der frühen Neuzeit*, Frankfurt a.M. 1992, 138ff., 147.

Reformation polemics.⁵⁹⁹ Aquinas had deemed only *eutrapelia* (benevolent laughter as opposed to malicious *Schadenfreude*) to be proper hilarity for a Christian. Monastic rules had frowned upon clerical laughter and Protestant reformers also promoted sobriety and a pious earnestness.⁶⁰⁰ At the same time, however, both Protestant print and sermons employed caricature and ridicule of the old religion from the beginning. Similarly, Loyola frowned upon laughter or provoking laughter but the Society of Jesus used caricature and mockery heavily in its attempts to ridicule ‘heretics’.⁶⁰¹ Laughing at the misguided and the enemy asserted one’s superiority and we find this kind of behaviour also in the military throughout the period, often in the context of iconoclasm and desecration. Peter Blickle has characterised iconoclasm as a “proxy phenomenon” (*Stellvertreterphänomen*) that was associated with revolutionary upheavals and civil strife.⁶⁰² Just as revolutionaries might smash the religious symbols of the old order, soldiers could employ these rites for their own purposes: by getting their hands on and debasing the sacred images of their opponents, they could prove their power.

When the Bohemian rebel troops laid siege to Pilsen in 1618 only months after the revolt had broken out, they were not just attacking a city but the symbol of foreign Catholic oppression of the indigenous Hussite and Protestant faith.⁶⁰³ As the trenches moved towards the city walls, the cloisters and Catholic churches surrounding the town fell prey to the Protestant attackers and the soldiers not only looted the buildings but devised ways to make the Catholic defenders destroy their own holy objects.⁶⁰⁴ Some soldiers took a crucifix from a church, draped the Saviour in a soldier’s coat and hoisted him up above the trenches, causing the Pilsen garrison, who mistook the figure for an enemy soldier, to shoot at their own ‘idol’. When the crucifix was shot to pieces, the soldiers dragged a statue of the Virgin Mary into the trench, dressed her in an apron and repeated the procedure. The statue was destroyed in the same way as the crucifix and a Protestant eyewitness gleefully remarked that had the Pilseners’ “saint-munching

⁵⁹⁹ See for example, Johan Verberckmoes, ‘The Comic and the Counter-Reformation in the Spanish Netherlands’, in: Bremmer and Roodenburg (eds.), *Cultural History of Laughter*, 76-89, and the contributions in Christoph Auffarth and Sonja Kerth (eds.), *Glaubensstreit und Gelächter. Reformation und Lachkultur im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Münster 2008.

⁶⁰⁰ Verberckmoes, *Comic and Counter-Reformation*, 82; Christoph Auffarth, ‘Alle Tage Karneval? Reformation, Provokation und Grobianismus’, in: Auffarth and Kerth, *Glaubensstreit und Gelächter*, 79-105, 83.

⁶⁰¹ Verberckmoes, *Comic and the Counter-Reformation*, 79, 83.

⁶⁰² Peter Blickle, ‘Bilder und ihr gesellschaftlicher Rahmen. Zur Einführung’ in: Blickle et al., *Macht und Ohnmacht der Bilder*, 1-9, 2.

⁶⁰³ Wilson, *Europe’s Tragedy*, 275.

⁶⁰⁴ Anon., *Warhaffter Bericht / Von der Belägerung vnd mit gestürmter hand Eroberung der Stadt Pilsen inn Behem*, s.l. 1619, 32.

mothers known this, they would've bawled their eyes out".⁶⁰⁵ Likewise, a marked air of merriment characterized the iconoclasm in Prague's castle church on Christmas 1619. Supervised by Frederick V's Calvinist court preacher Abraham Scultetus the cleansing of the church from Catholic idols was partly carried out by officers who set the tone of the event. Frederick had ordered to remove the images in order to put an end to Catholic idolatry and labourers had been brought in to take them down.⁶⁰⁶ The workers, presumably in accordance with their instructions, began to lower the statues and crucifixes to the ground when the officers stepped in and ordered them to drop the 'idols' from a height so that they would smash.⁶⁰⁷ To the soldiers, the mere removal of the offensive art was not enough; they wanted to see them destroyed. An officer called Barbistorff approached one of the broken crucifixes, kicked the figure of Christ and mocked: "Here you lie, you poor one, [...] help yourself".⁶⁰⁸ The scene is strongly reminiscent of the legionaries taunting Christ for his seeming impotence in the passion narratives but it cannot be determined from the report whether this was a conscious re-enactment of the scene on Golgotha.⁶⁰⁹ Nevertheless, while the legionaries proved to themselves and others that the man they were killing was not a deity but only a man, Barbistorff had an analogous intention: to expose that the object he kicked was not the Christ but a blasphemous image made by idolaters. The sniggering soldiers also illustrated that the Virgin Mary and St. John were not worthy of veneration when they arranged the saints' statues in a sexually suggestive manner.⁶¹⁰ In this situation, the soldiers turned a stripping of a church into full-blown iconoclasm. That Frederick did not order the destruction but merely the removal may have been informed by a desire to not alienate his new subjects too much or it may have been recognition of the artistic value of the pieces.⁶¹¹ Among other historians, Beatrice Wolter has noted that iconoclasts were anxious about the possibility of being led into idolatry by the presence of images and a simultaneity of revulsion and recognition is evident when the officers

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁶ Jessen, *Dreißigjährige Krieg*, 83.

⁶⁰⁷ Anon, *Reformation der königlichen Schloßkirchen zu Prag*, Prague 1621, 1. See also: Howard Louthan, 'Breaking images and building bridges: the making of sacred space in early modern Bohemia', in Will Coster and Andrew Spicer (eds.), *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 2005, 282-301; Beatrice Wolter, *Deutsche Schlagwörter zur Zeit des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, Frankfurt a.M. 2000, 158f.

⁶⁰⁸ Anon, *Reformation*, 1.

⁶⁰⁹ Matthew 27:28-40, esp. 38-40; Mark 15:29f.; Luke 23:36f.

⁶¹⁰ Anon., *Reformation*, 1.

⁶¹¹ On Calvinist appreciation of Catholic 'idols' as art see: Ilja M. Veldman, 'Bildersturm und neue Bilderwelten', in: Ansgar Reiss and Sabine Witt, *Calvinismus. Die Reformierten in Deutschland und Europa*, Berlin/Dresden 2009, 270-294, esp. 282.

turned stripping into shattering and degraded the figures.⁶¹² On the one hand, the artworks were rejected as ‘idols’, un-Christian and worthy of destruction, on the other, they were not merely discarded as trumpery and their importance was in a sense emphasized by the energy invested in destroying them.⁶¹³ Scultetus apparently did nothing to stop the soldiers’ iconoclastic activity but the fact that he did not mention how the images were treated in a sermon defending the removal as a theological imperative, suggests that he did not (publicly) approve of the events in St Vitus.⁶¹⁴ The mention of the events in the pro-Protestant *Theatrum Europaeum* equally concealed the destruction and merely reported that the Winterking had the idolatrous images removed from sight or covered, which suggests that also Protestant propagandists, too, were embarrassed about what had actually occurred.⁶¹⁵

The ornamental wealth of Catholic churches and the religious significance of material objects in Catholicism offered ample opportunity for desecration, but even the sparseness of Calvinist churches could be despoiled. A defilement scandal in Spanish-occupied but predominantly Calvinist Wesel occurred in June 1616. During the night preceding the Corpus Christi procession (4/5 June), soldiers of the Spanish garrison broke into the main church and comprehensively debased the central locus of Calvinism in the town. They began by cutting off the bell cords and used these to hang a dead cat from the pulpit candleholder.⁶¹⁶ They then smeared the pulpit in human faeces before doing the same to the church benches, so that, as the Calvinist citizen Arnold von Anrath commented, no believer could sit down without making themselves dishonourable.⁶¹⁷ Finally, the vandals tore the bible stand from the pulpit.

That the soldiers were ritually polluting the church is clear but the meaning of the dead cat in this context is puzzling. Given the taboo surrounding carcasses, the dead feline may merely have been intended as an addition to the excrement with which the church was coated. There possibly was a deeper, demonic meaning to this arrangement, however, because at least the lower ranks of the Spanish army frequently seem to have equated Protestantism, specifically Calvinism, with devil-worship. In Maastricht, a

⁶¹² Wolter, *Schlagwörter*, 159.

⁶¹³ See also Bernd Roeck, ‘Macht und Ohnmacht der Bilder. Die Historische Perspektive’, in: Blickle et al. (eds.), *Macht und Ohnmacht*, 33-64, 33f.

⁶¹⁴ Abraham Scultetus, *Kurtzer / aber Schrifftmäßiger Bericht / Von den Götzen Bildern*, Heidelberg 1620, esp. AiiR.

⁶¹⁵ *Theatrum Europaeum*, 1, 280.

⁶¹⁶ The event was related in the chronicles of the Wesel burghers Anrath (*Chronik*, 120f.) and Weseken (*Chronik*, 362).

⁶¹⁷ Anrath, *Chronik*, 121.

Spanish soldier who was pleading for his life with his Calvinist captors declared, “I believe in devils, like you all” (*Credo en Diablos, corno [sic] voz otros*).⁶¹⁸ Another Spanish soldier disrupted a Calvinist service in Wesel and summarized his assessment of the situation by shouting “*Diabol[o]*”.⁶¹⁹ The dead cat may therefore have been intended to signify the diabolical nature of Calvinism and the close association of cats with demons and witchcraft as well as the use of bell cords in popular magic make it plausible that the soldiers were attempting some kind of magical ritual.⁶²⁰ The fact that the soldiers smeared the benches with faeces can also be interpreted in this sense, as, to quote Bob Scribner, “in popular superstition the privy was the haunt of demons and evil spirits”.⁶²¹ That there was something menacing specifically about the cat would help explain Arnold von Anrath’s otherwise cryptic final remark on the episode: “What significance this will further have, time will tell, because of the cat”.⁶²²

The soldiers revealed a precise knowledge of the defining elements of the Calvinist faith as they specifically targeted the pulpit, the focal point of a Calvinist service, and the Bible-stand, which carried significant symbolism due to the central importance of Scripture in Protestantism. Regardless of the intended or perceived meaning of the dead cat, the soldiers had fully achieved their goal and the disgusted burghers confronted the Spanish governor. His reply (*es wehr ihm ledt solches zu horen*) is ambiguous and can either mean that he was ‘tired’ of hearing about such things or that he was ‘sorry’ to hear this.⁶²³ In either case, he promised to have the case investigated and to hang the culprits in the church door if they could be found. It was not only the Calvinist citizens of Wesel who were scandalized over the defilement, indignation extended across confessional divisions. A Jesuit father condemned the act during the Corpus Christi procession but, by way of explanation, mentioned a desecration by Dutch soldiers that involved an aspersion or stoup and possibly more human waste.⁶²⁴ The ritual pollution of the Calvinist church could consequently have been an act of revenge for a previous desecration of a Catholic sacral vessel. One gains

⁶¹⁸ Anon, *Franckenthalische Belägerung*, s.l. 1621, 12.

⁶¹⁹ Weseken, *Chronik*, 356.

⁶²⁰ ‘Katze’, *HDA*, vol. 4, 1107-1124. Burying a dead cat under a doorstep for example would attract evil to the house so it could be that the soldiers had something similar in mind for the church and the congregation (1115f). See also Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*, New York 1984, 92f.; ‘Glocke’ in: *HDA*, vol. 3, 868-876, esp. 871f.

⁶²¹ Scribner, *Sake of the Simple Folk*, 84.

⁶²² Anrath, *Chronik*, 121.

⁶²³ Ibid.

⁶²⁴ The passage is incomplete: “doch es wehre daher kommen, das 6 Uhr von [...] (Porta zu Embrich) in ein Wey-Kessel ge[...] und darnah Schwartzel darin gethan wehre.”, Weseken, *Chronik*, 362.

the impression that the soldiery's confessional sensibilities were so heightened at this point in time – be it by the important Catholic holyday of Corpus Christi or a previous sacrilegious act on behalf of the Protestant enemy – that they engaged in acts of religious violence that led to condemnation from their immediate superior, the Catholic governor of Wesel, and even from the Society of Jesus, a body not commonly known for its squeamishness in the confessional struggle.

Scenes of iconoclasm and desecration can therefore provide good evidence about the religious views of the soldiers involved: these men manifestly had a clear sense of themselves as agents of their denomination when they engaged in such activity. This finding stands in contrast to the un-confessional attitudes described in the previous chapter and we will have to evaluate this contradiction below. For now, it is important to note that the scenes also demonstrate that soldiers had an exact understanding of the doctrinal and material elements that defined the denomination they were attacking. This is a valuable insight into soldiers' religious perceptions in so far as it demonstrates not only awareness of the differences in ritual and theology but also that some were evidently so repulsed by these manifestations of the religious other that they felt the need to destroy or desecrate them.

Let us turn from attacks on the material manifestations of other denominations to the mockery, abuse and killing of believers. During the Sack of Rome, this took the shape of carnivalesque mock processions in which the Landsknechte dressed up in liturgical vestments and caricatured Roman ritual. In contrast to regular carnival processions, the German troops enacted a carnival 'with an edge' in Rome: here, they wore real liturgical vestments, not imitations, abused actual relics and killed priests when they refused to 'play along'. These men had grown up with the rituals of the old faith as well as the rites of inversion and knew them inside out, which was reflected in their ability to parody Catholic Ritual and probably also the gusto with which they did. Catholic troops that had been sent to Breisach on the Rhine in August 1587 to enforce counter-reformation policies mocked Protestant ritual. The soldiers swaddled two dogs like babies and baptized them in the Protestant church much to the horror of the locals, and forced them to provide food and drink to celebrate the event.⁶²⁵

⁶²⁵ Anon, *Neue Zeitung [...] welcher gestaltdt die Papisten durch die vngehewren Gülgische Kriegsgurgel das Euangelium Jesu Christi [...] zu Brysich am Reyn [...] grewlich verfolget*, s.l. 1587, Aii^v (own pagination).

Taunts, mockery and the joyous bullying of adherents of another confession persisted throughout the period. The insulting of the confessional other with religiously charged slurs is a rather clear indicator of confessional identity as the confessional slight simultaneously functions as an affirmation of the speakers' own convictions. Furthermore, by reducing the addressee to their religious allegiance, creed alone becomes the distinguishing element and the focal point of conflict, which overrides all other difference or commonalty. During the siege of Pilsen, the defenders called the besiegers "horse thieves" and "cow thieves" but also "Lutheran dogs" to which Mansfeld's troops retorted "sons of whores", "nun keepers" (*Nonnen Hütter*)⁶²⁶ or "perjurious, seal and letter breaking sons of priests".⁶²⁷ While the garrison's denigration of the attackers as Lutheran 'dogs' is rather straightforward, some of the Protestant besiegers' insults were implicit but indicative of an acute understanding of the religio-political situation. The accusation to be seal- and letter breakers related to the Letter of Majesty (1609), issued by Rudolph II and initially confirmed by emperor Matthias, which granted the Bohemian and Silesian estates freedom to decide on the confession in their territories, a privilege whose revocation had proven of significant consequence in the events leading up to the Bohemian Rebellion.⁶²⁸ Accusing the Catholic defenders of this injustice was thus a confessional as well as a political statement, which shows that, in this instance, the Protestant Bohemian propaganda had found its way to and was echoed by common soldiers passing time during the siege. The comparatively subtle slur 'priest's son' managed to simultaneously draw into disrepute the legitimacy of the son as well as deny the alleged father's vow of celibacy. The missing necessary constituent in their opponents' births, the 'whore' mothers were also not forgotten. 'Priest's son' was consequently a denigration of the addressees' provenance but it also had a confessional dimension. That the soldiers insulted their enemies on the grounds of their denomination shows that the garrison were identified as agents of Catholic duplicity and simultaneously that the jeerers considered themselves to be Protestant soldiers, fighting to right the wrongs worked against the Bohemian estates.

The pleasure of intimidation became evident when imperial troops came to Zwingenberg in Hesse in 1635 as they enjoyed mocking the Lutheran locals and forced a number of the villagers, among them the pastor David Stumpf, to drink a health to the

⁶²⁶ A looser translation, 'nuns' pimps' might convey the intended meaning more accurately.

⁶²⁷ Anon, *Warhaffter Bericht / Von der Belägerung [...] der Stadt Pilsen*, 19.

⁶²⁸ See Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, 113ff, 269ff.

pope.⁶²⁹ For the soldiers, it was an *amusing* display of power, knowing full well that the frightened villagers were at their mercy. For Pastor Stumpf it was a humiliation that he struggled to come to terms with. He tried to alleviate the insolence by restyling the toast as a “civil” and “social” act (*civiles gesellschaftswerk*), presumably in an attempt to deprive it of its religious dimension, while at the same time affirming that they had only toasted the pope “salva confessionis nostrae forma”, in keeping with their confession. Such situations, marked by the desire to exhibit superiority, could and did tip over into full-blown acts of violence. We have already encountered soldiers who mocked, mutilated and killed a pastor whilst looting. Moreover, instances in which small groups of soldiers abused civilians on the grounds of their confession seem to have been not infrequent. The killing of the confessional other could even be a source of pride: Colonel Gerrit von Nuyß apparently tried to impress or intimidate women by bragging how he had once strangled sixteen Beguines in one night.⁶³⁰ Glorification of this kind of behaviour seems to have been rare, however, as it is rarely reported in a believable manner.

Confessional propaganda endlessly related situations in which soldiers allegedly killed civilians on the grounds of their confession but in most cases it is indeterminable whether religious hatred was really the motivation or whether this was an interpretation or an invention of the respective authors. The propaganda machines of all churches constantly blew enemy violence out of proportion and embellished or invented confessional cruelty so that it is nearly impossible to ascertain the extent to which massacres or murders were religiously motivated. The Sack of Magdeburg (20th May, 1631), for example, is considered one of the defining moments of the Thirty Years’ War and is to this day remembered as the epitome of unrestricted confessional cruelty and destruction.⁶³¹ Hans Medick has provided a compelling portrayal of the atmosphere

⁶²⁹ David Stumpf, letter to superintendent Dr. Simon Leisring (1635), in: Herrman, *Aus tiefer Not*, 128f.

⁶³⁰ Weseken, *Chronik*, 387f.

⁶³¹ For a detailed history of the events leading up to and including the sack see: Friedrich Wilhelm Hoffmann, *Geschichte der Stadt Magdeburg nach den Quellen bearbeitet*, vol.3, Magdeburg 1850, 18-181. Recent articles on the Sack of Magdeburg include: Hans Medick, ‘Historisches Ereignis und zeitgenössische Erfahrung. Die Eroberung und Zerstörung Magdeburgs 1631’, in: Benigna von Krusenstjern, Hans Medick and Patrice Veit (eds.), *Zwischen Alltag und Katastrophe. Der Dreißigjährige Krieg aus der Nähe*, Göttingen 1999, 377-407; Michael Kaiser, “Excidium Magdeburgense”. Beobachtungen zur Wahrnehmung und Darstellung von Gewalt im Dreißigjährigen Krieg’, in: Markus Meumann and Dirk Niefänger, *Ein Schauplatz herber Angst. Wahrnehmung und Darstellung von Gewalt im 17. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 1997, 43-64, and idem, ‘Die ‘Magdeburgische’ Hochzeit (1631). Gewaltphänomene im Dreissigjährigen Krieg’, in: Eva Labouvie (ed.), *Leben in der Stadt. Eine Kultur- und Geschlechtergeschichte Magdeburgs*, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna 2004, 195-213; with a special focus on General Tilly: Tobias von Elsner, ‘Magdeburg – Opfertod und Kriegsverbrechen’, in: Markus

leading up to the fall of the city and the recognition among contemporaries that they witnessed an important historical event.⁶³² Contemporary broadsheets and pamphlets reporting the siege and the Sack employed the image of the Maid Magdeburg who was finally forced to wed her bridegroom Tilly.⁶³³ From a Catholic perspective, the horrors of Magdeburg had been brought about by the city's obstinate refusal to obey imperial orders and its fervent adherence to Lutheranism. The Premonstratensian Zacharias Bandhauer prefaced his eyewitness account of the Sack by a long description of the city's unreasonableness, which in his view arose directly from the Lutheran heresy.⁶³⁴ Even the suicide of a family who had drowned themselves in a well was attributed not to desperation or fear but was characteristic of Lutheran pig-headed delusion in Bandhauer's opinion.⁶³⁵ Catholic commiseration with the Protestant victims was in short supply. One Jesuit who followed the troops into the city forced those inhabitants who begged him for help to first say a prayer to the Virgin Mary before he would try to save them and pope Urban VIII sent a congratulatory letter to Tilly, which declared joyously that the victors had been able to "wash their hands in the blood of the sinners" (*potuisti lavare victrices manus in sanguine peccatorum*).⁶³⁶ For the Catholic victors, Magdeburg was a great prize militarily but also religiously as the Protestant stronghold had the potential to become a masterpiece of counter-reform. Tilly announced that Magdeburg would henceforth be called 'Marienburg' in honour of the Virgin Mary and only five days after the catastrophe a great procession made its way through the ruins, attended by the commanders, officers and a great number of clerics, all singing the *Te deum*.⁶³⁷

Reports that followed the catastrophe of Magdeburg attributed the exceptional violence of the imperial soldiers to religious hatred. Both Kaiser and Medick have

Junkelman (ed.), "Der Du gelehrt hast meine Hände den Krieg." Tilly. Heiliger oder Kriegsverbrecher?, Altötting 59-62.

⁶³² Medick, *Historisches Ereignis*.

⁶³³ See Rublack, *Wench and Maiden*, regarding the metaphorical equation of a free city with a virgin or maiden in early modern German print. See also Kaiser, *Magdeburgische Hochzeit*, 97. For an example see Anon, *Copey eines Schreibens Auß Magdeburgk// darinnen kürztliche doch gewisse/ und unpartheiische Relation zubefinden*, Eisleben 1631.

⁶³⁴ Zacharias Bandhauer, 'Diarium in welchem die Tragoedia oder Zerstörung der Stad Magdeburg kürztlich begriffen wird', ed. P.P. Klimesch 'Zacharias Bandhauer's deutsches Tagebuch der Zerstörung Magdeburgs 1631', *Archiv für Kunde österreichischer Geschichts-Quellen* 16 (1856), 239-319, especially 245-267.

⁶³⁵ Ibid. 280.

⁶³⁶ See Kaiser, *Gewaltphänomene*, 209. Diefendorf has been observed similar behaviour in the French context (*Beneath the Cross*, 103). The papal letter is cited from Kaiser, *Excidium*, 48f.

⁶³⁷ Arnold Mengerling, *Letzte Belagerung und jammerliche Erober- und Zerstörung der alten Stadt Magdeburg*, Magdeburg 1689, 61f.

pointed out that while horrific scenes doubtlessly unravelled on May 20th and the following days, it is less certain if the violence was in fact motivated religiously on behalf of the soldiery.⁶³⁸ If we consider Arnold Mengerling's report of the Sack, for example, the problem becomes evident. In Mengerling's account, the soldiers verbalize their hatred of 'heretics' and legitimize their atrocities by the victims' Protestantism.⁶³⁹ Mengerling relates an anecdote of one soldier bragging to his comrades about having impaled more than twenty infants on his pike. When the other soldiers, clearly horrified by this, ask him if he is not afraid of God's punishment for this atrocity, the soldier allegedly replies that he regretted not having killed more children in this manner "as they were heretics' children and not worth anything better".⁶⁴⁰ Whether this lurid scene actually took place seems very doubtful as it is too reminiscent of topoi of violence that we find throughout early modern Europe. The impaling of children is a recurrent image in narratives of violence that dates back to antiquity and became associated specifically with the Turk after the Fall of Constantinople 1453. Jürgen Luh has shown that commentators used precisely this image to communicate the experience of unbridled violence and relate horrors that were indescribable.⁶⁴¹ Kaiser has described a similar topos – not sparing the foetus in womb – in the same way, namely as a *chiffre* of extreme and illegitimate violence, so that we have to understand such descriptions not as reflections of actual events but as figurative metaphors.⁶⁴²

Another example, also taken from Mengerling's account, further illustrates the potential for confessional deformation of events. Mengerling described an abduction of Magdeburg children into the army camp, where the girls were allegedly either raped or sold and the boys transferred into the care of Catholic cloisters to be raised as monks.⁶⁴³ He attributed the treatment of the girls to the sexual depravity of the soldiery; the transportation of the boys to the monastery on the other hand was presented as a counter-reformatory machination intended to obliterate the next generation of Magdeburg Protestantism. But there are possible alternative interpretations. It is likely that many of the children that were taken into the camp were captives but this did not

⁶³⁸ Kaiser, *Gewaltphänomene*, 210; Medick, *Historisches Ereignis*, 405.

⁶³⁹ Mengerling, *Letzte Belagerung*, 41.

⁶⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁶⁴¹ Luh, *Türkenkrieg*, 200f.

⁶⁴² Michael Kaiser, "Ärger als der Türck". Kriegsgreuel und ihre Funktionalisierung in der Zeit des Dreißigjährigen Kriegs, in: Sönke Neitzel and Daniel Hohnsolt (eds.), *Kriegsgreuel. Die Entgrenzung der Gewalt in kriegerischen Konflikten vom Mittelalter bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*, Paderborn 2008, 155-183, 164.

⁶⁴³ Mengerling, *Letzte Belagerung*, 51f.

necessarily mean that they were mistreated. If we consider the fate of the Friese family who was captured and rescued by a soldier from Nuremberg, a different version of events becomes thinkable. The soldier looked out for the Frieses not out of mere charity but also because he had been promised a handsome ransom. The family were fully aware, however, that being one soldier's loot provided relatively good protection against others. The soldier treated the several children kindly and the eldest son Johann Daniel expressed his deep gratitude years later: "He was a mild-hearted, god-fearing man. [May] the Lord repay him forever for what he did for us! We will never forget the benefactions he accorded to us and will still know how to praise them on Judgment Day".⁶⁴⁴ In these circumstances, being taken captive could consequently be a desirable position to be in as it placed the vulnerable townsfolk under the protection and in the care of their captors. Secondly, it seems that during the Sack of Magdeburg children who had lost their parents were sent into the care of clerics regardless of confession. Jacobus Schwanenberg, for example, the Protestant field preacher of Henrik Holk's regiment, looked after many solitary children in his quarters in nearby Olvenstedt.⁶⁴⁵ The transfer of the boys to the monasteries may therefore have been motivated by a wish to ensure their welfare, rather than by the confessional impetus of wanting to turn 'heretics' into Catholics.

The strong confessional interpretation of the Sack of Magdeburg exemplifies the difficulties historians face when dealing with such events. The behaviour of the military was positively forced into a confessional framework so that it becomes widely impossible to see behind the propagandistic interpretations and exaggerations of atrocities. If we turn to the actual behaviour of the soldiery in this particular instance, however, the interpretation of the events changes fundamentally as there is little evidence that the soldiers themselves saw the Sack of Magdeburg in confessional terms.⁶⁴⁶ Two diarists, Hagendorf and Ackermann, took part in the Sack and recorded the event in their diaries, and it becomes clear that the horrors of Magdeburg also affected veterans. Hagendorf, who had been fighting in wars since 1624 and was shot twice during the storm, noted: "I felt sorry from the bottom of my heart that the city burned so horribly".⁶⁴⁷ To him, Magdeburg was a catastrophe but no confessional interpretation is evident in his account. Likewise, captain Jürgen Ackermann, pondered

⁶⁴⁴ Hoffmann, *Geschichte*, (3), 177.

⁶⁴⁵ Thodænus, *Threni Magdaeburgici*, Liii^R.

⁶⁴⁶ Kaiser has also made this point in *Gewaltphänomene*, 210f.

⁶⁴⁷ Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 138.

the sight of the ruins: “there I saw the whole city of Magdeburg, apart from the cathedral, the cloister and the new market, lie in embers and ashes, [...] from which I could discern God’s exceptional omnipotence and punishment”.⁶⁴⁸ Ackermann was a Protestant but there is no indication that he perceived of a confessional dimension of this event. The experiences of the Lutheran pastor Christoph Thodaenus during the Sack provide further evidence that most imperial soldiers did not act on confessional grounds but simply looted. Thodaenus encountered plunderers who spared him because he was a pastor, some who wanted to kill him because he was a pastor and others who wanted to kill him *although* he was a pastor.⁶⁴⁹ Even though he was repeatedly addressed with the slur *Pfaffe*, which was applicable to clerics of all confessions, no plunderer made a specific comment about him being a *Lutheran* pastor. One soldier was about to bludgeon Thodaenus with his mace when his comrade intervened and said, “what do you want to do, you see that he is a preacher”.⁶⁵⁰ The two soldiers were looting together, which suggests familiarity, but they clearly had different views on how to treat clerics. Thodaenus, his wife and their maidservant were ultimately saved by the Spanish colonel Joseph de Ayñsa. De Ayñsa not only berated a soldier for mistreating the pastor but also placed the ‘heretic’ under his personal protection and proved open to mostly friendly theological discussions in the days to come.⁶⁵¹ It was only on the way out of the city that Thodaenus reports that some Croat soldiers tried to get to him because they recognized him as a Lutheran preacher.⁶⁵² For the most part, therefore, the soldiers seem to have been after plunder and they reacted differently to Thodaenus’s habit but, with the exception of the Croats, none exhibited a particular hostility that could be linked to confessional hatred.

The discrepancy between the way the Sack of Magdeburg was experienced, described and remembered by civilians and the way in which soldiers seem to have behaved could not be greater. While civilians interpreted the Sack and the ensuing military violence in unambiguously confessional terms, the soldiers apparently did not: to them it was variously a looting opportunity or a monstrous catastrophe but there is no indication that they were motivated by confessional hatred. We consequently have to be even more careful when labelling acts of violence as ‘religious’, as not every instance

⁶⁴⁸ Volkholz, *Ackermann*, 17.

⁶⁴⁹ Thodaenus, *Threni Magdaeburgici*, Jii^R-Liii^V.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid. Ki^R.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid. Ki^Vff; Kiii^V.

⁶⁵² Ibid. Kiii^R.

that was experienced or interpreted in this way by civilians was necessarily motivated by confessional hatred on behalf of the soldiers. This finding also raises questions regarding the influence a specific situational context had on the violence it produced. One might have expected that a confessionally charged situation like the Siege of Magdeburg would have affected the behaviour of the soldiers but it seems that it did not. Magdeburg witnessed horrific scenes but it appears that civilians imbued the violence with confessional meaning, while it was apparently not generally religiously motivated on behalf of the soldiers. We therefore have to pay attention to soldiers' actual behaviour in the recorded instances examined here rather than to the situational context, as only individual behaviour allows us to determine if a given act of violence was religiously motivated.

Turning away from the specific example of Magdeburg and broadening our perspective, there is, however, one specific military context in which attitudes seem to have been markedly different: there is evidence that it was a common perception in the Spanish army that the enemy were heretics. The Spanish army seems exceptional in so far as religious propaganda actually appears to have had an impact, which stands in marked contrast to the general indifference to confessional and political categories that were observed in the previous chapters. While the acts of religious violence described above were isolated events, the evidence for confessionally motivated violence in the Spanish army is rather dense across time and occurred in many different contexts. The Black Legend – the systematic distortion, exaggeration, and invention of Spanish Catholic atrocities by Protestant Propagandists – has to be taken into account here and heightened suspicion is called for when we deal with allegations of Spanish cruelty.⁶⁵³ However, as Henry Kamen has pointed out, the Black Legend was “a legend, not a myth” and Benjamin Keen posited that “the so-called Black Legend is substantially accurate, if stripped of its rhetoric and emotional coloration” and therefore “no legend at all”.⁶⁵⁴ Mere propaganda does not account for the frequency with which Spanish religious violence occurs in the sources because, as we will see, Spanish religious

⁶⁵³ On the Black Legend, see: Koenraad W. Swart, ‘The Black Legend during the Eighty Years War’, in: J.S. Bromley and Ernst H. Kossmann, *Britain and the Netherlands*, vol. 5, The Hague 1975, 36-57; Dirk Maczkiewitz, *Der niederländische Aufstand gegen Spanien (1568-1609). Eine kommunikationswissenschaftliche Analyse*, Münster 2005, 256ff; Benjamin Keen, ‘The Black Legend Revisited: Assumptions and Realities’, *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 49 (1969) 4, 703-719.

⁶⁵⁴ Henry Kamen, *Empire, War and Faith in Early Modern Europe*, London 2002, 143; Keen, *Black Legend*, 719.

violence differs from other events in that the kind of violent behaviour reported is not uniform enough to suggest a topos but exhibits distinctive variations on a common theme, namely the persecution of heresy.

The Spanish army was mainly deployed to fight the Dutch rebellion but frequently operated within the Holy Roman Empire as well. In the 16th century, these incursions were generally limited to the border regions of the Rhineland and Westphalia but during the Thirty Years War, Spanish troops fought throughout the Empire. The Netherlands from the 1520s to the 1570s have been described by William Monter as the “epicentre of heresy executions” in Europe and already when the Duke of Alba had first led his army into the Netherlands in 1567, his men were certain that the “expedition was directed specifically against heresy”.⁶⁵⁵ While Alba himself initially rejected the notion that he was fighting heretics rather than rebels, his years in the Low Countries caused a change of heart and by 1571 he was imploring the Vatican to send more inquisitors so that more heretics could be burned.⁶⁵⁶ From the beginning, the Spanish army in Flanders frequently suspended martial law and custom.⁶⁵⁷ The Spanish incursion into imperial territory in 1598/99 and the treatment of the Protestant Count Wirich von Daun-Falkenstein and his troops may be cited here as typical.⁶⁵⁸ Under its commander Francisco de Mendoza, the Admiral of Arragon, the Spanish army entered the lower Rhine region in September 1598.⁶⁵⁹ The main reason for Mendoza’s incursion was the need to find winter quarters for his troops but Mendoza’s other declared objective was to eradicate Protestantism.⁶⁶⁰ Along the way, Spanish troops attacked especially Protestant estates and despite count von Daun’s protestation of neutrality Mendoza laid siege to his castle Broich near Mühlheim. An accord was negotiated but as soon as von Daun’s soldiers marched out of the castle, they were taken to a nearby field and

⁶⁵⁵ William Monter, ‘Heresy executions in Reformation Europe 1520-1565’, in: Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner (eds.), *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, Cambridge 1996, 48-64, 49; Henry Kamen, *The Duke of Alba*, New Haven/London 2004, 79.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid. 94, 166. On Alba’s rule see also Pieter Geyl, *The Revolt of the Netherlands 1555-1609*, 2nd ed. London 1958 [¹ 1932], 99ff.

⁶⁵⁷ Maczkiewitz, *Aufstand*, 258.

⁶⁵⁸ Anon., *Kurtze vnd warhaffte Anzeig [...] Was sich [...] in dem Niderländischen Westphelischen Creiß verloffē*, s.l. 1599, 6ff.

⁶⁵⁹ See Johannes Arndt, *Das Heilige Römische Reich und die Niederlande 1566-1648*, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna 1998, 124ff.

⁶⁶⁰ Stefan Ehrenpreis, *“Wir sind mit blutigen Köpfen davongelaufen...” Lokale Konfessionskonflikte im Herzogtum Berg 1550-1700*, Bochum 1993, 48, 51f.

massacred. The count himself was taken captive and killed while taking a walk some days later.⁶⁶¹

In the empire, the reaction to the invasion and von Daun's murder was a grand display of impotence: the estates sent letters of protest to Mendoza and to the emperor, Rudolph II, who protested to Mendoza and the Governor General of the Habsburg Netherlands, Albert of Austria, who in turn abdicated all responsibility and blamed Mendoza.⁶⁶² Unfazed, the Admiral of Arragon continued to send threatening letters to cities and potentates including the Bishop of Paderborn, Dietrich von Fürstenberg.⁶⁶³ In this particular letter, Mendoza stated bluntly that he had entered the empire for want of pay and food and that there was little chance that he could keep the "hungry and naked soldier" from pillaging Fürstenberg's diocese, because it was known among the soldiery that Lutherans lived and preached in the bishop's dominions.⁶⁶⁴ To assure that the 'innocent' (read: 'Catholics') among Fürstenberg's subjects were spared the "whip" (*flagellum*) of the "*miles Catholicus*", the bishop should ensure that no Protestants were found once – not *if* – Mendoza's men arrived.⁶⁶⁵ Otherwise, Mendoza assured him that all Lutherans would be strung up and everyone, regardless of confession, plundered.

Mendoza thus not only invaded the empire without authorization from his warlord, but began to dictate religious policy to the legitimate rulers whose territories he illegally invaded. While this behaviour is indicative of a peculiar arrogance and betrays Mendoza's ability to predict correctly that he would get away with his gross insubordination, this episode also shows that he undeniably saw the revolt in the Netherlands in religious terms. It seems that he regarded the problem to be less political than religious in nature, which would explain why he so readily ignored political boundaries. The threat Mendoza was fighting was not so much peculiarly Dutch but generally a Protestant one, and the rebels' Protestant German neighbours had to be treated in much the same way as the Admiral's nominal enemy. This view, as we will

⁶⁶¹ Anon., *Anzeig [...] Was sich [...] in dem Niderländischen Westphelischen Creiß verloffien*, 6ff.

⁶⁶² The documents were collected and printed the following year: Anon. *Hispanischer Arragonischer Spiegel*, s.l. 1599.

⁶⁶³ Mendoza's letter was printed with Fürstenberg's letter to the town of Paderborn: *Des Hispanischen Kriegsvolcks Obersten / Don Francisci de Mendoza Copey Schreibens An den Bischoff zu Paderborn*, Erfurt 1599.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid. Aii^R.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid. f.

see, was apparently not limited to the commanders but was shared by many Spanish soldiers of all ranks and expressed also in the way they acted out religious violence.⁶⁶⁶

Spanish religious violence is especially conspicuous because it often imitated elements of heresy trials. During the Cologne War (1583-88), allied Spanish and Bavarian troops took the city of Bonn by accord in late January 1586 and the Spanish colonel Don Juan Manrique de Lara arrested and interrogated the town's reformed preacher *Magister* Johannes Northausen.⁶⁶⁷ The army's behaviour towards the inhabitants of Bonn and especially the abuse of the ministers was criticized even from within its own ranks. Colonel Wolff von Erlach, a Protestant in Bavarian service, wrote a letter to the Duke of Württemberg in which he heavily condemned the events at Bonn and attributed them either to Manrique's instigation or to general "papist tyrannical bloodthirstiness".⁶⁶⁸ Von Erlach and Manrique were rivals but the Protestant soldier's concern for the welfare of the preachers seems to have been genuine, as he had previously tried to hire Northausen's as his field preacher, a proposition the latter had fatefully rejected because he feared a Catholic trap.⁶⁶⁹ Northausen's ordeal is remarkable not only in its dreadfulness but also in the amount of information we can extrapolate for the religious mindset of a Spanish colonel. Northausen was taken to colonel Manrique, who began to interrogate the preacher in the presence of a few other soldiers and officials.⁶⁷⁰ Not only did Manrique call the new faith a "pseudo religion" (*ein vermeinte Religion*) that was engaging in empty ritual. More importantly, he maintained, Protestantism had no tradition, which further undermined its claim to being a 'real' religion.⁶⁷¹ The Catholic Church, in contrast, boasted the unbroken apostolic succession, which Manrique regarded as irrefutable proof of orthodox supremacy. Despite his dismissive attitude towards the new faith, Manrique seems to have appreciated the opportunity to try a Protestant in person and the discussion went on to topics such as the communion and other sacraments as well as the definition of

⁶⁶⁶ Unless names are given it is impossible to determine whether soldiers described as *Spanier* were actually native Spaniards or mercenaries from the Low Countries, the Empire or elsewhere. Straddling has described native Spaniards as "an ever-contracting minority" in Philip IV's armies so that "by the 1640s, less than one in four of the men enlisted [...] was a native of the peninsula" (R.A. Straddling, *Spain's Struggle for Europe 1598-1668*, London/Rio Grande, 1994, 251).

⁶⁶⁷ Johannes Northausen, *Erbermliche Aber warhaffte vnnd Instrumentirte anzeig vnnd beschreibung / was nach der Verrätherischen auffgebung der Statt Bonn der Bischoff zu Lüttig / durch seine befelchshabere gegen einem frommen Kirchen diener da selbst fürnehmen lassen*, s.l. 1584. On the accord of Bonn see Max Lossen, *Der Kölnische Krieg*, vol. 2, Munich/Leipzig 1897, 459ff.

⁶⁶⁸ Cited in Lossen, *Kölnische Krieg*, 2, 473, footnote.

⁶⁶⁹ Northausen, *Erbermliche [...] anzeig*, 3.

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 8f.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.* 9.

‘heretic’.⁶⁷² Eventually, however, he declared the inanity of Protestantism proven and repeatedly offered the preacher the choice between death and conversion and when Northausen refused Manrique had him thrown into the Rhine.

The scene illustrates that the colonel was thoroughly immersed in confessional thinking and that he saw the violence he administered in confessional terms. What makes his behaviour especially conspicuous is his imitation of the procedure of heresy trials. Ecclesiastical law pertaining to heretics was well defined and envisioned several stages that had to be passed through before an individual was branded a heretic and had to suffer the consequences.⁶⁷³ The heretical thought stood at the beginning, followed by an accusation of heresy and a trial in which the contested ideas were examined. Then the heretic was admonished to recant and return to orthodoxy and only when the heretic exhibited lasting obstinacy (*pertinacia*) he faced execution. Colonel Manrique followed this procedure in every way: he first established the nature of the heresy, debated the heretical beliefs of the accused, repeatedly offered the chance to recant and only ordered the execution when Northausen’s *pertinacia* had become evident again and again.⁶⁷⁴

The episode in Bonn is exceptionally well documented and one might object that the confessional mindset of an individual colonel can hardly be taken as representative. But the view among Spanish soldiers that they were fighting heretics seems to have been widespread and was often reflected in the way they dealt with the corpses of their enemies: they had the tendency to burn dead Protestants. After the sack of Neuss (1586), the Protestant town commander Friedrich Hermann Clout was killed in his bed, his corpse draped in wreaths dipped in tar, hung out of a window next to the body of Clout’s preacher Christoph Fetzer and partially burned.⁶⁷⁵ Similarly, count von Daun was left unburied for several days before the soldiers returned to burn his body in a nearby hut.⁶⁷⁶ One of the authors reporting this outrage felt that the body had been cremated to express “public *despect*, mockery and ignominy of all Protestant estates” and while this may well have been the intention, the idea that von Daun was a ‘heretic’ influenced how this contempt was expressed.⁶⁷⁷ Soldiers thus imitated the ritual burning of heretics that the Catholic Church practised in the manner they dispatched with their

⁶⁷² Ibid. 10ff.

⁶⁷³ See Angerendt, *Toleranz*, 239.

⁶⁷⁴ Northausen, *Erbermliche [...] anzeig*, 7ff.

⁶⁷⁵ Anon., *Warhafftige: Zeytungen / Von der Belegerung / vnnd eynemung / der Statt Neuß*, Augsburg 1586, Aiiiir. See also Helmut Gilliam, ‘Neuss und der Kölner Krieg’, in: Max Tauch (ed.), *Neuss und der Kölner Krieg*, Neuss 1986, 9-25, 22.

⁶⁷⁶ Anon, *Anzeig [...] Was sich [...] in dem Niderländischen Westphelischen Creiß verlossen*, 6ff.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid. 10.

Protestant enemies. This connection was rarely made explicit (at least it was not reported) but when Spanish troops poured gunpowder on the bodies of killed Swedes, they explained their reasoning: “because they are heretics, they must be persecuted and burned with fire”.⁶⁷⁸

The imitation of heresy trial procedures makes the *ad hominem* violence of Spanish troops particularly salient and the specific variations on this common theme lend the reports credibility. In contrast, sources that merely alleged that soldiers killed out of confessional hatred make it impossible to ascertain whether this was actually the case or the authors’ interpretation and the tendency to employ literary topoi calls into doubt their accuracy. There remains a fundamental problem, however, as rejecting the truthfulness of sources that invoke such topoi of violence ignores the possibility that soldiers were influenced in their behaviour precisely by such reports. It is possible that soldiers, who were of course familiar with such tropes, may have actually acted them out but we have no means of resolving this hermeneutical dilemma.

Conclusion: religious violence and the individual

Scenes in which religious violence was acted out allow insights into soldiers’ religious attitudes that are difficult to document otherwise. These incidents show that soldiers involved exhibited confessional attitudes, apparently had a religious motivation and betrayed a good knowledge of confessional differences in doctrine and religious practice. The wide spectrum in which military religious violence could manifest itself also shows that confessional antagonism could be expressed in degrees of severity. The pattern that emerges confirms scholarship on religious violence in other contexts: Catholic soldiers appear to have been more prone to attack persons, while the desecration and destruction of sacred places and objects seems to have been more closely associated with Protestant violence. This pattern can only be considered a tendency, however, as we have also seen Protestant soldiers killing Catholics on grounds of religion and Catholic soldiers debasing a Protestant church. Critically, the likeliness with which a Catholic soldier killed a Protestant on religious grounds or vice versa cannot be gauged. The reason why the impression arises that Catholics were more prone to killing Protestants lies in their greater conspicuousness merit to the imitation of

⁶⁷⁸ Cited by Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 210f.

Church ritual. They can consequently be more clearly *identified* as religiously motivated. Protestant soldiers who killed Catholics did not do so in ways that can be associated with rituals that allow labelling these acts as unambiguously religiously motivated. Thus, while the examination of confessional violence yields good insights into the religious mentality of the soldiers involved, generalizations regarding the occurrence of religious violence seem invalid.

There are many instances in which soldiers inverted confessional dichotomies, for example during the Sack of Rome when Lutheran Landsknechte protected nuns from rape by Catholic troops.⁶⁷⁹ Situations in which soldiers began to argue amongst each other over the treatment of members of a different denomination are also telling, since they show that soldiers' personal moral boundaries differed. The case of pastor Herdenius, who only avoided being left stark naked by a looting party because one soldier objected to stripping a cleric and intimidated his comrades with blasphemous curses, has already been described in the previous chapter.⁶⁸⁰ Similarly, the nun Maria Anna Junius witnessed how two Catholic soldiers in Protestant services began to fight over whether or not to plunder a Catholic convent.⁶⁸¹ Even in situations that were extremely charged with confessional antagonism like the Sack of Magdeburg, behaviour was apparently not stringently guided by confessional attitudes. Not all Catholics reacted with indifference to the suffering of the Protestant population and over 600 women found refuge in the Unser Lieben Frauen cloister.⁶⁸² Pastor Thodaenus's experience proves that the imperial troops behaved in entirely different ways towards the people they came upon whilst looting and it bears repeating that it was a Spanish colonel who rescued the preacher and his household. Confessional categories consequently did not predictably determine how soldiers behaved or whom they turned against; religious violence was attitudinal in character, not institutional.

Confessional attitudes could be expressed through acts of religious violence and these situations provide valuable insights into these attitudes but it would be incorrect to conclude that confessional categories as such influenced the occurrence of religious violence in any meaningful way beyond introducing the potential for conflict. It is in fact rather difficult to find instances that can be labelled confidently as 'religious' violence, which leads us to an evaluation of the prevalence of confessional violence in

⁶⁷⁹ E.R. Chamberlin, *The Sack of Rome*, London 1979, 173.

⁶⁸⁰ Herdenius, letter to superintendent Dieterich, 51.

⁶⁸¹ Hümmer, *Bamberg im Schweden-Kriege*, 213f.

⁶⁸² Bandhauer, *Diarium*, 277f.

the armies. We have to take into account a fundamental imbalance in the sources towards the exceptional and the violent, while the countless daily encounters between soldiers and civilians of different confessions that did *not* end violently were simply not recorded.⁶⁸³ If we take the case of the Spanish army in Protestant towns like Wesel, we find several poignant instances in which soldiers made their aversion to the ‘heretical’ beliefs of the locals explicit but their many comrades who did not are not tangible for the historian because their inactions are unrecorded. As we have seen in the previous chapter, confessional differences generally did not affect the conduct of war and religious coexistence appears to have been a characteristic of military society. We therefore have to place the acts of religious violence in relation to the predominant ability to overlook confessional differences in the military. As Diefendorf has observed for the context of 16th century Paris, it seems that in the military context religious violence was also acted out by a radical minority whose deeds were reported but this should not lead to an overestimation of the importance of confessional hatred.⁶⁸⁴ The simultaneity of religious violence and religious coexistence in the military is not contradictory but indicative of a plurality of attitudes towards confessional matters. The doctrinal fragmentation of Western Christendom introduced the *potential* for confessional conflict but there was no *inevitability* of confessional conflict and violence. Moreover, whether religious violence occurred or not appears to have depended crucially on the individuals involved, who chose to act out religious violence, refrain from it, stop it, or simply overlook confessional categories altogether.

⁶⁸³ See Kaiser, *Ärger als der Türck*, 182, for a similar estimation.

⁶⁸⁴ Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross*, 177.

Chapter 5

Dying, Death and Burial in the Military

Killing and dying are defining elements of the soldier's profession. Soldiers' attitudes towards killing and military violence were addressed in the third chapter. The intention of this chapter is to examine what characterized dying, death and burial in the military sphere and in how far attitudes and practices differed from those described by historians in the civilian context. Much has been written about the importance of death, dying and burial in early modern culture but our knowledge of how these themes were dealt with in the military sphere is still rudimentary.⁶⁸⁵ We will begin with an overview of the culture of death as historians have described it in the civilian context. Funeral sermons given for soldiers are a good starting point for the study of military dying culture as these texts were very specific regarding the circumstances of death and, importantly, offered evaluations of how 'good' a given death had been. The focus will then turn to theological advice given to soldiers in spiritual literature regarding the preparation for death under the adverse circumstances of military life. The discussion will move on to military attitudes towards dying and death and military funerary rites.

Dying well in early modern culture

Early modern dying was both an intricate and an important matter. To quote Allan Kellehear: "[t]here were procedures to follow, people to meet, tasks to be performed and property to be dispersed"⁶⁸⁶. The soul's welfare in the netherworld was a primary concern

⁶⁸⁵ The pioneering French studies are: Phillippe Ariès, *Essais sur l'histoire de la mort en occident du Moyen Age a nos jours*, Paris 1975; *L'homme devant la mort*, Paris 1977 [German ed. *Geschichte des Todes*, Munich 1980, paperback ed.: Munich 1982]; Pierre Chaunu's *La Mort a Paris: XVIe, XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, Paris 1978; Michel Vovelle's *La Mort et l'Occident de 1300 à nos jours*, Paris 1983. See also: Ralph Houlbrooke's edition of essays *Death, Ritual and Bereavement*, London 1989, and his monograph *Death Religion and the Family in England 1480-1750*, Oxford 1998; Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death: Visual Culture in English Death Ritual*, London 1991; David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, Oxford 1997; Sabine Holtz, 'Die Unsicherheit des Lebens. Zum Verständnis von Krankheit und Tod in den Predigten der lutherischen Orthodoxie', in: Lehmann and Trepp, *Zeichen der Krise*, 135-157; Craig M. Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead – Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450-1700*, Basingstoke 2000; Vanessa Harding, *The Dead and the Living in London and Paris, 1500-1670*, Cambridge 2002; Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* Oxford 2002; Norbert Ohler, *Sterben und Tod im Mittelalter*, Düsseldorf 2003; Allan Kellehear, *A Social History of Dying*, Cambridge 2007; Luebke, *Confessions of the Dead*. Specifically for the military context see Frank Pietzcker, 'Die Todesvorstellung im Landsknechts- und Soldatenlied', *Zeitschrift für Musikpädagogik* 44 (1988), 3-13; Krusenstjern, *Seliges Sterben*, esp. 483ff; Kaiser, *Ars moriendi*.

⁶⁸⁶ Kellehear, *Social History of Dying*, 89.

for the individual. While a pious life was considered a reasonably good investment, dying well was the ultimate indicator and determiner of post-mortem standing. Conscious preparation for the transition to the next life was indispensable as was the adherence to the rules laid out by the *ars moriendi* literature that had begun to circulate in the late middle ages. Philippe Ariès's seminal studies of the topic have led a host of scholars to address, evaluate and reevaluate the importance of death in early modern life.⁶⁸⁷ The picture that emerges is both detailed and varied but a number of elements remained fundamentally unchanged.⁶⁸⁸ The most general and at the same time most important goal was to die 'well'; the bad death was greatly feared.⁶⁸⁹ In contrast to the bad sudden death, the good death was anticipated and dealt with by the individual. When death was approaching, a series of preparatory procedures was initiated and the priest or minister was summoned to see the moribund out of this world with a series of prayers and admonitions. Five temptations had to be overcome in the hour of death (loss of faith, despair, impatience, vainglory and avarice) and deathbed procedures were aimed at helping the dying person in doing so.⁶⁹⁰ Friends and family would gather around the bed and aid the dying, Catholics praying for their souls, Protestants praying for faith and steadfastness. Dying went well when *moriens* had stoically borne the pains of illness, death had been accepted, the necessary prayers had been said and the dying person had passed on calmly. Death was simultaneously the ultimate challenge to faith and ultimate proof of faith, as Edward Muir states succinctly, "this final moment determined all".⁶⁹¹

The Reformation affected the last stages of life profoundly. Due to a changing topography of the netherworld through the abolition of purgatory, religious pluralization brought with it diverse doctrines regarding burial. The orthodox way of ritual interment in sacred ground, with masses read on behalf of the deceased's soul, was met with varying degrees of scepticism by the reformers.⁶⁹² Purgatory as both a cleansing and waiting facility of the soul offered a convenient solution to the problem of immediate post-mortem judgement *versus* allocation to one of the eternal abodes on Judgement Day. Therefore, the denial of its existence in Protestantism raised the question of what, then, *did* happen to the souls of the dead. Luther concluded that souls slept until Judgement

⁶⁸⁷ Ariès, *Geschichte des Todes*.

⁶⁸⁸ Houlbrooke, *Death*, 183.

⁶⁸⁹ Holtz, *Unsicherheit des Lebens*, 137.

⁶⁹⁰ See Philip Morgan, 'Of Worms and War: 1380-1558', in: P.C. Jupp and C. Gittings (eds.), *Death in England, an Illustrated History*, Manchester 1999, 128.

⁶⁹¹ Muir, *Ritual*, 52.

⁶⁹² Koslofsky, *Reformation of the Dead*, 31ff.

Day, a concept that was also adopted by other Protestant sects.⁶⁹³ Protestant burial rites reflected these changing ideas about the netherworld. Protestantism sought to sever the ties between the living and the dead and the removal of the dead from within the parish churchyard to a cemetery outside of the dwelling places of the living was intended to create spatial distance.⁶⁹⁴ Jean Calvin was characteristically radical in his insistence on an unmarked grave for himself but for most Protestants he was taking the attack on popish ritual too far.⁶⁹⁵

It is important to underline that the *ars moriendi* literature described an ideal of a good death that many did not perfectly perform in practice. Furthermore, local dying customs and individual attitudes at times differed significantly from official doctrines.⁶⁹⁶ Marc Forster has found that 17th century Catholics in South Western Germany felt that deathbed confession and communion were essential to a good death but rejected the sacrament of extreme unction, as they feared that receiving it would seal their death.⁶⁹⁷ Calvinism's official funerary minimalism and the separation of the living from the dead met with resistance among the reformed population. David Luebeke has described how Westphalian Calvinists ignored official Reformed doctrine and asserted themselves against the Catholic clergy in their determination to be buried in the Catholic churchyard, as they considered extramural burial demeaning and were intent on remaining part of their community also in death.⁶⁹⁸ In England, both Catholics and Protestants were convinced that they could control their own salvation by concentrating their thoughts on the divine in the final moment before death, a notion that was unknown in *any* official creed.⁶⁹⁹ Popular attitudes towards death and burial were therefore highly varied and resilient against attempts from above to make communities conform to official doctrines.

Burial practices were therefore subject to custom and varied depending on place and situation. While villagers could hope to be buried in personal graves, this spatial luxury was impossible in urban areas, where only the upper social strata were buried individually. For the rest, the last journey ended in a mass grave.⁷⁰⁰ Burial often became uncomfortably skeletal in times of plague. The bodies had to be – and mostly were –

⁶⁹³ MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 580f.

⁶⁹⁴ See Koslofsky, *Reformation of the Dead*, 40ff.

⁶⁹⁵ MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 577.

⁶⁹⁶ Kaiser, *Ars moriendi*, 324.

⁶⁹⁷ Forster, *Catholic Revival*, 108f.

⁶⁹⁸ Luebke, *Confessions of the Dead*.

⁶⁹⁹ Richard Wunderli and Gerald Broce, "The Final Moment before Death in Early Modern England", *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 20 (1989) 2, 259-275.

⁷⁰⁰ Ohler, *Sterben*, 148; Muir, *Ritual*, 56.

interred but the rites performed were often stripped down. Since the first wave of the Black Death in the mid-14th century, incidents where no priest, or indeed anyone, could be found to bury the dead are recorded.⁷⁰¹ The fear of infection explains this behaviour but we know too little about how people rationalized the denial of customary burial rites and what effect this was perceived to have had on the souls of pious Christians – as opposed to criminals whose maimed burials were an extension of punishment. One can surmise that in Catholic contexts both before and after the Reformation, much could be done for the benefit of the deceased *ex post*, for example through the subsequent consecration of the mass graves and the reading of masses. Protestants, however, had little more than faith to console them after a loved one had received a plague burial. So, while the good death and decent burial certainly were a great concern, it is important to point out that there existed a multiplicity of popular attitudes towards death and burial. Furthermore, the quality of death was largely determined by the situation in which it occurred.

Several specifics of military life raise doubt regarding the likeliness that soldiers would die well, according to early modern norms. The dying needed tranquillity and comfort in their last hours but both were scarce commodities in soldiers' lives. Dying in battle obviously precluded the possibility of composing one's thoughts in the moment of death. We have already seen that chaplains were never available in sufficient numbers so that we must assume that most soldiers died without professional spiritual assistance. So how did soldiers cope with these unpromising prospects for their own departures from this life?

Funeral sermons for soldiers

The most detailed insights into how certain soldiers died are given in funeral sermons written for members of the upper ranks. 'Certain' has to be emphasized: the individuals honoured with these sermons and their subsequent publications were few and disproportionately privileged in life as in death. An examination of how they performed their deaths consequently has to be prefaced with the caveat that these men were in many ways exceptional in military society. Examining the deathbed rites of the

⁷⁰¹ Klaus Bergdolt, *Der schwarze Tod in Europa. Die große Pest und das Ende des Mittelalters*, Munich 2000, *passim*; Samuel K. Cohn Jr., 'The Black Death: the end of a paradigm', in: Canning et al. *Power, Violence and Mass-Death*, 25-66, 42f.

military élite can serve as a starting point, however, not least because the detailed attention to their deaths stands in stark contrast to the indifference with which the majority of the military dead were treated as we will see later on. This section will portray the deaths of three noblemen: the unequivocally ‘good’ death of Friedrich Wilhelm von Wallendorf, the violent, potentially ‘bad’ death of Johann Dietrich von Haugwitz and finally the execution of Bernhard von Miltiz. The circumstances of their deaths were recorded by clerics and later published in booklets including the sermons given at their funerals, their *curricula vitae* and related texts, in Miltiz’s case a consolatory letter (*Trostschrift*) his mother had written to her son and a prayer the condemned man had composed while awaiting execution⁷⁰². The fact that the clerical authors interpreted the deaths recorded in religious terms makes these texts a good entry point into a discussion of military death.

Friedrich Wilhelm von Wallendorf died an impeccable death by all standards. Born in 1609, he and one of his cousins had joined the Bubenheim regiment under Werner von Tilly, in 1626.⁷⁰³ Much to his superiors’ delight, Wallendorf proved to be a diligent, hard-working soldier while superintendent Eggelinck, who authored the funeral sermon, was impressed by the virtuousness of the young officer. His parents had raised him in accordance with the “pure Lutheran catechism” and his religious upbringing helped the eighteen year old to perform a model death.⁷⁰⁴ Wallendorf contracted a “very dangerous feverish illness” and although two of his cousins serving in the same regiment paid for medical treatment, the fever was stronger. When Wallendorf realised that he would surely die, he called for superintendent Eggelinck and confessed his sins. Eggelinck read him edifying passages from Scripture and prayed with him until Wallendorf died the following day. It is noteworthy that a superintendent, a high-ranking Protestant office holder, attended to Wallendorf. Johann Tserclaes and Werner von Tilly had enforced re-catholization in the Lower-Saxon Circle, to which Ahlden, the town where Wallendorf died, belonged.⁷⁰⁵ In his sermon, the superintendent comforted Wallendorf’s family and friends with the assurance that he had not died “like a godless [man], without any remorse and anguish for his sins: but as a blessed,

⁷⁰² Paul Reich, *Leichpredigt. Bey dem Leichbegengnüs des Weiland Edlen Juncker Bernhard von Miltitz [...] In Volckreicher vorsamlung gethan*, s.l. 1615.

⁷⁰³ Wilhelm Eggelinck, *Majestät Brieff*, Braunschweig 1627, Hi^R.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid. Giiii^R.

⁷⁰⁵ See Kaiser, *Politik und Kriegführung*, 84ff.

penitent, faithful Christian”.⁷⁰⁶ Wallendorf’s had not been a “bad”, “quick death” but he had died “in faithful meditation, Christian preparation for a blessed hour of death and in true invocation of his redeemer and saviour Jesus Christ” and he had “passed on gently, weakened by his severe illness, in his bed”.⁷⁰⁷ Finally, the young man had received honourable burial with “persons of nobility and officers as well as a great number of soldiers” in attendance. Wallendorf had managed to meet the high demands of death etiquette: he had accepted his death, was attended to by a cleric, confessed his sins, said the appropriate prayers, passed on calmly in the presence of relatives, and received an honourable burial. This model death left nothing to be desired.

Johann Dietrich von Haugwitz met a far less peaceful end: in a quarrel over for horse fodder he was shot by the quartermaster Johann Burckelau.⁷⁰⁸ His regimental chaplain, Johann Jacob Angermüller, used the occasion of Haugwitz’s funeral to remind the attending soldiers of their spiritual obligations in no uncertain terms. Angermüller centred his sermon on Psalm 90:12 (“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom”). Like King David, cavaliers should strive to die well (*ευθανασίαν*) as Haugwitz’s death was a divine *monstrum* that showed how sudden a soldier’s life could end.⁷⁰⁹ Angermüller preached sardonically against the lack of concern with post-mortem matters among the cavalry, stating not only that the cavalier’s god was most frequently “his belly” but also that he had personally heard from many soldiers that they would rather be at a large banquet in hell than in heaven or did not even believe in the resurrection.⁷¹⁰ Throughout the sermon, Angermüller shamed his congregation, who apparently compared rather unfavourably to a man like Haugwitz. Not only had he been a model soldier, courageous and “magnanimous” (*μεγαλόψυχος*), and in his early twenties already a veteran of the battles of White Mountain and Fleurus, Haugwitz had also been a model Christian. He had attended Angermüller’s sermons whenever possible, making him “a curious exception to our cavaliers, both noble and common” and the chaplain had also frequently seen him reading his prayer book.⁷¹¹ He did have his character flaws but Haugwitz himself had

⁷⁰⁶ Eggelinck, *Majestät Brieff*, Hii^Vf.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁸ Angermüller, Johann Jacob, *Christliche Leichpredigt / vnd Bußpredigt / Bey dem Adelichen Begräbniß / Des weiland WolEdlen / Gestrengen / vnd Mannhaften Johann Dietterichen von Haugwitz [...] gehalten*, Leipzig 1624. The circumstances of Haugwitz’s death are related on pages Gi^V ff.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid. Bi^V, Giiii^R.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid. Biiii^V.

⁷¹¹ Ibid. Gi^Vf.

been aware of this and readily confessed and rued his deficiencies.⁷¹² Regarding Haugwitz's quick and potentially bad death, Angermüller assured his congregation that, in this exceptional case, the factors that might cast doubt over the welfare of Haugwitz's soul could be ignored safely. His death *was* quick but the chaplain asserted that in this instance St. Augustine's dictum *non male moritur qui bene vixit* applied.⁷¹³ The Lord would surely forgive that it had been von Haugwitz who had challenged the quartermaster to the duel, as his anger was caused by injustice and Burckelau's rude and insubordinate behaviour.

Compared with the calm, orderly death of Friedrich von Wallendorf, it is important to underline that Angermüller could still present Haugwitz's death as a 'good' one, despite its inauspicious circumstances. In contrast to the perfect death performed by Wallendorf, Johann von Haugwitz's departure from this world displayed elements that could raise concerns regarding his soul's welfare. The suddenness with which he met his fate and the resulting lack of preparation, the anger that had made him challenge the quartermaster, and his spiritual 'infirmities' were all factors that could, in principle, have detrimental effects on his salvation. His pious comportment during his life outweighed these, however, so that the way he had departed from this life lost importance.

Even more remarkable is the funeral sermon of Bernhard von Miltitz, who was executed for killing another nobleman in Dresden in 1614.⁷¹⁴ In contrast to Haugwitz's life and death, the former being exemplary, the latter less so, we encounter the inverse situation in Miltitz's death: he was a convicted murderer facing execution but had rediscovered piety just in time to perform a perfect death. Born into a Junker family in 1587 he had served in Hungary, Denmark and other theatres of war and was apparently *en route* to another engagement in Scandinavia when he killed an anonymous nobleman in Dresden.⁷¹⁵ He initially fled the city but, much to the satisfaction of Paul Reich, a deacon at Dresden's Kreuzkirche who attended to Miltitz in spiritual matters and gave his funeral sermon, the killer returned on his own accord to face his punishment.

Miltitz appears to have accepted the verdict and the prospect of his execution calmly. Reich recounts Miltitz's fantasies of becoming an advocate against "ire and faction" amongst nobles should he obtain a pardon but the convict seems to not have

⁷¹² Ibid.

⁷¹³ Ibid.

⁷¹⁴ Reich, *Leichpredigt*.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid. Diii^{Rff}.

squandered too much hope on this unlikely prospect and instead prepared himself for death.⁷¹⁶ In gaol, Miltitz copied Bible passages and prayers and also composed prayers of his own including one that was printed alongside the sermon. He asked God's mercy, expressed his confidence in dwelling with Him eternally and also commended his mother into God's care.⁷¹⁷ On the morning of the execution, Miltitz confessed his sins and received communion. When the time to die came, the young man bound his own hands, walked willingly and without assistance to the place of execution, knelt down confidently, commended his soul into God's hands and seems to even have rejoiced at the prospect of being with Christ.⁷¹⁸

The execution of the murderer was ideal to prepare for and perform a good death. Miltitz was in control of all his faculties until the end, he could produce written evidence of his faith, write and recite prayers and impress with his composed demeanour and active compliance. The description given in Reich's account is almost reminiscent of a religious play. Miltitz seems to have managed to transform the 'theatre of horror', to borrow Richard von Dülmen's term, into a 'theatre of piety'.⁷¹⁹ It is neither exceptional nor surprising that convicts facing execution embraced the endeavours of the clergy to prepare them for death and strengthen their faith. In contrast to modern concepts of capital punishment that generally regard the death of the delinquent as the moment in which retribution is made, in pre-modern times penitent convicts became 'poor' sinners. If judges, clerics, executioners and convicts played their role well, an execution was not a mere act of revenge but an awe-inspiring, edifying event. Four years prior to Bernhard von Miltitz's execution, a young woman was put to death for an incestuous relationship in Nürnberg.⁷²⁰ On her way to the place of execution she blessed the bystanders repeatedly, asked them for forgiveness, said a prayer that she, like Miltitz, had specifically composed for the occasion and finally offered her neck 'willingly' to the executioner. Her prayer was in fact considered so edifying that it was later included in a collection of prayers.⁷²¹ Von Dülmen has shown that, as long as the delinquents accepted the role of the penitent sinner, they could not only expect comfort and sympathy but also act as moral exemplars. The public confession and acceptance of the verdict turned the villain into "a rueing Christian who

⁷¹⁶ Ibid. Diiii^R.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid. Diiii^Rf, Eiii^V f.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid. E^R.

⁷¹⁹ Richard von Dülmen, *Theater des Schreckens*, Munich 1985.

⁷²⁰ See *ibid.*, 164f. for this case.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

was led to the slaughter” and who, it was commonly held, was absolved from all sin and went straight to Heaven.⁷²² Bernard von Miltitz’s performance fully satisfied deacon Reich who composed his funeral sermon around Ezekiel 33:11 (“As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live”).

What do these three accounts of military deaths show us? First of all, the sermons use the same language of the good death that was used in the civilian context and the same criteria applied to civilian and military deaths. It is striking, however, that, while the circumstances of these deaths could not be more different, all three were presented as good deaths. One could somewhat cynically account for this by referring to the elevated social and military status of the deceased and the assumable pressure the preachers were under to present these deaths in a favourable light. This may have been a factor but an eagerness or necessity to please the congregations does not explain sufficiently why the preachers interpreted these heterogeneous deaths as ‘good’. Chaplain Angermüller for one seems not to have worried about attacking the congregation’s lack of piety and morality in Haugwitz’s funeral sermon. It is more convincing to suggest that these examples indicate that the precepts of the *ars moriendi* were in fact far less rigid than is often postulated by historians and that, in praxis, clerics and lay people alike had some leeway in negotiating even imperfect deaths. The tenets of dying etiquette were valid in the military context but it seems that the reality of military life and the likeliness of a sudden, quick death led chaplain Angermüller to emphasize the importance of a pious life, which could outweigh a ‘bad’ death.

The sermons do not testify only to the norms of the clerics, Wallendorf and Miltitz both actively shaped their good deaths according to the same norms. There is further evidence from military diaries that shows that the authors evaluated death in the same terms as their civilian contemporaries. Caspar von Widmarckter, for example, mentioned death frequently and distinguished between death in battle, which he did not evaluate in either way, and the explicitly good death of his ensign Hans Friedrich von Harstall who died “blessed in God and [in a] Christian [manner]” of a fever.⁷²³ Augustin von Fritsch also described the good death of Colonel Melchior von Reinnach, who “passed on blessedly in the Lord” when he succumbed to a gunshot wound.⁷²⁴ We will

⁷²² Ibid. 161f.

⁷²³ Gräf, *Söldnerleben*, 143.

⁷²⁴ Westenrieder, *Fritsch*, 171.

return to soldiers' attitudes towards dying in detail, but for now the observation that the notion of dying well was shared and recorded by soldiers is of importance. This shows that a traditionally well-managed death was an ideal also in the military. In the context of the army, however, such placid departures could not be counted on as the 'bad' death was constantly lurking.

Preparing for a 'bad' death

In the context of military life, comfort was rare especially for the lower ranks and the fact that the minority of soldiers actually died in battle is the most compelling indicator of their dire living conditions.⁷²⁵ If the numbers given by the author of an account of the Swabian League's Württemberg campaign of 1519 are to be trusted, the league's army comprised approximately twenty thousand infantry and four thousand horse, of which two hundred, including sappers were killed by the enemy – less than one percent.⁷²⁶ About twice that number, however, were either executed by the provos or killed or maimed in brawls among 'comrades'. Malnutrition made camp society vulnerable to a variety of diseases and the unsanitary camps and cramped quarters were an ideal breeding ground for diseases such as typhus, smallpox, plague, typhoid, syphilis and especially dysentery.⁷²⁷ Due to the persistent inability of the military authorities to organize sufficient provisions, the death rates incurred from hunger and the resulting heightened vulnerability to infection increased proportionally to the size of the armies. If a field army failed to keep on the move, the situation became even more dire as food resources rapidly depleted, latrines filled up and butchered animal carcasses rotted next to the tents and huts. When the imperial army spent the summer of 1527 in the city of Rome and its surrounds a plague broke out among the Germans and claimed about 5000 men.⁷²⁸ Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof gave a haunting description of camp life: "they march in the frost and cold, rain and foul weather in wet clothes and shoes [...] Apart from that they suffer bitter hunger [...] no clean, pure water they could drink:

⁷²⁵ For the period of the Thirty Years War, see Quentin Outram, 'The Socio-Economic Relations of Warfare and the Military Mortality Crises of the Thirty Years' War', *Medical History* 45 (2001), 151-184, esp. 156ff.

⁷²⁶ Anon, *Des hochloblichen schwebischen punds Hörzug im landt zu Wirtemberg*, s.l. 1519, 18 (own pagination, title page = 1).

⁷²⁷ Tallett, *War and Society*, 106f; Burschel, *Söldner*, 258ff.

⁷²⁸ Schönhuth, *Leben und Tathen*, 7.

They lie in the filth, mess, lice and stench, tangled and on top of each other”.⁷²⁹ These were the conditions in which many soldiers met their end.

Trying to avoid death will have been the obvious reaction and in this respect, the efforts to limit violence that have been described in Chapter 3 gain an additional dimension. Soldiers could also turn to a specific variety of apotropaic magic, known as *Festmachen* or *Passauer Kunst*. I have examined these magical practices in an article provided in the appendix.⁷³⁰ In many ways, the specific example of the *Passauer Kunst* encapsulates attitudes towards the military in general. As in confessional matters, military authorities, the article argues, largely turned a blind eye to these magical practices.⁷³¹ Despite the fact that the *Passauer Kunst* was commonly taken as another case in point of soldierly deviance, the practices themselves appear to have been not peculiar to the military but were drawn from the repertoire of early modern popular magic.⁷³² While theologians of all denominations and many civilians considered the *Passauer Kunst* to be demonic, the article argues, soldiers in fact tried to harness the powers of the sacred in order to save their lives: hosts, Bible passages or herbs in amulets and the use of magical formulas or prayers were all part of Christian popular magic.⁷³³ Finally, individual soldiers in all armies, regardless of nominal confession tried to make themselves invulnerable.

But most authors focussed their deliberations on the violent way soldiers died in the confusion of battle. In this situation, the pivotal moment of death that according to the *ars moriendi* ought to be calm and composed was therefore experienced engulfed in the chaos of battle. Meditative prayer and passing on calmly in these circumstances were impossible, especially as death increasingly came in the form of canon, harquebus or musket balls, fired from a distance and suddenly killing the unsuspecting victim.

The solution to the problem came in the form of prayer before the engagement. As we have seen in the second chapter, communal prayer had been customary throughout the Middle Ages and into the early modern period, warriors knelt down before an engagement, prayed to God, the Virgin and the saints for victory and intercession. In preparation for death, Catholic field preachers heard dying confessions

⁷²⁹ Kirchhof, *Militaris Disciplina*, 108f.

⁷³⁰ Nikolas Funke, ‘“Naturali legitimâque Magica” oder „Teufflische Zauberey”? Das „Festmachen” im Militär des 16. Und 17. Jahrhunderts, *Militär und Gesellschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit*, 13 (2009) 1, 16-32.

⁷³¹ Ibid. 18f, 29.

⁷³² Ibid. 27f.

⁷³³ Ibid. 29f.

and administered the last sacraments. The nun Maria Anna Junius mentions how a dying officer called for a preacher who heard his last confession. From this we can assume that the preachers went into battle with the soldiers.⁷³⁴ The chronic shortage of clerical staff also meant, however, that the preachers who were present could only attend to a minority so that many men died without their spiritual comfort. While this problem was especially noticeable in the context of battles, the burden on the preachers was also enormous in other situations. Abbot Maurus Friesenegger described how a field preacher had to hear thirty confessions in one day in late December when a great number of his flock were dying from hunger and cold.⁷³⁵ In the past, soldiers themselves had at times adopted the role of priests as was the case before the battle of Pontvallain (1370) when the men made the sign of the cross over the bread and used it for communion, heard each other's confession and prayed together.⁷³⁶ I have not come across instances of such spiritual industry in the early modern period, however.

Communal prayer and, in the Protestant context, hymn singing was a practicable option to counter the fears of the soldiers, although the main intention seems to have been to ask for protection from death rather than to prepare for it. When the Protestant troops prepared for battle at Drakenburg in 1547, the whole force knelt down three times and prayed for God's assistance.⁷³⁷ Then, Luther's suitably martial hymn *Strong Tower and Refuge is Our God (...Right godly shield and weapon)* was sung.⁷³⁸ Finally, when the time for battle had come and the soldiers marched towards their enemy, they sang *In Peace and Joy I Now Depart*, another hymn of Luther's with a strong, consoling orientation towards the other world.⁷³⁹ The choice of hymns seems to have been intended to bolster the men's morale through the celebration of God's protection against the "evil foe" and secondly, to soothe their fears when it came to fighting and dying so that they might die 'peacefully', if not 'joyously'. As was the case with hymns used during services, the hymns sung here were not specifically military.⁷⁴⁰ The lyrics fit the occasion of battle, not least because of their at times martial overtones and reliance on military language, but they were common Lutheran fare that the soldiers had learned in their civilian lives.

⁷³⁴ Hümmer, *Bamberg im Schwedenkriege*, 59.

⁷³⁵ Friesenegger, *Tagebuch*, 37.

⁷³⁶ Contamine, *War*, 299.

⁷³⁷ Bei der Wieden, *Leben*, 54.

⁷³⁸ Luther, 'Strong Tower and Refuge is Our God', in: L.W. Bacon and N.H. Allen (eds.), *The Hymns of Martin Luther*, [1st New York 1883], reprint: s.l. (Dodo Press) 2006, 70.

⁷³⁹ Luther, 'In Peace and Joy I Now Depart', in: Bacon and Allen, *Hymns*, 58.

⁷⁴⁰ See Chapter 2.

Indeed, hymns or prayers that were written specifically for the use of the soldier are far and few between. Martin Luther composed one of the first prayers for soldiers to prepare themselves for death.⁷⁴¹ This prayer contained many of the characteristics that were traditionally associated with the meditative contemplation that was considered ideal in the moment of death according to the *ars moriendi*. The soldier should not hope for salvation in his capacity as a warrior but as a Christian, his profession was superseded by the emphasis on the individual's faith and personal accountability. The prayer is void of all imploration for victory or, in fact, anything that is not to do with the individual speaker's salvation. The context in which it is spoken – by a soldier before battle – is assigned to the background. The individual character is further emphasized by Luther's suggestion to add the Lord's Prayer or the creed and "[i]n doing so commit body and soul into God's hands, draw [one's] sword, and fight in God's name".⁷⁴² Just before battle, in Luther's view, the soldier should consequently blank out the situation as far as possible and fight, and potentially die, in personal communication with the Lord. This is the closest soldiers could be expected to approximate the pious contemplation befitting the dying in less adverse circumstances.

Luther's prayer was included in later military publications, most notably in Leonhart Fronsperger's *Spiritual War Regime*, but the focus in theological tracts shifted away from final contemplation to godly living.⁷⁴³ Andreas Musculus did not concern himself with last things in his theological handbook for soldiers; he gave his readers instructions on how to *live* in a way that did not threaten salvation.⁷⁴⁴ The "disorderly life" he suspected most soldiers led would be the state in which they died and these were the grounds on which God would judge them.⁷⁴⁵ But such "evil, wild and scurrilous sows" were no concern of his; he was addressing the few pious warriors who abstained from this "devilish life".⁷⁴⁶ Providing that his readers had ascertained that the warlord they were serving had a just cause to go to war and that it was not waged against Protestantism, it was a soldier's moral conduct that determined his chances in the netherworld. In short, it was not how soldiers died but how they lived that mattered.

⁷⁴¹ Luther, *Soldiers*, 136f.

⁷⁴² Ibid. 136.

⁷⁴³ Fronsperger, *Geistliche KriegßOrdnung*, xv^v.

⁷⁴⁴ Musculus, *Beruff vnd Stand*. The insistence on a pious, repentant life was a characteristic of Lutheran orthodoxy (Holtz, *Unsicherheit des Lebens*, 138).

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid. Ciii^r.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid. Ciii^rf.

Being prepared for death and remaining alert to the suddenness with which a soldier's life could end remained of tantamount importance in the military and this notion was shared at least by the military elites. Caspar von Widmarckter felt that his busy life distracted him from contemplating its end and after a narrow escape from death, he purchased a seat and two grave sites in his local church.⁷⁴⁷ Robert Monro also explained in cautionary passages that soldiers "ought ever to be well prepared, having death ever before their Eyes, they ought to be the more familiar with *God*, that they might be ever ready to embrace it".⁷⁴⁸ He warned "foolish men" that battle was not where most soldiers met their end but rather that "some die, through one kinde of death, and some by another; so that we ought ever be prepared and ready, not knowing how, when, or where to die [...] Our care then should be still, to meditate on the end, that it may be good, and then doubtlesse we shall die well".⁷⁴⁹

The departure from the traditional *ars moriendi* paradigm in deemphasizing the importance of ultimate contemplation and stressing the importance of leading a good life and be ever prepared to die, already evidenced in chaplain Angermüller's funeral sermon for Johann Dietrich von Haugwitz, was commonly held in the military. It was not specific to Protestantism as the Catholic Lazarus von Schwendi, chief military adviser to Charles V and Maximilian II, also cautioned soldiers to live piously and to avoid committing atrocities because they "know no certain time of their life and death but stand in constant danger" of death.⁷⁵⁰ The key to Heaven therefore lay in the soldier's life, not his death: the *ars bene vivendi* became a substitute for the complex demands of the *ars moriendi* and this notion was also promoted in 17th century religious literature.⁷⁵¹

Military attitudes towards death

In the sixteenth century, the Landsknecht was frequently depicted in the *danse macabre* genre as well as in a series of broadsheets that portrayed soldiers in conversation with death.⁷⁵² The soldiers in these images are noteworthy in their confident, even cocky, demeanour in the face of Death. A pen and ink drawing by Hans Baldung (around 1503)

⁷⁴⁷ Gräf, *Söldnerleben*, 93.

⁷⁴⁸ Monro, *Expedition*, II, 7.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid. II, 48.

⁷⁵⁰ Schwendi, *Kriegsdiskurs*, 278.

⁷⁵¹ See for example Puchner, *Christliche [...] Gebetlein*, Biiii^{Vf}, E^R-Eiii^R.

⁷⁵² See Rogg, *Landsknechte*, 213ff.

shows the scene in an exaggerated, almost comic form.⁷⁵³ The Landsknecht is leaning casually on a pole weapon, half turning towards the Reaper who looks not very ‘grim’ in this depiction. The soldier’s facial expression is void of fear; he looks, in fact, rather bored. Death, on the other hand, is smiling, his body is fully turned towards the Landsknecht. In other depictions of the ‘Death and moriens’ type, Death leads or drags the unfortunates away by their arms or clothes: in Baldung’s drawing, Death feels the cloth of the Landsknecht’s cape and seems rather in awe. While Baldung took the motif to the extreme, soldiers were frequently portrayed as extraordinarily self-assured in the face of death. The soldier rarely attempts to flee but surrenders to Death fatalistically.⁷⁵⁴ Albrecht Dürer’s broadsheet of 1510, admonishing the reader to be prepared for death at all times, also uses the Landsknecht in the image to illustrate the omnipresent danger of losing one’s life.⁷⁵⁵ Again, the Landsknecht leans casually on his halberd, calmly looking at the hourglass Death holds in his hand. In contrast to the calm acceptance is another, rather rare, motif in which the soldier puts up a fight with Death. These fights are full-on engagements with Death, who often exchanges his customary scythe for military weapons.⁷⁵⁶ The soldiers’ reactions to Death as portrayed in art are exceptional: collected acceptance on the one hand, resorting to a fierce fight on the other, but in either case fearlessness is a characteristic response.

While the Landsknecht therefore featured prominently in art, common soldiers’ deaths were of little interest in written sources. The suffering of the populace and the deaths of commanders received much attention, but few cared about the dying of the rank and file. It may be due to their low social status and the stigma attached to soldiering or the voluntary nature of the profession that widely precluded compassion, but the degree to which soldier death evades the modern eye is extraordinary. Warlords and commanders rarely showed interest in the deaths of their mercenaries. War ‘from above’ was a technical affair and losses of troops featured mainly as statistical fluctuations. When Tilly’s troops massacred the Scottish garrison of Neu Brandenburg in early 1631, the Swedish king sent Donald Mackay, the owner of the regiment, a letter in which he expressed his regret about his loss. That this was not a letter of condolence becomes clear immediately, as Gustavus Adolphus followed his expression of regret

⁷⁵³ Ibid. 214.

⁷⁵⁴ See for example the anonymous ‘Totentanz’ depicted in Miller and Richards, *Landsknechte*, 57.

⁷⁵⁵ Albrecht Dürer, ‘Keyn ding hilfft fur den zeytling todt’, depicted in Rogg, *Landsknechte*, 215.

⁷⁵⁶ See also the woodcuts by Wolfgang Strauch ‘Landsknecht und Tod’ (c.1555), in Strauß, *German Singleleaf Woodcut*, III, 21, and Jacob Binck, ‘Landsknecht kämpft mit dem Tod’, undated, in: Blau, *Landsknechte*, I, 121.

with matter of fact orders to replenish the ranks of Mackay's three regiments with Scottish levies.⁷⁵⁷ Robert Monro, who was serving under Mackay but had been dispatched elsewhere and thereby escaped the slaughter, showed more empathy with his dead comrades. He noted the "crueltie and inhumanitie" of the imperial troops in not giving quarter to the Scots who "fought valiantly to the last man".⁷⁵⁸ Typically, Monro mentioned the names of the officers killed but the rank and file remained anonymous and amorphous. Also in battle reports and other news media the names of dead officers were meticulously listed. An author reporting the events in Bohemia in late 1618 stated that an attack on the retreating imperialists resulted in only 20 dead on the rebels' side and that "apart from a lieutenant on horse, no one noble" died.⁷⁵⁹ On the enemy side, over a thousand men had been lost through death, desertion or capture, among them seven or eight nobles, all but an anonymous captain listed by name and rank. The losses among the lower ranks were of little concern to anyone. In an account of the Swabian League's Württemberg campaign of 1519, the event of legendary mercenary leader Georg von Frundsberg having his beret shot off his head was as important as the fact that many of the League's men had been shot that day.⁷⁶⁰ Jöns Månsson Teitts, a trumpeter in Gustavus Adolphus' service, also described his experiences during the German expedition mainly in terms of what happened to the king, rather than the soldiers or Teitts himself.⁷⁶¹ The king's horses, on the other hand, received a lot of attention and Teitts noted when and how they were killed with great detail.⁷⁶²

Indifference towards the suffering of the rank and file was thus the norm but in some instances the military elites also commiserated. Colonel Caspar von Widmarckter was not overly concerned with his men's welfare and in his campaign diary, diplomatic and organizational matters and personal misfortunes, for example when a Piedmont ox stepped on his foot and the colonel lost a toenail, took precedence over pondering his men's lot.⁷⁶³ In some instances, however, Widmarckter was moved to record the dire living conditions of the common soldiers, for example when the army was stuck in Brusasco: "the whole time I saw nothing but squalor, misery and disease among the

⁷⁵⁷ Letter from Gustavus Adolphus II to Donald Mackay, 15th March 1631. NAS, GD84/2/181.

⁷⁵⁸ Monro, *Expedition*, II, 23f.

⁷⁵⁹ Anon, *Zwo warhafftige Zeitungen auß Böhmen*, s.l. 1618, Aii^vf.

⁷⁶⁰ Anon, *Des [...] schwebischen punds Hörzug*, 7.

⁷⁶¹ Jöns Månsson Teitt, *Kriegszüge mit Gustav II Adolph, 1621-1632*, Heiko Droste, Arne Losman (eds.), accessible at: <http://www.amg-fnz.de/quellen/teitts/ed.htm> (last accessed: 16/10/2009)

⁷⁶² See e.g. *ibid.* 9^v.

⁷⁶³ Gräf, *Söldnerleben*, 136.

soldiers in the excessively stinking quarters”.⁷⁶⁴ When the army was finally ordered to march on Montiglio after six days, the colonel expressed pity with the sick men, many of whom “died miserably while marching”.⁷⁶⁵ A letter sent to the imperial colonel Wilhelm von Westphalen shows that his inability or unwillingness to take care of his men had become known to his shocked superiors. General von der Wahl had received a letter in which field marshall von Hatzfeld vented his anger over the fact that the officers had allowed several hundred to “starve and croak” (*verrecken*) in a “pitiless manner”.⁷⁶⁶ Hatzfeld had ordered the distribution of the sick over all imperial garrisons in the region to ensure their care and general von der Wahl had passed on specific orders to Westfalen but he had failed to organise the transport and five hundred men had been left to die in Paderborn. Von der Wahl’s anger is noticeable in the letter and Hatzfeld wrote that whoever was responsible would have to justify himself before God. In this instance, the unnecessary deaths of hundreds of men provoked harsh condemnations from high-ranking officers. Such sympathy appears to have been rare, however, and maybe also undesirable for men who had to cultivate an unemotional attitude towards those they had to send into battle.

It is striking how comparatively little one reads about the natural outcome of war, death, in military sources. The horrors of the battlefield are hardly ever described at length and when Kirchhof attempted this he cautioned the reader that a realistic description of a battle defied both language and imagination.⁷⁶⁷ Mostly extolling the joys of Landsknecht life, songs, too, only rarely shed light on the dark side of the soldier’s experience. References to the gore of battle were not an infrequent interjection, however, even in lyrical contexts that praised the valour and bravery of the Landsknecht. The former Landsknecht and songwriter Jörg Graff called the battlefield the “judge’s book” into which the combatants wrote the sentences until “the blood runs into the shoes”.⁷⁶⁸ Wading through blood became a common formula to describe the carnage of battle. In a low-German song about the battle of Milan (1521), the author contrasted the short duration of the battle with the amount of blood that was spilled: “The battle lasted only a short time / From 3 o’clock until dinner time / One saw a lot of

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid. 133.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid. 134.

⁷⁶⁶ Letter from General von der Wahl to Colonel Westphalen, 24th Jan. 1641, in: Andreas Neuwöhner (ed.), *Im Zeichen des Mars. Quellen zur Geschichte des Dreißigjährigen Krieges und des Westfälischen Friedens in den Stiften Paderborn und Corvey*, Paderborn 1998, 180.

⁷⁶⁷ Kirchhof, *Militaris Disciplina*, 147.

⁷⁶⁸ Jörg Graff, ‘Ein schön Lied / von der Kriegsleut Orden’, in: Meinhardt, *Schwartenhals*, 9f.

blood being shed / One saw many a Landsknecht stand there / in the blood up to his feet”.⁷⁶⁹ While in these two songs the blood on the ground was shed by the vanquished, it becomes a *memento mori* in a song about the battle of Pavia (1524): “In the blood we had to walk / up to over our shoes, up to over our shoes / merciful God, acknowledge the misery / or else we have to perish also”.⁷⁷⁰

The reality of battle caused mass panic and the chaotic retreats of whole regiments are frequently described phenomena. In his scathing report on the Protestants’ defeat at White Mountain, Christian von Anhalt, the field commander of the Bohemian army, sharply condemned the mass flight among the common soldiery that had completely dissolved the battle formation but showed unusual empathy in blaming the cruel treatment their officers had subjected them to for their retreat.⁷⁷¹ Anhalt’s subordinate Count Thurn was less willing to blame the officers and instead intoned the old litany of the soldiery’s “un-Christian, unheard-of godless lifestyle” with which they had invoked God’s wrath “thousandfold”.⁷⁷²

It was not just the demoralized, destitute and hungry soldiery who panicked in the face of death; the horrors of the battlefield also affected the nobility, the putative warrior ‘elite’. In his account of the Battle of Breitenfeld (1631), Sydnam Poyntz described the panic that grabbed hold of the Duke of Saxony and his nobles. With the Catholic cavalry and some of Tilly’s infantry approaching, the battle became heated around the Saxon regiments and in Poyntz’s estimation Duke John George proved a coward when he fled the battlefield.⁷⁷³ The romantic vision of glorious, knightly combat that was still entertained by the nobility did not prepare the young noblemen for the filthy reality of the battlefield: “being young Cavaliers and Gallants, and who had never seene a battaile fought, and seeing themselves drop, and the bullets fall so thicke, and their Duke gone, threw away their Armes, and fled”.⁷⁷⁴ While Poyntz had observed the Duke’s and his nobles’ cowardice with cynicism, John George’s final order to hang all men who fled from the battlefield filled the Englishman with disgust because “hee deserved it best, for hee fled hymself first”.⁷⁷⁵ Poyntz’s unusually defiant

⁷⁶⁹ Anon., ‘Dat ledlin van der slacht to Meiland’, *ibid.* 62f.

⁷⁷⁰ Anon., ‘Der Landsknecht Trommelreihen auf die Pavier Schlacht’, *ibid.* 72.

⁷⁷¹ Christian von Anhalt, ‘Abschrift der Liste von des Feinds Macht und Anzahl an Kriegsvolck’, in: G. Lorenz, *Quellen zur Vorgeschichte und zu den Anfängen des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, Darmstadt 1991, 501ff.

⁷⁷² H. Jessen (ed.), *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg in Augenzeugenberichten*, Munich 1971, 90.

⁷⁷³ Poyntz, *Relation*, 58.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 59.

criticism of his former warlord and those above his station becomes more readily understandable when bearing in mind that John George had broken one of the greatest taboos in the early modern military code of honour. A commander was *never* to leave the battlefield before the battle was over, not even when wounded.⁷⁷⁶ Instead it was considered the commander's and the officers' duty to fight and die with their men. Kirchhof composed a template for a pre-battle speech for commanders to give to their troops, which ended: "I will not desert you while I [still] have one warm drop of blood [in me], the breath, or a single vein may stir. *In summa*, on this day and on this field I will stay alive with you or die honourably".⁷⁷⁷ Cowardice was a disgrace for the rank and file, for a commander it was unforgivable.

The likeliness of one's own death is never pondered at great length in the military memoirs. We find very few and mostly laconic descriptions of almost deadly encounters in the soldiers' memoirs and we can construct an admittedly sketchy picture of how soldiers viewed the prospect of their own death. For a born warrior like Götz von Berlichingen, death was not the worst prospect. When he had his hand shot off by a small canon, his initial reaction was to plead with God to let him die as he thought that his loss had rendered him useless for his vocation.⁷⁷⁸ Looking back on his life, however, Berlichingen later thanked and praised the Lord for having protected and helped him through almost six decades of undeterred, single-handed, warring.⁷⁷⁹ For less dedicated warriors avoiding death was the top priority. Cowardice was both a punishable offence and a taboo, making Peter Hagendorf exceptional when he candidly described spending an assault on Straubing in a hedge and entering the city when the fighting was over in a counterpoint to the bravado that characterized military songs, for example.⁷⁸⁰ The outcome certainly justified his passive role: only nine men of his three hundred strong regiment had survived the assault and Hagendorf was promoted from corporal to *Wachtmeister*, as no one of that rank was still alive. Hagendorf's decision to wait in his hedge until the attack was over shows that he did not wish to die in what the veteran may have correctly predicted to be a high-risk venture. The serious wounds he had suffered during the storm on Magdeburg the year before may also have taught him

⁷⁷⁶ von Schwendi, *Kriegsdiskurs*, 231.

⁷⁷⁷ Kirchhof, *Militaris Disciplina*, 144.

⁷⁷⁸ Berlichingen, *Vhedt vnd Handlungen*, 77.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁰ Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 53, 143.

caution.⁷⁸¹ He had survived the storm unscathed but was shot twice, in the stomach and through the armpits, after entering the city. After the surgeon had treated him he was taken back to his hut “half-dead”. Instead of giving more information about his state or contemplating the likeliness of his impending death, however, he lamented the fate of the city which “burned so horribly”⁷⁸². Jürgen Ackermann, who was also at Magdeburg, narrowly escaped being shot. After the storm, he began to loot but when he smashed in a door with an axe, a man inside shot at him, barely missing Ackermann and killing the man next to him. Ackermann wryly remarked that after this he was “fed up with breaking down doors” and started looking for plunder downstairs.⁷⁸³ Neither Hagendorf nor Ackermann stated the likeliness of their death explicitly but whether this was due to ‘repression’ or the diarists’ considering their thoughts on dying to be unworthy of being recorded remains unclear.

Hagendorf’s diary especially is enlightening regarding his priorities and it seems that he distinguished between the professional deaths of soldiers, including himself, and the illnesses and deaths of his family. After he had been taken back to his hut, his wife went into the burning city to find a pillow and cloth for bandages and bedding, leaving their sick baby daughter Elizabet with her husband. When news reached the camp that the houses were collapsing and the looting women were likely to have died Hagendorf noted: “my wife grieved me more than my own damage because of the sick child”.⁷⁸⁴ Even in his own critical situation, the soldier’s paternal worries overrode concerns about his own life. The deaths of soldiers and pugnacious peasants, on the other hand, were described matter-of-factly or callously, for example when he soberly recorded rather high fluctuation of captains during the siege of Magdeburg.⁷⁸⁵ Slight amusement is detectable when he records that the soldier and his wife in the hut next to his tent had “all 4 feet [legs] shot off close to the arse” by a cannon during the siege of Compie.⁷⁸⁶ Nothing indicates that he considered the impact the cannonball could have had for him and his family had it taken a slightly different trajectory.

When it came to his loved ones, however, Hagendorf shows no indication of callousness. Every death of a child was recorded throughout the diary giving the name and adding the formula “may God grant him/her a joyous resurrection” and a cross. The

⁷⁸¹ Ibid. 47, 138.

⁷⁸² Ibid.

⁷⁸³ Volkholz, *Ackermann*, 16.

⁷⁸⁴ Peters, *Söldnerleben*, 47, 139.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid. 138.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid. 155.

death of his first wife Anna Stadlerin grieved him especially and he composed an ‘obituary’ for her and their children:

“God grant her and the child [Barbara, born the same year, died just before her mother] and all her children a joyous resurrection, Amen. For in the eternal, blessed life we will see each other again. So now my wife has passed away with her children. Their names are these: Anna Stadlerin of Traunstein from Lower Bavaria. Children: The first did not [live long enough to] get a baptism the other three, however, all received the blessed, Christian baptism.

The mother

Anna Stadlerin ✕

The children

The first NN ✕

Anna Maria ✕

Elisabet ✕

Barbara ✕

God grant them eternal rest, 1633”⁷⁸⁷

This passage is the most detailed insight we gain into Hagendorf’s attitude towards death and it is testimony of a family man’s grief. The hope of being reunited with his wife and children in the next life, the emphasis he placed on the fact that apart from the prematurely-born boy all his children had been baptized (which raised the chances of a post mortem family reunion) and the invocations of God to rest their souls and resurrect them are all sentiments one would expect from a 17th century father and husband.⁷⁸⁸ The passage also implies his hope to enter Heaven, as this is where he would be reunited with his wife and children. There is none of the bravado and defiance that was characteristic of soldier songs. A detail that Marco von Müller has observed in the manuscript illustrates how deeply affected Hagendorf was by the deaths in his family.⁷⁸⁹ The ‘obituary’ for his family contrasts with the remainder of the diary in so far as Hagendorf’s usually steady hand deteriorates in this passage, suggesting that he was still deeply distressed by his losses when he produced the clean copy of his diary years later.

Despite the scarceness of detail in the sources, certain general trends of military attitudes towards death may be suggested. Firstly, the omnipresence of death made the topic relatively uneventful. Consequently military writers only recorded details when the situations were especially noteworthy for their gravity, cruelty or novelty. This implies an acceptance of the fact that death was part of their occupation. The evidence

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid. 142f.

⁷⁸⁸ The Brandenburg squire Christoph von Bismarck used a very similar formula when recording the deaths of his children from the plague: “God grant them a peaceful rest and a joyous resurrection to the eternal life on Judgment Day” in: Schmidt, *Tagebuch des Christoph von Bismarck*, 76.

⁷⁸⁹ Müller, *Leben*, 41f.

from Peter Hagendorf's diary supports this interpretation, as he seems to have felt wholly differently about death in his professional environment and his private context. The lack of reflection on the soldiers' own mortality is more difficult to account for. One suspects a degree of 'repression' but it is also possible that the soldiers may have thought their deliberations about death not particularly interesting. They presumably knew how they felt about death and must have made their peace with it.

Burial

The last element of military death to be considered is burial and – again – the sources are surprisingly tacit on the topic. For the most part, the dead seem to vanish from sight. Often we hear of soldiers' burials only if the circumstances were interesting for other reasons. It is for the perceived slyness of the Jesuits that the burial of a soldier named Berndtt was recorded for example.⁷⁹⁰ Berndtt, who served the United Provinces near Wesel on the Lower Rhine, was captured by the Spanish and, in captivity, a Jesuit promised him that his life would be spared if he converted to Catholicism. Berndtt complied but was hanged nevertheless. His newly wed wife requested and received her husband's body from the governor, and, after Jesuit intercession, she was allowed to bury him in the churchyard. Arnold von Anrath, the Calvinist Wesel citizen recorded this episode as another instance of what he perceived of as Catholic and especially Jesuit duplicity; the mentioning of the soldier's burial by his wife in consecrated ground is fortunate but rare.

Not even religious literature such as victory sermons mentions the fallen.⁷⁹¹ Military ordinances that policed life in the army in varying degrees of detail are also tacit in respect of dying or burial. While dying itself was admittedly difficult to regulate, it is remarkable that articles of war would lay out rules regarding where to slaughter and bury animals but not what should be done to dead humans.⁷⁹² This may be explained by the fact that the articles of war were predominantly aimed at the personnel whilst alive, whereas the burial of the dead was an organisational task that fell under the responsibility of the commanders and their subordinates. Military manuals should therefore contain relevant passages but, again, finding directives as to what should be

⁷⁹⁰ Anrath, *Chronik*, 20.

⁷⁹¹ See for example Pater Sabinus, *Eine Predigt Von der Victori*, s.l. 1620; Anon., *Victori-Schlüssel*, s.l. 1631; Theobald, *Heerpredigt*.

⁷⁹² Denmark, *Articuls Brieff*, Ei^v.

done with the dead is very difficult, as before the 18th century military authors paid little attention to burial.⁷⁹³

Lazarus von Schwendi, the chief military advisor to both Charles V and Maximilian II, dedicated 4 lines of his 100 page *Kriegßdiscurs* (1577) to the fallen. Under the heading ‘what is to be done after victory’ von Schwendi encourages the victor to perpetuate what he deems to be an old tradition and celebrate mass on the battlefield to thank God and pray for the slain.⁷⁹⁴ Afterwards, high-ranking officers and nobles should be buried “with honour”, the rest, friend *and* foe, in pits on the battlefield. Schwendi’s emphasis on burying the officers honourably is important as it implies that the way the rank and file were buried was less than honourable, a notion that will be addressed below. The mass grave was therefore the predominant final resting place of the lower ranks while officers were usually buried individually and in churches of their confession. The bodies of officers killed in a skirmish between Dutch and Spanish troops near Mülheim on the Ruhr in 1605, for example, were taken westwards to the Rhine to be buried. Those in Dutch service were buried in the Calvinist main church in Wesel, while the Spanish officers were buried in Duisburg.⁷⁹⁵ If possible, noblemen were buried with all due splendour and rites as can be seen from the funeral sermons that were studied at the beginning of this chapter. But even for the nobility, arranging an appropriate burial could be unmanageable as can be seen in the case of Adrian Hildebrand von Veltheim, whose brother Heinrich Julius tried to have his remains transferred home for six years after Adrian’s death at the battle of Lützen.⁷⁹⁶ If officers came from far away, funeral arrangements were made close by. A Spanish officer by the euphonic name of Julius Caesar de Cacciis, hailing from Milan but shot at Frankenthal, was buried in Worms in 1621. His Latin epitaph gave a brief *curriculum vitae* and stated that Julius Caesar had died “*pro defendenda Catholica Religione, contra Lutheranos & Calvinistas*”.⁷⁹⁷

⁷⁹³ Hannß Friedrich von Fleming discussed the advantages as well as the cultural stigma attached to cremation and briefly addressed burial etiquette (see below) in 2 ½ columns of *Der Vollkommene Teutsche Soldat* (Leipzig 1726) 375f.

⁷⁹⁴ von Schwendi, *Kriegßdiscurs*, 235. The same advice is given in Dillich’s *Kriegßbuch*, 298.

⁷⁹⁵ Weseken, *Chronik*, 303.

⁷⁹⁶ Peter Kannemann, *Christliche Leichenpredigt über das schöne Trostsprüchlein* (Funeral sermon for Sophia von Alvensleben), Halberstadt 1639, 43.

⁷⁹⁷ Anon, *Franckenthalische Belägerung*, s.l. 1621, 16. According to the account, this declaration of religious motivation moved the Worms Jesuits to scratch out the offending epitaph. What would turn into the Thirty Years War was, after all, not supposed to be openly labelled a ‘religious’ war.

The bodies of fallen officers were usually handed over by the victors as was the case with Wolfgang Endres Stieber's remains, who died at Budweis in 1618.⁷⁹⁸ In exceptional situations, the bodies of the noble officers were the target of mutilation. When Martin Schenk von Niedeggen drowned in a fated attempt to take Nijmegen in 1589, the citizens fished his body from the river, took him to the city hall and had the punishment for high treason administered on the dead body: they cut off his penis and stuffed it into his mouth, cut out his heart, quartered the body and skewered his head on a pike.⁷⁹⁹ After the sack of Bredenberg castle, that has already been mentioned in Chapter 3, the victors, who had sustained heavy casualties, searched the castle for the body of the garrison's commander, Major Dunbar "and having found it, they ript up his breast, tooke out his heart, sundered his gummies, and stucke his heart into his mouth".⁸⁰⁰ Robert Monro accounted for the defilement of the corpse by the fact that the besiegers had lost more than a thousand men after Dunbar had refused to surrender in a previous *parlé*.

Ideally, the rank and file ended up in mass graves. Bernardino de Mendoza, writing his *Theorica y practica de guerra* (1595) after a distinguished career in Flanders, portrayed the burial of the fallen as a moral obligation of the commander.⁸⁰¹ The victor was to give thanks to the Lord and reward the sacrifice of the dead by burying them "with all honor and solemnitie" as well as "rewarding their sonnes, & heires, according to the qualitie of their service".⁸⁰² The German translation goes into greater detail regarding the commander's obligation to the soldiers' kin and adds a rare dimension of empathy with the families of the common soldiery who would "lament that they have incurred the greatest damage, especially because the fatherly heart cannot be compensated with money".⁸⁰³ Mendoza's exhortation was in many respects overly idealistic, however, as some twenty years later Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof viewed this degree of care for the fallen with nostalgia. In his own experience, the dead were simply left on the battlefield and the peasants who buried them did so negligently; dumped in

⁷⁹⁸ Anon, *Zwo warhafftige Zeitungen aus Böhmen*, s.l. 1618, Aiii^R.

⁷⁹⁹ Anrath, *Chronik*, 27; Heike Preuß, 'Martin Schenk von Nideggen und der Truchsessische Krieg', *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 49 (1985), 117-138, 136.

⁸⁰⁰ Monro, *Expedition*, I, 39.

⁸⁰¹ Bernardino de Mendoza, *Theorica y practica de guerra*, Madrid 1595. An English translation, *Theorique and Practice of Warre*, was published by Edward Hoby in 1597, a German translation, *Theorica et Practica Militaris*, by Lucas Jennis was published in Frankfurt in 1619.

⁸⁰² Mendoza, *Theorique and Practice of Warre*, 115.

⁸⁰³ Mendoza, *Theorica et Practica Militaris*, 151.

shallow ditches, the corpses became fodder for wild animals.⁸⁰⁴ An etching attributed to Christian Richter, though unrelated, illustrates Kirchhof's description.⁸⁰⁵ Strewn about on the ground lie corpses of six soldiers, some dressed, some naked. Two dogs tear at the flesh of a naked man in the foreground while large birds feed on the remaining corpses with more birds descending from the sky. The sarcastic caption reads: "This is the gown of honour and the last pay, take Hans Huhn away and finally carry him off"⁸⁰⁶. The illustration and the caption are unambiguous in their message: being stripped, left unburied and preyed on by animals is the appropriate, deserved end for a soldier.

It seems that these and other descriptions are not exaggerated. The frequency with which rotting, naked corpses occur in the sources and the art of the time suggests that armies indeed left behind trails of dead bodies. In the early stages of the Bohemian rebellion, a news pamphlet reported that many dead soldiers who lay in the forests and lined the roads between Neuhaus (Jindřichův Hradec) and Budweis. The text mentioned that the corpses were all stripped naked "*cum reverentia*" but not, it seems, to the dignity of the dead but the modesty of the reader.⁸⁰⁷ Only extraordinarily gruesome scenes moved contemporaries to express commiseration with the military dead. After the imperial besiegers of the Palatinate city of Frankenthal had been routed, the enemy camp was set on fire, resulting in the death of many ill and wounded soldiers who had been left behind. In this instance, the author reporting the events commented on the lamentable sight of the many "fresh dead" lying about.⁸⁰⁸ Importantly however, leaving the dead behind unburied was not shrugged off as yet another military digression from the norm. Some civilians may have felt *Schadenfreude* and probably a sense of justice in seeing their erstwhile tormentors left to rot, bereft of Christian burial and their last honours, in the way Christian Richter expressed in the caption to his etching. For the most part, however, contemporaries, civilian and military, were appalled at such a degree of neglect and even for a seasoned soldier, the sight of abandoned corpses was harrowing. When Caspar von Widmarckter moved his troops to Brusasco in 1617, he was shocked by the state of the area and especially by the fact that it was "full of dead

⁸⁰⁴ Kirchhof, *Militaris Disciplina*, 146.

⁸⁰⁵ Christian Richter(?), *Soldatenbüchlein*, s.l. 1642, etching 24, in: Bussmann and Schilling (eds.), 1648, III (catalogue), 162.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁷ Anon, *Zwo warhaffte Zeitungen auß Böhmen*, Aiii^R.

⁸⁰⁸ Anon, *Franckenthalische Belägerung*, 14.

[bodies] a great number of which were not half buried, others not at all, many were still half alive”.⁸⁰⁹

Burial was not just down to the assiduousness of the respective commanders but often a question of mere possibility. Obviously, fleeing armies could not stop to bury their dead and the victors were often overstrained by the immense organisational effort. Robert Monro stressed the importance of according fallen comrades the honour of burial “as becomes Christians” and admonished his readers to recover the dead and wounded “with the hazard of our own lives” but pointed to a lack of time that might preclude such considerations.⁸¹⁰ In some situations, those responsible proved thick skinned when it came to decomposing bodies littering the locale. After the Sack of Rome, a plague broke out among the Germans and claimed about 5000 men. The mercenary leader Sebastian Schertlin blamed the outbreak of the plague on the many dead bodies that were still unburied almost two months after the city had been taken.⁸¹¹ Ideally, mass graves were dug after battle, the dead stripped and stacked into the pits. The same mode of disposal seems to have been used when greater numbers of corpses gathered on the march or in camp. Burial was time-consuming and after the attack on Frankfurt on the Oder in April 1631, it took six days to bury the dead. Respect for the dead suffered in these situations and Robert Monro, present at Frankfurt, observed that “in th’ end they were cast by heapes in great ditches, above a hundred in every Grave”.⁸¹²

If not out of respect for the dead, corpses had to be removed to allow the living to return to their daily lives. This may have been immediately apparent in villages and towns – and even here it could take a while until the dead had been removed – but when battlefields were to be restored to their normal use, the rotting corpses had to be buried as well. Negligence affected the surrounding areas in very real terms. In 1606, the Wesel knackers went through the town to kill all dogs, as there were a high number of reports regarding canine rabies. The townsfolk thought the dogs had infected themselves with rabies by eating from the corpses of Spanish and Dutch soldiers that had not been buried deep enough the year before.⁸¹³

⁸⁰⁹ Gräf, *Söldnerleben*, 133.

⁸¹⁰ Monro *Expedition*, II, 25.

⁸¹¹ Schönhuth, *Leben und Thaten*, 7.

⁸¹² Monro, *Expedition*, pt. II, 35.

⁸¹³ Weseken, *Chronik*, 302f.

One would expect that chaplains were present but the few sources that address burial at all do not mention clergy. It seems, then, that the dead were mostly buried without religious rites, which is extraordinary in the context of early modern funerary culture. The modes of burial that are the most similar to the military mass grave are urban pauper burial and the plague pit. In the civilian context, however, clergy was usually present at the interment or, in Catholic locales, could bestow rites and masses on the dead when an opportunity arose afterwards.⁸¹⁴ During outbreaks of the plague, as we have seen, victims died at times without sacraments and were buried without rites. But these instances scandalised contemporaries – a marked contrast to the military context in which burial without rites seems to have been the norm and was accepted without comment. Interment in a military mass grave was an anonymous and unsentimental affair, which may explain why clerics were not mentioned in this context. However, the fact that the military funeral tradition for individuals was also devoid of religious elements is striking.⁸¹⁵ Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof gave a description of military burial customs. When a soldier died, the members of his squad made a bier from pikes and took the corpse to his grave outside the camp. The procession was headed by fife and drums and the dead man's comrades and friends followed the body. The fife and drum and the interment were the only necessary constituents of military burial; there is no mention of a chaplain or of any religious element. Kirchhof does refer to exceptional cases in which the congregation said the Lord's Prayer and sang Psalms but these were explicitly facultative additions at the discretion of the mourners.⁸¹⁶ This fundamentally secular rite seems peculiar in comparison to the funerary customs of the established churches but it is not dissimilar to a popular trend in the early stages of the reformation that has been described by Craig Koslofsky.⁸¹⁷ The reformers initially failed to back up their attack on 'papist' funerary rites with suggestions regarding how a god-pleasing funeral should be conducted. Much to the shock of the Wittenberg theologians, the result was that some communities began to bury their dead either in an extremely simplified manner or entirely without ceremonies. The rejection of intercession for the

⁸¹⁴ See Klaus Bergdolt *Der schwarze Tod in Europa. Die große Pest und das Ende des Mittelalters*, Munich 2000, 82. Bergdolt also makes the important point that clerics and monks died in such vast numbers because they did *not* forsake their flocks and paid with their lives for their assiduous care (163). See also Vanessa Harding, 'Whose body? A study of attitudes towards the dead body in early modern Paris', in: B. Gordon and P. Marshall (eds.) *The Place of the Dead – Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 2000, 170-187, 183f.

⁸¹⁵ Olnitz, *Kriegs Ordnung*, I^R; Kirchhof, *Militaris Disciplina*, 179f.

⁸¹⁶ Kirchhof, *Militaris Disciplina*, 179f.

⁸¹⁷ Koslofsky, *Reformation of the Dead*, 86ff.

dead and the reformers' message of *sola scriptura* – *sola fide* was interpreted so radically at times that bodies were buried in a completely declericalized manner at night “like senseless beasts, like dogs”, as a scandalized Catholic priest wrote.⁸¹⁸ The population could prove hostile to the perpetuation of the old rites, which were associated with clerical greed, and although the wholesale rejection of all ceremony was deemed offensive also by reformers, in Koslofsky's estimation those who “buried their dead very simply probably thought they were showing greater respect to the dead than did the ‘superstitious’ ceremonies of the established churches”.⁸¹⁹ Popular anti-clericalism could therefore be reflected also in the way the dead were treated once the new movement had provided an alternate route to salvation to the traditional (and costly) rites officiated by the clergy: faith alone. But such anti-clerical sentiments predated the Reformation and were expressed already in a Landsknecht song from around 1510, in which the speaker states that the simple, martial accompaniment of the drum to his grave is “nine times” more preferable to “all the shavelings’ [*Pfaffen*] muttering”.⁸²⁰ The song, attributed to Jörg Graff, is full of bravado in addressing the dangers of military life, especially being wounded, and it is difficult to discern to what degree the sentiment expressed here is a felicitous expression of anti-clericalism or a martial pose. The Landsknecht in the song is not opposed to funeral rites per se but rather rejects the traditional, ‘civilian’ funeral in favour of the distinctly military burial ceremony with fife and drum. In this sense, the sentiment expressed may be less an attack on the ‘shavelings’ than a deliberate emphasis on the military way of life and its customs, very much in line with the other calculated diversions from civilian society and its norms including dress, demeanour and deliberate blasphemy.

It is also possible that the boastful rejection of clerical accompaniment was an attempt at making necessity a virtue, as even such basic honours were often denied to common soldiers. Kirchhof described with disdain that the military authorities frequently banned both the musical accompaniment and daylight burial in order not to undermine morale and how the dead were put in the ground hastily and quietly at the night.⁸²¹ Silence, darkness and the absence of rites were the marks of the dishonourable *Eselsbegräbnis* or *sepultura asina*, which placed the deceased on the level of animals and was “reserved for criminals, suicides, notorious drunkards and other dishonest

⁸¹⁸ Ibid. 91.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid. 92.

⁸²⁰ As quoted in Burschel, *Söldner*, 266.

⁸²¹ Kirchhof, *Militaris Disciplina*, 180.

people” before the late 17th century.⁸²² In terms of practice and symbolism, burying dead soldiers silently during the night excluded them from the communion of Christians and assigned them to the status of outcasts and beasts. Civil authorities took similar measures in times of plague but contemporaries did not readily accept public health concerns as sufficient reasons to excuse such a stark deviation from burial customs. In 1564, Hieronymus Weller, a superintendent in Electoral Saxony, sharply criticised the Freiberg town council for ordering the burial of plague victims at night and without ceremonies.⁸²³ Koslofsky writes: “Weller urged the council that ‘this dishonourable and nocturnal form of burial should be abolished’. [...] For Weller the hygiene benefits of the burial ordinance were far outweighed by the immense dishonour and disturbance caused by burial without ceremony at night”.⁸²⁴ It seems that Kirchhof was moved by similar considerations to reject the military authorities’ practice of nocturnal burial. The cultural and social implications of denying soldiers daylight burial speak volumes, however. While those who were usually buried at night were offenders of some sort, the soldiers were disgraced with nocturnal burial purely on the grounds of their profession and military expedience. The low social status of the mercenary thus found its expression also in the way in which his body was disposed of. Hastily interred at night and in silence, he shared the criminal’s final disgrace. The reasoning of the military authorities for letting bodies silently disappear seems straightforward enough but how those who faced such a disgrace dealt with the prospect cannot be determined.

It seems that there was no distinction made between the dead in respect of who they had died for. In times that knew no distinctive uniforms, affiliation was arguably difficult to determine, especially as the dead were often quickly stripped naked. Burial is also another instance in which the solidarity among mercenaries that was described in Chapter 3 could become evident. A song from 1622 contained the line “We will bury them in the ground without any mockery, may God have mercy on them” when describing the treatment of the enemy dead.⁸²⁵ One can assume that the soldiers’ families and other train followers were buried in the same mass graves as the soldiers but the sources do not mention them either. Despite the meticulousness with which Peter Hagendorf recorded the deaths of his wife and children, the diary does not give any indication regarding where and how his family were buried. We can speculate that,

⁸²² See Koslofsky, *Reformation of the Dead*, 101f. 133.

⁸²³ Ibid. 134.

⁸²⁴ Ibid.

⁸²⁵ Pietzcker, *Todesvorstellung*, 4.

if possible, he may have buried them with dignity, but in other circumstances they would have ended up in the mass graves. Only the military elite could afford to give their loved ones stately funerals, like Colonel Salomon Adams, who had his newborn daughter Anna Sophia buried in Magdeburg Cathedral in 1633, where her lavishly decorated sandstone tomb-slab can still be seen in the ambulatory surrounding the courtyard.

Until recently, no early modern military mass graves were known in the territories of the former Holy Roman Empire and questions concerning the state of the bodies, causes of death, how the corpses were arranged or if they were indeed naked as the written and pictorial sources suggest had to be left unanswered. In 2007 and 2008 respectively, however, two mass graves dating from the Thirty Years War were discovered near Wittstock (Brandenburg) and Alerheim (Bavaria). Both finds tell entirely different stories of military burial, as the Wittstock site suggests orderliness in treating the dead while the Alerheim grave evidences neglect. The grave in Wittstock was dug to dispose of the remains of soldiers who died in the battle of Wittstock on October 4th, 1636, between Swedish and Imperial-Saxon troops that claimed between 6-8000 victims.⁸²⁶ The grave contained 110-125 bodies, close-packed into a pit measuring 6 x 3.5m, orientated east-west. In the bottom layers, the bodies had been stacked into the grave in two rows, heads pointing outwards in a north-south direction. To maximise the use of space, corpses were laid on top of the arms of the neighbouring bodies and individual bodies were interspersed in a right angle on the legs of the layer below. The bodies in the top six layers were stacked in the grave in an east-west orientation, heads pointing eastwards, bodies overlapping so that the heads of the men below rested between the legs of the men that were laid on top of them.⁸²⁷ The grave contained exclusively male skeletons, aged between 17 and 45 years, most of whom had died from bullet and slashing/hacking wounds. Most of the bodies were naked when they were put into the grave. Although no cloth was preserved, little iron hooks and eyelets as well as a few buttons found with 24 skeletons indicate that these men were buried in some form

⁸²⁶ Sabine Eickhoff, Anja Grothe, Bettina Jungklaus, 'Söldnerbestattungen des Dreißigjährigen Krieges. Ein Massengrab bei Wittstock', *Ostprignitz-Ruppin Jahrbuch 2008*, Kreisverwaltung Ostprignitz-Ruppin, 103-112. I would like to thank Anja Grothe for her help and for providing me with copies of the articles she and her colleagues have published. The forthcoming exhibition '1636 - ihre letzte Schlacht' that opens at the Archäologisches Landesmuseum Brandenburg in April 2012 will present the finds (www.1636.de, last accessed 13/9/2011) and the conference in November 2011 promises further insights.

⁸²⁷ Ibid. 105f.

of garment, maybe an undershirt.⁸²⁸ No personal effects were found. The other grave contained remains of about 75 soldiers and boys who fell in the Battle of Alerheim (August 3rd, 1645) between French-Hessian-Weimarian contingents and Imperial-Bavarian troops.⁸²⁹ Only a few coherent skeletons could be recovered as the bodies had been buried in an advanced state of decomposition.⁸³⁰ It had taken several months after the battle until the local count found four men who were willing to carry out the gruesome task of interring the decaying bodies for 250 gulden. The graves substantiate the diverging descriptions of post-mortem treatment that were found in the written sources. It seems that the men who fell at Wittstock were buried in an organised effort on behalf of the commanders soon after the battle had been won. At Alerheim, the victors abandoned the dead to be buried by the locals.

Conclusion

The examination of attitudes to dying, death and burial has uncovered arguably the clearest deviations from civilian norms encountered in this study. While the historiography of death tends to agree on the importance of dying well and honourable burial in early modern culture, the military dealt with these matters in a pragmatic and often negligent way. While the ideals of dying well were shared by the military, the evidence from the funeral sermons shows that even traditionally bad deaths could be interpreted in a favourable light and that the evaluation of good and bad deaths was therefore less rigid than normative tracts on dying etiquette and historians working with these sources suggest. Soldiers had to live with the knowledge that their deaths were unlikely to meet the high standards of the *ars moriendi*. The solution that was offered by theologians was to stress the importance of a Christian lifestyle and constant contemplation of death, while the actual circumstances in which the soldier died were de-emphasized.

Soldiers' attitudes towards death are difficult to extrapolate but the bold defiance in the face of death with which artists attributed the soldier is not reflected in the written sources. In fact, many instances are described in which individuals and units reacted with panic and flight to impending death. From the perspectives of the military elites

⁸²⁸ Sabine Eickhoff, Anja Grothe, Bettina Jungklaus, 'Memento Mori – Söldnerbestattungen der Schlacht bei Wittstock 1636', *Archäologie in Deutschland*, 2009(1), 26-29, 29.

⁸²⁹ Stefanie Berg-Hobohm, 'Ein anderer Blick auf die Schlacht von Alerheim. Massengrab aus dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg entdeckt', *Denkmalpflege Informationen*, 140 (2008), 21-22.

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.* 22.

and civilian accounts it appears that the suffering and deaths of the common soldiers elicited little sympathy and was of little interest other than in casualty rates. In autobiographical accounts, the likeliness of the author's own death was usually ignored but it seems that soldiers distinguished between deaths of military personnel, which were mostly treated with indifference or coarse humour, and the deaths of family members, which affected the soldiers as much as anyone else.

Burial practices remain opaque, as the scant evidence is conflicting. Whereas the consensus was that burying the dead was a necessity, if not a Christian obligation, in many instances corpses were neglected and left to rot. The chronic shortage of field preachers can explain why burial had to happen without religious ceremony but the secular nature of military funerary rites that have been described remains puzzling. It has been suggested that the declericalized military funeral may have been related to other popular movements against religious ceremonies that were fuelled by anti-clericalism. Conversely, it is possible that, in this instance, the comparison to the civilian context draws attention to seeming inconsistencies that were not perceived as such by soldiers themselves. They may have just accepted that these burial customs were contingent on their status as warriors. But how this was rationalized and whether it was thought to influence the afterlife in any way cannot be reconstructed. We can only note that the presence of clerics at funerals was considered of no great importance in the military context. It remains unclear how soldiers coped with the prospect of being interred in what can only be considered a dishonourable manner, or worse, not being buried at all.

When health, the strategies to limit violence, and magic failed, soldiers died as they had lived. They had to negotiate the norms and values surrounding death under unfavourable conditions. As in life, dead soldiers could be a burden to the civilian population who had to endure the failures of an overstretched and inefficient military system. Finally, the international community of Christian warriors continued to exist also in death, when men of all confessions, from all over Europe, friends and enemies, were laid to rest in the same pit.

Conclusion

Given that the preceding chapters have addressed a variety of questions and themes, it seems more appropriate to ‘take stock’ rather than ‘to conclude’. The project set out to examine religious attitudes that were characteristic of the military in the Reformation period and the time of religious pluralization that ensued. In this respect, it is primarily a contribution to our understanding of the early modern military as a socio-cultural group. More generally, the preceding chapters have described an additional facet of religious diversity in early modern culture.

The study has shown that the role of religion and religious mentalities were more complex than has been previously allowed. Soldiers and civilians did not differ fundamentally in their religious beliefs. In contrast to certain areas of the civilian realm, however, confession did not play a significant role in the military as a whole. Soldiers’ lives, as we have seen, were predominantly unaffected by confessional considerations in regards of who they fought with, for, or against. Military authorities tried to regulate religious matters but were generally intent on providing an un-confessional legal and organisational structure. At the same time, universally Christian mindsets and values underpinned military society. In this respect, the study also provides a historiographical link between pre-Reformation warfare and the ‘tolerant’ military attitudes that have been described for the later 17th century and beyond. It appears that confessional mindsets were not *abandoned* in the military realm in the 17th century; they had never become a characteristic of military life in the first place.

In the early stages of researching this project, finding source material that elucidated questions surrounding religion presented great difficulties. No single reservoir of archival materials on military religious life could be identified despite thorough searches. Sufficiently detailed records could not be identified beyond those known to historians already. Even after broadening the period of study to one and a half centuries and abandoning a more precise geographical localization, no particular type of source could be relied upon to substantiate sufficient materials. It was therefore necessary to adopt a more flexible methodological approach and to gather evidence where it could be found: in military law codes, contemporary military tracts, individual surviving personal records, and even material evidence such as the design of military banners in German-speaking territories. It is therefore possible that there are pertinent

records that have not been uncovered yet. If such detailed material is discovered in the future, arguments in this dissertation may have to be reconsidered.

In many respects, however, the relative scarcity of evidence from any single source type and the resulting multiplicity of genres that this study has drawn on made it possible to uncover the many complexities that have been highlighted throughout the preceding chapters. Relying on close reading was necessary to make the most of the data available and it has led to new evaluations. The realization that the early modern stereotype of the irreligious soldier had a long genealogy may be cited as an example. A close reading of situations in which violence occurred has led to the conclusion that even in contexts that were highly charged with confessional tension, soldiers' behaviour in itself was rarely indicative of confessional hatred but gained its confessional dimension only through the civilian perception. Likewise, the initially incongruous-seeming omnipresence of God in military autobiographies, and the simultaneous absence of confessional perceptions has led to a re-evaluation of the importance of confessional dichotomies via an examination of notions of enmity and the conduct of war.

The variety of source types has also revealed complexities by representing a greater range of perspectives on soldiers and contexts in which we have encountered them. This, it can be argued, has led to new and more balanced and nuanced considerations. As we have seen, trial records, for example, only allow us to encounter those soldiers who treated women recklessly and brutally. The letters examined here, however, indicated that soldiers were equally able to be loving partners who were attractive to some women and were welcomed into families.

These insights also have implications for our perception of the period in general. Firstly, it affects the way we conceptualize 'confessional' wars, as evidently confession neither had much of an impact on the men who fought them, nor on the way war was conducted. Secondly, it has consequences for the way we perceive of early modern confessional divisions. Despite doctrinal pluralization and change, we should not lose sight of the fact that, fundamentally, the same common Christian values lay at the core of all confessions. Precisely these shared principles and beliefs were emphasized and fostered in the military, both on a structural level and in everyday life. Furthermore, the notion that confessionalism was *the* determining dynamic that shaped policies and behaviours in the period cannot be maintained. Confessional policies invariably ceded to the *ratio belli* and – while it apparently was a grudging toleration on

behalf of the warlords – the fact remains that confessionalization was generally not pursued and had no measurable impact on the military. For ordinary people who joined the armies, confessional oppositions lost meaning too easily for such dichotomies to have been deeply ingrained. In this and other respects, the preceding chapters have spoken to the pervasive ability to negotiate putative axioms of early modern religion and culture in different contexts. Soldiers were mostly able to ignore confessional fissures, not least because the military structural framework throughout the Empire gave them the freedom to do so. Another case in point is the way in which the *ars moriendi* was dealt with in the military. When regular deathbed etiquette was difficult to observe, the paradigm was renegotiated and adapted in a way that suited the context.

The great complexity of at times contradictory ideas and behaviours has become evident throughout. By the same token, categories like ‘Catholic’, ‘Protestant’, ‘confessional’, ‘enemy’ and so forth have proven to be only of limited use as they threaten to conceal cultural diversity. Approaching the early modern military under the premise of formal confessional categories, for example, must lead to the conclusion that soldiers were abnormal in this respect because their behaviour cannot be categorized in these terms. By paying attention to what the sources actually tell us, and by remaining vigilant regarding our own presuppositions, however, we can hope to encounter the past more fully in its convolution and its contradictions. It is crucial not to gloss over these contradictions and inconsistencies because, while it may not make for neat arguments, it arguably yields a more representative view of the past.

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Appendix 1:

Table of Military Autobiographers

Table of Military Autobiographers:

(Accounts are arranged according to the time period covered)

Name	Biographical details	Time covered in autobiography:	Social Status	Confession
Anonymous	b.: c.1474 (Erfurt?) d.: after c. 1529 (Erfurt?)	1484-1493	Cannot be determined	Cannot be determined
Götz von Berlichingen	b.: 1480/81 (Berlichingen or Jagsthausen) d.:1562 (Neckarzimmern)	1480s-1540s (written c.1560)	Imperial knight (<i>Reichsritter</i>)	Lutheran
Sebastian Schertlin von Burtenbach	b.: 1496 (Schorndorf) d.: 1577 (Augsburg)	1518-1577 (completed by his son Hans Sebastian)	Burgher's son, knighted after Battle of Pavia (1525)	Lutheran
Georg Niede	b.1525 (Allendorf) d. 1589 (Herford)	1525-1588	Schoolteacher's son, captain from 1564, various administrative and secretarial positions.	Lutheran
Hans Staden	b.: unknown (Homberg) d.: unknown (unknown)	1547-1555	Commoner	Lutheran
Burkhard Stickle	b.: 1541 (Stuttgart) d.: 1613 (Schorndorf)	1566-1598	Burgher's son, captain from 1583, Obervogt of Leonberg from 1592.	Lutheran
Erich Lassotta von Steblau	b.: 1560s (Blaschewitz?) d.: after 1611	1573-1594	Noble	Protestant (?)
Caspar von Widmarckter	b.: 1566 (Leipzig?) d.: 1621 (Vacha)	1566-1617	Burgher's son, ennobled 1596 by Henri IV of France.	Protestant
Augustin von Fritsch	b.: 1599 (unknown) d.: 1662 (Weiden)	1618-1641	Commoner, ennobled 1638, later <i>Amtmann</i> of Waldsassen monastery and commandant of Weiden.	Catholic
Thomas Raymond	b.: c.1610 d.: c.1681	c.1622-1658	Commoner, later in various secretarial and administrative positions.	Anglican
Peter Hagendorf (?)	Cannot be determined	1625-1649	Commoner	Cannot be determined
Sydnam Poyntz	b.: 1607 (Reigate, Surrey) d.: unknown	1625-1636	Gentleman	Catholic (converts 1630/31)
Robert Monro	b.: unknown (Ross-shire) d.: 1680 (Comber, Co. Down)	1626-1634	Gentleman	Presbyterian
Jürgen Ackermann	b.: 1603 (unknown) d. 1680 (Kroppenstedt)	Fragment 1: 1627-1631 Fragment 2: 1636-1647	Commoner, captain (date unknown), judge (1652) and mayor (1658) of Kroppenstedt.	Lutheran
James Turner	1615-1686	1632-1670	Minister's son, captain before 1639, knighted 1660.	Presbyterian

Appendix 2:

Nikolas Funke, ‘‘Naturali legitimâque Magica’ oder ,Teufflische Zauberey’? Das ,Festmachen’ im Militär des 16. Und 17. Jahrhunderts, *Militär und Gesellschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit* , 13 (2009) 1, 16-32.

Nikolas Funke
 “‘Naturali legitimâque Magica’ oder ‘Teufflische Zauberey’? Das
 ‘Festmachen’ im Militär des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts’

(Published in *Militär und Gesellschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit*, 13 (2009) 1, 16-32. Pagination of publication given in square brackets.)

[16] Der Tod war in der Frühen Neuzeit allgegenwärtig, doch dürfte er kaum einer sozialen Gruppe so aufdringlich bewusst gewesen sein wie Söldnern und ihren Angehörigen, denn töten und getötet werden waren die charakteristischsten Merkmale ihres Berufs. Die *ars moriendi* war ein grundlegendes Paradigma dieser Zeit, allerdings war es im Militär meist unmöglich einen ruhigen, bewussten, also ‘guten’ Tod zu sterben. Die Angehörigen der unteren Ränge hatten darüber hinaus im Falle des eigenen Todes kein ehrliches Begräbnis zu erwarten, sondern konnten bestenfalls darauf hoffen, in einem Massengrab bestattet zu werden und das auch nur, wenn dies die Umstände zuließen. Umso verständlicher ist es daher, dass die *ars mortem evitandi*, um Michael Kaisers Begriff zu borgen, also magische Praktiken, mit denen der eigene Tod abgewendet werden sollte, unter Söldnern auf besonders aufmerksames Interesse stießen.¹

Dieser Beitrag versucht sich den magisch-religiösen Praktiken anzunähern, die im Militär des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts geläufig waren, um sich gegen Verwundung und Tod zu schützen. Im Kontext der materiellen Kultur im Militär spielen diese insofern eine Rolle, als dass es sich weitgehend um Gegenstände wie Amulette, beschriebene Zettel und andere Objekte handelte, denen die Kraft zugeschrieben wurde, das eigene Überleben sicherzustellen.

Während sich Volkskundler besonders für die Zeit des Ersten Weltkriegs mit militärischem ‘Aberglauben’ auseinandersetzten, ist den im Militär der Frühen Neuzeit kursierenden Wundsegen und Amuletten von Historikern bislang wenig Beachtung geschenkt [17] worden.² Die älteren volkskundlichen Arbeiten stellen zwar diachron

¹ Michael Kaiser, Zwischen ‘ars moriendi’ und ‘ars mortem evitandi’. Der Soldat und der Tod in der Frühen Neuzeit, in: ders., Stefan Kroll (Hrsg.), *Militär und Religiosität in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Münster 2004, S. 323-343.

² Unter den folkloristischen Arbeiten sind vornehmlich Hans Bächtolds, *Deutscher Soldatenbrauch und Soldatenglaube*, Straßburg 1917 und Ernst M. Kronfelds, *Der Krieg im Aberglauben und Volksglauben*, München 1915, sowie [Art.] festmachen, in: Hans Bächtold-Stäubli (Hrsg.), *Handwörterbuch des Deutschen Aberglaubens*, Bd. 2, Berlin, New York ³2000, Sp. 1353 f. zu nennen. Die neuesten Beiträge zum Thema aus historischer Sicht: Kaiser, *ars moriendi* (Anm. 1), Brage Bei der Wieden, *Niederdeutsche Söldner vor dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg. Geistige und mentale Grenzen eines sozialen Raums*, in:

‚abergläubische‘ Verfahren aus dem militärischen Milieu in großem Umfang dar, allerdings begnügten sich die Autoren zumeist damit, Beispiele zusammenzutragen und nach verschiedenen Gesichtspunkten zu ordnen, eine nähere kulturelle oder zeitliche Kontextualisierung unterblieb in der Regel. Darüber hinaus bleiben die Quellen, aus denen die Informationen bezogen wurden, häufig im Dunkeln. Die historischen Beiträge setzen sich zwar mit den Bemühungen der Soldaten auseinander, sich vor dem Tod zu schützen, allerdings ohne die Praktiken bzw. die Objekte, die hierfür hergestellt und verwendet wurden, näher zu betrachten oder einzuordnen.

Letzteres stellt zugegebenermaßen keine leichte Aufgabe dar. Quellen, die auf diesen Bereich der populären Magie verweisen, gibt es reichlich, allerdings erlauben diese Zeugnisse in den wenigsten Fällen detaillierte Einsichten, da Beschreibungen der Rituale oder Gegenstände meistens fehlen. So lässt zum Beispiel der Feldprediger Zacharias Theobald jun. in einer Heerpredigt aus dem Jahr 1618 erkennen, dass die Soldaten beschriebene Oblaten (‚*characterische Brot*‘) einnahmen, um für vierundzwanzig Stunden unverwundbar zu werden. Was auf diesen Oblaten geschrieben war, berichtet er jedoch nicht.³ Besondere Beachtung verdienen daher Johannes Staricius 1615 zuerst veröffentlichter *HeldenSchatz* und der von einem anonymen und pro-schwedischen Schreiber verfasste *Victori-[18]Schlüssel*, der 1631 in Druck ging.⁴ Beide Werke stellen, im Gegensatz zu anderen Quellen, die Rituale der Passauer Kunst relativ detailliert dar und bilden somit die Hauptquellen für diesen Beitrag. Gerichtsakten, die für Hexenprozesse erhalten sind und oft Einblicke in die Rituale der Hexerei erlauben, fehlen für das Festmachen. Dies ist einerseits dadurch bedingt, dass Militärgerichtsakten aus der Zeit vor dem ausgehenden 17. Jahrhundert überhaupt kaum erhalten sind. Andererseits handelt es sich aber beim Festmachen eben nicht um Hexerei und somit ist es unwahrscheinlich, dass diese Praktiken überhaupt vor Gericht kamen. Magie, Alchemie und Medizin sowie ihre ‚populären‘ Varianten waren bis zum Aufkommen der experimentellen Wissenschaft auf allen Ebenen untrennbar miteinander verwoben und magische Vorstellungen lassen sich in den meisten Bereichen frühneuzeitlichen Lebens nachweisen. Trotz der intensiven Forschung der

Bernhard Kroener, Ralf Pröve (Hrsg.), *Krieg und Frieden. Militär und Gesellschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Paderborn u. a. 1996, S. 85-107.

³ Zacharias Theobald jun., *Heerpredigt Auß dem schönen Gebet deß theuren Feld Obristen Judæ Maccabæi*, Friedberg 1618.

⁴ Johannes Staricius, *HeldenSchatz*, Frankfurt 1615. Der *HeldenSchatz* erwies sich als überaus beliebter Ratgeber und erfuhr bis zum Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts noch mindestens elf Auflagen. Anonym, *Victori-Schlüssel*, o. O. 1631.

letzten Jahrzehnte hält sich noch immer bei modernen Betrachtern der Eindruck, dass es sich bei Magie in der frühen Neuzeit grundsätzlich um ein strafbares Verbrechen handelte. Es war allerdings nicht die Magie an sich, die vor weltlichen Gerichten verhandelt wurde, sondern zumeist der Ausnahmefall der Hexerei, der Schadenszauber. Die *Constitutio Carolina Criminalis* von 1532 macht deutlich, dass nur *jemandt*, der *den leuten durch zauberey schaden oder nachtheyl zufügt*, mit dem Leben zu strafen sei, andere Zauberer aber, denen kein *maleficium* nachzuweisen war, sollten *nach gelegenheit der sach* (wie zum Beispiel Scharlatanerie) gestraft werden.⁵ Einige juristische Richtlinien gingen sogar noch einen Schritt weiter und nahmen gelungene Heilung von Kranken oder den Schutz der Ernte durch magische Rituale explizit von der Strafverfolgung aus.⁶ Somit ist es auch nicht [19] verwunderlich, dass Magier, die die Passauer Kunst praktizierten, nicht in Kriminalakten auftauchen, denn sie betrieben eben das Gegenteil des *maleficium*, indem sie ihren Kunden Schutz versprachen. Und wenngleich sie sich damit nicht unbedingt im Bereich des ‚Legalen‘ bewegten, so war ihr Handeln doch auch nicht per se illegal.

Die Vorstellung, dass man sich unverwundbar machen konnte, war in der Frühen Neuzeit unter Soldaten weit verbreitet. Jemanden, der als unverwundbar galt, nannte man ‚fest‘ oder ‚gefroren‘. Die Praktiken, mit denen man die Unverwundbarkeit zu erlangen hoffte, wurden im 16. Jahrhundert meist als ‚Festmachen‘ bezeichnet, im frühen 17. Jahrhundert verbreitete sich dann der Begriff der ‚Passauer Kunst‘. Der Ausdruck wird zumeist auf den Passauer Scharfrichter Kaspar Neithart zurückgeführt, der um 1611 im Feldlager vor der Stadt Soldaten in der Kunst sich ‚fest‘ oder ‚gefroren‘ zu machen unterwiesen haben soll beziehungsweise gedruckte Zettelchen verkaufte, die geschluckt wurden, um sich vor Verwundung und Tod zu schützen.⁷ Gustav Freytag zweifelte diese Etymologie schon im 19. Jahrhundert an und unterstellte, der Begriff ‚Pessulant‘ – mit dem jemand bezeichnet wurde, der mit Zauberei umging – sei im Volksmund zu ‚Passauer‘ verballhornt worden. Letztlich bleibt festzuhalten, dass ‚Passauer Kunst‘ seit dem frühen 17. Jahrhundert zwar kein neues Phänomen bezeichnet, der Begriff aber bald auf die ganze Bandbreite von im Militär geläufigen

⁵ Friedrich-Christian Schroeder (Hrsg.), *Die Peinliche Gerichtsordnung Kaiser Karls V.*, Stuttgart 2000, S. 73.

⁶ Vgl. Wolfgang Behringer, *Witchcraft Persecutions in Bavaria – Popular Magic, Religious Zealotry and Reason of State in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 1997, S. 81.

⁷ Vgl. Kronfeld, *Der Krieg im Aberglauben* (Anm. 2), S. 88; Bächtolds, *Deutscher Soldatenbrauch* (Anm. 2), S. 22. Auch der Autor des *Victori-Schlüssels* scheint dieser Auffassung zu sein, wenn er 1631 schreibt, die Passauer Kunst sei *vor etlichen vnd zwanzig Jahren* aufgekommen. Anonym, *Victori-Schlüssel* (Anm. 4), S. Aii^v.

apotropäischen magischen Verfahren angewandt wurde.

Bevor die Methoden dargestellt werden, sollte der Blick zunächst auf ihre Außenwirkung gerichtet werden. Dass Soldaten versuchten, sich auf verschiedene Weise vor dem Tod zu schützen, war in der Frühen Neuzeit ein Allgemeinplatz. Besonders von theologischer Seite wurden die Praktiken mit entschiedener Ablehnung bestenfalls als abergläubisch, zumeist jedoch als Teufelswerk ge[20]wertet. Luther warnte vor soldatischem Aberglauben wie der Anrufung bestimmter Heiliger, dem Beschwören der Waffen oder dem Tragen des Johannesevangeliums (von dessen Mitführen man sich körperlichen Schutz versprach), da sich der Soldat hierdurch der Sünde des Unglaubens bzw. eines falschen Gottvertrauens schuldig machte.⁸ Er empfahl dem Leser vor der Schlacht Körper und Seele im Gebet Gott anzuvertrauen, fakultativ noch ein Credo und ein Vater Unser zu sprechen und dann in *Gotts namen* zu kämpfen.⁹ Während Luther die apotropäischen Handlungen der Soldaten zwar als Aberglauben brandmarkte, diese jedoch noch im Fundus christlicher Gefahrenabwehr verordnete, waren sich spätere Autoren über konfessionelle Grenzen hinweg darin einig, dass es sich hierbei um etwas weitaus Gefährlicheres handelte. Exemplarisch mag hier der Jesuit Georg Scherer zitiert werden, der seine Schrift *Ein bewährte Kunst vnd Wundsegen*, in der er für Gebet, Barmherzigkeit und Mäßigung als theologisch vertretbare Alternative zu den magischen Praktiken der Soldaten warb, wie folgt einleitete:

*Es pflegen inn Kriegsleufften vnd Feldzügen nicht allein vil auß den gemainen Kriegßleuten/ sondern auch etliche Hauptleuth vnd Obristen/ weiß nicht was für teuffliche Künst zugebrauchen/ vnd abergläubige Wundsegen anzuhucken.*¹⁰

Scherers Einschätzung ist insofern typisch, als dass sie einerseits die Schutzzauber der Soldaten eindeutig als schwarze Magie und Aberglauben verurteilt und sie als ein in allen Rängen verbreitetes Phänomen sieht, andererseits jedoch über die Formen dieser Praktiken keine Informationen preisgibt. Die Frage ob dies auf Desinteresse oder Unwissen zurückzuführen ist, ob die Details als allgemein bekannt vorausgesetzt wurden oder ob die Stille als Bemühen gewertet werden muss, diese Methoden durch eingehendere Beschreibung nicht noch weiter zu verbreiten, bleibt offen.

⁸ Martin Luther, Ob Kriegsleute auch in seligem Stande sein können, in: D. Martin Luthers Werke, Weimar 1897 [Neudruck: 1964], Bd. 19, S. 660.

⁹ Ebd., S. 661. Leonhart Fronsperger übernimmt diese Passage fast wörtlich in Leonhart Fronsperger, Geistliche Kriegsordnung (...), Frankfurt a. M. 1565, S. XVV.

¹⁰ Georg Scherer, Ein bewerte Kunst vnd Wundsegen, Ingolstadt 1595, S. AiiR. 20.

[21] Berichte über die ‚Gefrorenen‘ lassen sich zumeist in nichttheologischen Quellen finden. Hans Wilhelm Kirchhoff berichtet von einem Söldner namens Funck, der 1547 im Feldlager bei Kassel hingerichtet wurde.¹¹ Funck hatte sich zuvor bei einem Garthausen in der Nähe von Bremen aufgehalten und im Vertrauen auf seine *Zäuberey* wiederholt *muhtwillig und vorsetzlich Balgen angericht* und hierbei mehrere Landsknechte verwundet oder getötet. Zu Beginn des Dreißigjährigen Krieges beobachtete ein anonymes Privatmann in Mansfelds Armee bei der Belagerung von Pilsen wie der Söldner Hans Fabel eines Tages mit einem Humpen Bier auf den Stadtgraben zuging. Obwohl die Belagerten auf ihn schossen, trank Fabel sein Bier aus, kehrte ins Lager zurück und zog sich fünf Kugeln aus der Brust.¹² Sein Wundzauber schützte Fabel jedoch nicht vor Krankheit; er verstarb noch vor der Eroberung der Stadt. Für den Autor war dies kein Zufall. Die *zauberische Kunst* sei zwar nicht nur *gantz gemein* sondern auch effizient, denn man hätte *eher von einem Felsen/ als von eim solchen bezauberten etwas geschossen*.¹³ Der Autor ging aber auch davon aus, dass den Gefrorenen *der Teufel (...) in der Haut stecke* und warnte vor dem hohen Preis der vorübergehenden Unverwundbarkeit, denn er habe *irer vil gekennet/ die es gebraucht/ die sein schrecklich umb ihr Leben kommen*.¹⁴ Die Anwendung der Zauberei sei auch im Hinblick auf die Ewigkeit ausgenommen kurzsichtig, denn sie verstoße gegen das erste und das zweite Gebot, was zur Folge habe, dass diejenigen, die im Vertrauen auf Gott fielen, von den Engeln in den Himmel getragen würden, die Gefrorenen hingegen über kurz oder lang *der schwarze Casper* hole.

Es waren nicht nur die niederen Ränge, die mit der Passauer Kunst in Verbindung gebracht wurden. William Watts' auf dem *Theatrum Europaeum* basierender Bericht über die Schlacht von Leipzig 1631 schildert, wie das Original, General Tillys Verwundungen und den [22]Verdacht des behandelnden Barbiers von Halle, dass Tilly fest sein müsse.¹⁵ Im Gegensatz zum *Theatrum* lehnt Watts diese Vermutung jedoch als ehrenrührig ab: *Very loath I am to leaue so base an imputation vpon so honourable a Commander; as to owe his life, all this while, vnto a devilish inchantment*.¹⁶ Watts war

¹¹ Hans Wilhelm Kirchhoff, *Militaris Disciplina*, Kritische Ausgabe, hrsg. v. Bodo Gotzowsky, Stuttgart 1976, S. 62 f.

¹² Anonym, *Warhaffter Bericht/ Von der Belägerung und mit gestürmter hand Eroberung der Stadt Pilsen inn Behem*, o. O. 1619, S. 17.

¹³ Ebd.

¹⁴ Ebd., S. 18.

¹⁵ William Watt, *The Famovs Victorie of Leipsich*, in: *The Swedish Discipline*, London 1632. Der Schlachtbericht beginnt nach dem Hauptteil mit neuer Paginierung.

¹⁶ Ebd., S. 32.

durchaus an der Passauer Kunst interessiert und erwähnt sie auch an anderer Stelle. In der Erstausgabe des ersten Teils seines *Swedish Intelligencer*, in dem er, ebenfalls auf der Grundlage des *Theatrum Europaeum*, den Kriegsverlauf schildert, beschreibt er dem englischen Leser diese deutsche Spezialität durchaus fasziniert in einer langen Marginalie.¹⁷ Er versichert, dass es eine solche Praktik, an deren Wirkung kein deutscher Soldat zweifle, wirklich gäbe, und führt den Leser sogar in die deutsche Fachterminologie ein: *The Charme which they weare makes their bodies Gefrorn, that is, frozen, and hard. (...) No bullet nor iron weapon can pierce them.*¹⁸ Ein Soldat habe den Engländern vor *Stoade*, vermutlich *Stade*, die Stirn geboten und obwohl die Gegner mindestens hundert Schüsse auf ihn abgaben und seine Kleidung zerfetzten, ging der Mann, seine Hosen raffend, seines Wegs. Was in Bezug auf anonyme Individuen eine gute Anekdote abgab, wollte Watts auf Tilly, der zwar gegen die von ihm unterstützten Schweden kämpfte, aber auch beim Feind hohes Ansehen genoss, nicht sitzen lassen. Die ‚teuflische Bezauberung‘ fände nach seiner Auffassung ausschließlich unter der *reprobate raskalitie* der Armee Anwendung, selbst Angehörige der alleruntersten Ränge lehnten die Passauer Kunst ab, wenn sie etwas auf ihre Reputation hielten. Für Watts als gutem Protestanten und Parteigänger des frommen schwedischen Königs war diese Form der Zauberei also eindeutig mit einem Stigma behaftet, mit dem man ehrenhafte Kommandeure, auch Feinde, nicht verunglimpfen dürfe.

[23] Es ist wichtig festzuhalten, dass die Zeitgenossen, wenn sie die Passauer Kunst verurteilten, dies aufgrund religiöser Bedenken taten, ihr aber nicht die Wirkkraft absprachen. Dass die Effizienz der Praktiken auch im zivilen Alltag anerkannt wurde, ist einer Passage des *HeldenSchatzes* zu entnehmen. Der Erfurter Scharfrichter musste 1601 einen Verurteilten köpfen, der als *vest* galt, und forderte ihn auf, beiden Parteien das (Ab-)Leben nicht unnötig zu erschweren.¹⁹ Der Verurteilte zeigte sich einsichtig, holte getrocknetes Johanniskraut unter seinem rechten Arm hervor und reichte es dem Henker, wonach die Hinrichtung reibungslos zu ihrem Ende gebracht werden konnte. Verglichen mit den Einschätzungen der Zeitgenossen, die das Festmachen recht eindeutig in die Sphäre des Dämonischen einordneten, wirkt das Bündel Kraut, welches der Verurteilte dem Scharfrichter übergab, fast banal und es scheint erforderlich sich mit der Passauer Kunst detaillierter auseinanderzusetzen.

¹⁷ William Watts, *The Swedish Intelligencer – The first part*, London 1632, S. 127.

¹⁸ Ebd.

¹⁹ Staricius, *HeldenSchatz* (Anm. 4), S. 91.

Johannes Staricius *HeldenSchatz* ist ein Kompendium für den militärischen Alltag, das besonders im ersten Teil eine Reihe von naturmagischen Verfahren beschreibt. Nach detaillierten Anweisungen für die Herstellung einer Rüstung aus *Elektrum magicum*,²⁰ wie Vulcanus (Hephaistos) sie für Achilles gefertigt haben soll, schließt Staricius eine Sammlung von Beschreibungen, Rezepten und Bauanleitungen für verschiedenste Rituale, Gegenstände und Waffen an. Die enorme Bandbreite des Werkes umfasst unter anderem Wetterzauber, Schwerter, mit denen der Besitzer immer siegt, Freikugeln oder Rezepte, mit denen sich die Kraft von Pferden auf erschöpfte Soldaten übertragen lässt, wie man mit Speck Felsen sprengen kann, oder wie man Soldaten binnen einer Stunde von der Ruhr heilt. Bei alldem ist Staricius verständlicherweise stets bemüht, gegen den Verdacht der schwarzen Magie zu protestieren und klarzustellen, dass er *mit der teuflischen Verbindung der Geister (...) vnd anderen Nigromantischen zaubereyen/ nichts zuschaffen* habe und es sich bei seinen Künsten lediglich um *Naturali legitimâ* [24]*que Magica cum ceteris scientis* handle, die dem Menschen von Gott offenbart und somit erlaubt seien.²¹ Praktiken, mit denen man sich vor Verwundung schützen kann, kennt Staricius einige. *Johannis Blut* (Johanneskraut), das auch der Erfurter Hinzurichtende bei sich trug, sollte am St. Johannistag (24. Juni) zwischen elf und zwölf Uhr geerntet und anschließend am Körper getragen oder ins Wams eingenäht werden.²² Ein Soldat, dessen Namen Staricius aus Gründen der Diskretion nicht preisgeben will, habe dank dieses Amuletts durch einen türkischen Säbel lediglich einen Striemen am Bein davongetragen. Ein weiterer Bekannter des Autors habe das erste Menstruationsblut einer Jungfrau mit einem Leinentuch aufgefangen, in ein neues, von einer Jungfrau genähtes *Niderkleid* eingewickelt und dieses unter dem rechten Arm getragen.²³ Die Wirkung dieses Amuletts zeigte sich nicht nur im Kampf, den der Träger immer gewann, sondern sie verlieh ihm auch beständiges Glück im Spiel. In Verbindung mit einem speziellen Schwert riet Staricius weiter, man solle sich zum Schutz vor Blutwunden auch einen *Character*, also ein Siegel, aus dem Eisen eines Richtschwerts anfertigen und diesen in einen Ring einsetzen lassen. Was dieses Siegel abbilden sollte, verrät der Autor zwar nicht, allerdings solle man *O Castiel Princeps armorum, per Deum Abraham, Isaac & Iacob* in den Ring gravieren lassen, sich das Siegel vor dem Kampf in die Stirn drücken und den Ring an den Ringfinger der rechten

²⁰ Ebd., S. 1 f.

²¹ Ebd., S. 54.

²² Ebd., S. 75.

²³ Ebd., S. 76.

Hand stecken. Staricius weist ausdrücklich darauf hin, dass einer der entscheidenden Vorteile dieses Rezepts der sei, dass man keinerlei Beschwörungen sagen müsse. Dieser Vorteil erschließt sich, wenn man sich in Erinnerung ruft, dass traditionell viele magische Rituale die Kombination von Zauberspruch und Geste beinhalteten.²⁴ Da durch das Eindrücken des Siegels also schon die Geste ausgeführt wurde, hätte das gleichzeitige Sprechen einer Formel den Verdacht [25] der Zauberei erwecken können, was weder im Sinne des Anwenders noch des Autors sein konnte.

Ein weiteres, sehr zeitaufwendiges Mittel aus dem *HeldenSchatz* um sich festzumachen war, Zettelchen aus Jungfrauenpergament in der Weihnachtsnacht um Mitternacht mit ‚I.N.R.I.‘ zu beschreiben und sie vor Ablauf der Stunde in kleine *Küchlein* aus Wasser und Mehl zu stecken und das ganze in Pergament oder Papier einzuwickeln.²⁵ Nun musste man die Küchlein unter die Altardecke schmuggeln und warten, bis die Messen zu Ostern, Christi Himmelfahrt und Pfingsten über ihnen gesprochen worden waren, bevor sie wirksam wurden. Vor dem Kampf musste der Nutzer nun durch eine kurze Formel seine Seele in Gottes Hände legen (*In nomine Patris, & Filii, & Spiritus sancti, Amen. In manus tuas Domine commendo spiritum meum*), eines der Küchlein schlucken und anschließend eine weitere Formel sprechen (*Iesus autem transiens per medium illorum ibat in pace: Deus meus custodiat me (Ioannem, Petrum, &c.) ab omni malo*).²⁶ Der Soldat war nun für 24 Stunden fest.

Ein letztes Mittel, um sich gegen *hawen/ stechen/ vnd schiessen* zu schützen, war zwar nicht ganz so aufwendig, bedurfte aber auch der Vorbereitung.²⁷ Zunächst war es nötig den Schädel eines Gehenkten oder Geräderten zu finden, auf dem Moos wuchs. Am folgenden Tag musste man an die Stelle zurückkehren und den Schädel so zurechtlegen, dass man das Moos davon abschaben konnte. Nun galt es bis zum kommenden Freitag zu warten und das Moos unter Aufsagung folgender Formel zu ernten:

*Ich, XXX, bitte heut zu dieser frist/ Dich meinen HERREN Jesum Christ/ der reinen Magd Mariae Sohn/ du wollest mir beystahn auff diesem Plan/ vnd mir helfen binden aller meiner Feinde Händ/ vnnd wollest mir helfen zerreißen/ ihr Stahel vnd all ihr Eisen/ Jesu Mariae Sohn/ Hilff mir von diesem Plan. Im Namen deß Vatters/ deß Sohns/ vnnd deß heiligen Geistes/ Amen.*²⁸

[26] Was nun mit dem Moos zu tun war, bleibt offen, es liegt aber die Vermutung nahe,

²⁴ Vgl. hierzu, z. B. Isaac Bacon, Versuch einer Klassifizierung altdeutscher Zaubersprüche und Segen, in: *Modern Language Notes* 67 (1952), S. 224-232, hier S. 226.

²⁵ Staricius, *HeldenSchatz* (Anm. 4), S. 92.

²⁶ Ebd.

²⁷ Ebd. S. 93 f.

²⁸ Ebd.

dass man es wie das Johanniskraut als Amulett benutzte oder es einnahm.

Der *Victori-Schlüssel* wendet sich entschieden gegen die Passauer Kunst und verurteilt sie, anders als der *HeldenSchatz*, eindeutig als Teufelswerk.²⁹ Der Großteil der Schrift preist das gute Gewissen des Soldaten und das Leben im Einklang mit Gottes Geboten als einzig wahren Weg den Sieg zu erringen. Zu Beginn gewährt der Text allerdings auch einen kurzen Einblick in verschiedene Praktiken der Passauer Kunst. Dieser Autor bezichtigt ebenfalls Angehörige aller Ränge *Aberglaubische Teuffelssachen* zu verwenden, um sich fest zu machen. Auch er nennt das Verschlucken eines ‚Chartel‘ als eine gängige Praxis um *auff 24. stund lang vor schiessen/ hawen vnd stechen/ etc. allerbest verwahret vnd gesichert zu seyn*.³⁰ Wie von Luther wird auch hier das Johannesevangelium genannt, das, auf *zartes Papier* geschrieben und *heimlich an Papistischen Orten vnter die Altardecken* geschoben, in Amulette gefasst wird, nachdem eine oder drei Messen darüber gelesen wurden.³¹ Die Eucharistie wird dem *Victori-Schlüssel* zufolge ebenfalls zum Festmachen missbraucht. Die Soldaten sollen sie *in deß Teuffels Namen* empfangen, allerdings danach aus dem Mund nehmen, um den Leib Christi anschließend zu *verbergen vnd alsdann in sich verheilen zu lassen*.³² Diese Stelle ist recht kryptisch, liest man sie mit Gustav Freytag, so wurde ein Schnitt gemacht und die Hostie unter die Haut geschoben.³³ Stimmt Freytags Lesart, so war diese Methode wohl insofern effektiv, als dass die resultierende Entzündung den Soldaten kampfunfähig machte, wenn sie ihn nicht tötete, bevor der Feind die Möglichkeit dazu hatte. Das eine subkutane Aufbewahrung von Amuletten allerdings in der Passauer Kunst nicht als unüblich galt, lässt sich Balthasar Bekkers *Die Bezauberte Welt* (1693) entnehmen, in der be[27]richtet wird, dass sich Soldaten auch Passauer Zettel in die Wunde legten, um sie dort verheilen zu lassen.³⁴ Das letzte Beispiel, das im *Victori-Schlüssel* aus der Praxis des Festmachens angeführt wird ist das *Nothembd*, das zwar im Gegensatz zu den anderen Methoden nicht den Körper an sich unverwundbar machen, jedoch ebenso vor Verletzungen schützen sollte.³⁵ Die Herstellung eines solchen Nothemds war äußerst aufwendig: Zunächst mussten Mädchen, die jünger als sieben Jahre waren, ein Garn spinnen, dieses weben und aus dem Stoff mit besonderen

²⁹ Anonym, *Victori-Schlüssel* (Anm. 4).

³⁰ Ebd. S. AiiV.

³¹ Ebd. S. AiiiR.

³² Ebd.

³³ Gustav Freytag, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg 1618-1648*. Reprint Langensalza 2005, S. 150.

³⁴ Zitiert bei Kronfeld, *Der Krieg im Aberglauben* (Anm. 2), S. 87.

³⁵ Anonym, *Victori-Schlüssel* (Anm. 4), S. AivR.

Kreuznähten ein Hemd schneiden. Anschließend musste es, wie die Kuchlein aus dem *HeldenSchatz*, oder die mit dem Johannesevangelium beschriebenen Zettel, am Altar versteckt werden, bis drei Messen darüber gesprochen waren. Verglichen mit den Anleitungen, die Kronfeld zusammengetragen hat, ist dies ein relativ einfach herzustellendes Nothemd. Kronfeld berichtet von Astrologen, die eine günstige Nacht zur Herstellung bestimmen müssen und nicht weniger als 40 reinen Jungfrauen, die das Garn in des Teufels Namen spinnen und das fertige Hemd mit dem Kopf eines bärtigen, behelmten Mannes sowie des gekrönten Beelzebub und zwei Kreuzen besticken müssten.³⁶

Erinnert man sich der zeitgenössischen – zivilen – Einschätzung der Passauer Kunst als einer grundsätzlich teuflischen Angelegenheit, so scheint diese mit den genannten Beispielen nicht in Einklang zu stehen. Abgesehen von den Beelzebubstickereien auf den Nothemden, ein Detail das Kronfeld einem Sagenbuch des 19. Jahrhunderts, also keiner an sich historischen Quelle entnommen hat, scheint das Festmachen wenig ‚Teuflisches‘ an sich gehabt zu [28] haben.³⁷ Im Gegenteil haben fast alle beschriebenen Praktiken ein eindeutig christliches Element: das Johannesevangelium spielt eine prominente Rolle, die vorgeschriebenen Formeln beschwören Gott, Jesus oder die Trinität in Gänze, eine Reihe von Objekten beziehen ihre Kraft aus der Verbringung an den Altar und aus dem Lesen der Messe bzw. sind, wie im Fall der Hostie, schon für sich sakrale Gegenstände. Die Passauer Kunst, wie sie sich hier darstellt, scheint somit eher in den Bereich der Volksfrömmigkeit und der populären Zauberei, nicht aber in den der schwarzen Magie gehörig. Die Unterstellung des Dämonischen von protestantischer Seite, wie sie beim Verfasser des *Victori-Schlüssel* deutlich wahrzunehmen ist, lässt sich recht einfach auf das starke ‚papistische‘ Element zurückführen, welches in den beschriebenen Ritualen hervortritt. Es ist ebenfalls einsichtig, dass sich ein gegenreformatorischer Intellektueller wie Scherer gegen den in der Grauzone des Volksglaubens gedeihenden Wildwuchs ‚abergläubischer‘ Praktiken außerhalb der Regulationsmechanismen der Kirche wendet. In einer rhetorischen Kultur, in welcher mit dem Vorwurf des ‚Teuflischen‘ geradezu inflationär umgegangen

³⁶ Kronfeld, *Der Krieg im Aberglauben* (Anm. 2), S. 90. Eine zeitgenössische englische Anthologie übernatürlicher Begebenheiten berichtet auch von einem *Indusium Necessitas* oder *Nothembt*, dessen Herstellung mit der von Kronfeld beschriebenen übereinstimmt. Thomas Bromhall, *An history of apparitions, oracles, prophecies, and predictions*, London 1658, S. 89.

³⁷ Kronfeld, *Der Krieg im Aberglauben* (Anm. 2), S. 90 gibt J. Gebhart, *Österreichisches Sagenbuch*, Pest 1863 als Quelle an.

wurde, ist es nicht verwunderlich, dass dieser auch gegen die konfessionsübergreifend als deviant empfundene Passauer Kunst erhoben wurde. Eine unliebsame rituelle Praxis, die (populäre) religiöse, magische und medizinische Aspekte in sich verband, polemisch mit dem Teufel in Verbindung zu bringen, lässt also eher auf einen sprachlichen Reflex als auf eine den Tatsachen entsprechende Beschreibung schließen.

Inwiefern die Unterstellung des Teuflischen bloße Polemik war, lässt sich letztlich nicht mit Sicherheit feststellen. Selbst Staricius scheint der Auffassung gewesen zu sein, dass neben den von ihm empfohlenen Methoden auch dämonische im Umlauf waren, denn er sah sich dazu veranlasst seine Leser vor *Abgöttischen WundtSegen vnd andern vnchristlichen Teuffelischen zauberischen Mitteln* zu warnen, da diese *sich mit gutem reinem gewissen nimmermehr noch in alle Ewigkeit nicht* [29] *verantworten noch entschuldigen* ließen.³⁸ Die dämonische Seite der Passauer Kunst, so es sie denn gegeben hat, entzieht sich allerdings unserem Blick. Gründe hierfür lassen sich schnell finden: So wäre es zum Beispiel für einen Autor wie Staricius wenig opportun gewesen, seiner Leserschaft explizit dämonische Rituale zu empfehlen. Auch mit Blick auf den ‚Marktwert‘ der Praktiken scheint es für die Verkäufer der Passauer Zettel und anderer festmachender Objekte ratsamer gewesen zu sein, wenn sie ihrer Kundschaft Methoden anbieten konnten, die ihre Wirkung aus einem dezidiert christlichen Kontext bezogen.

Dass auch die militärische Obrigkeit den Vorwurf der dämonischen Zauberei nicht besonders ernst nahm, lässt sich daran erkennen, dass militärische Regelwerke wie die Kriegsartikel die Passauer Kunst weitgehend ignorieren. Lediglich die schwedischen und auf diesen basierende Artikel erwähnten ab 1621, dass Zauberer und Waffenbeschwörer vor Gericht zu bringen und aus dem Lager zu entfernen seien. Dies lässt zwar erkennen, dass man solche Dienstleistungen nicht dulden wollte, es bedeutet jedoch nicht, dass man sie als schwarze Magie identifizierte, was sich vermutlich in einem höheren Strafmaß niedergeschlagen hätte. Des Weiteren ist auch davon auszugehen, dass die militärische Obrigkeit bei der Passauer Kunst bewusst ein Auge zudrückte, denn der positive Einfluss auf die Moral und Kampffreudigkeit der sich so geschützt fühlenden Soldaten dürfte erheblich gewesen sein.

Zuletzt sei noch anzumerken, dass weder die hier beschriebenen Rituale noch die zum Festmachen verwendeten Objekte ausschließlich für diesen Bereich der populären Magie charakteristisch waren. So waren zum Beispiel die einleitenden Verse des

³⁸ Staricius, HeldenSchatz (Anm. 4), S. 77.

Johannesevangeliums die beliebteste Bibelpassage, die in Textamuletten Verwendung fand und einer Vielzahl von Zwecken diente, die von der Abwehr von Dämonen oder Hexerei bis hin zur Therapie verschiedener Krankheiten reichten.³⁹ Auch die geweihte Hostie er[30]freute sich als Talisman allgemeiner Beliebtheit. Das Moos von einem Totenschädel, *usnea*, war ein integraler Bestandteil der Medizin und die Vorstellung, dass Leichenteile von jungen, plötzlich Gestorbenen medizinisch besonders wirksam seien, war zeitgenössische Lehrmeinung. Da der menschliche Körper eine vorherbestimmte Lebensdauer habe, so die Theorie, könne man die übrige Lebenskraft eines vor seiner Zeit getöteten (und nicht durch lange Krankheit geschwächten) Körpers ‚ernten‘ und auf andere übertragen.⁴⁰ Dass Ingredienzien von Leichen und Materialien, wie Richtschwerter, in der Passauer Kunst, die eng mit dem Scharfrichter assoziiert war, auftreten, ist ebenso nur folgerichtig. Einerseits war der Scharfrichter in der frühen Neuzeit ein etablierter medizinischer und magischer Dienstleister, andererseits saß er ‚an der Quelle‘ und verfügte wie kein anderer über die notwendigen materiellen Bestandteile der festmachenden Zauberei.⁴¹

Zusammenfassend lässt sich festhalten, dass es sich bei der Passauer Kunst um eine Form der populären Magie handelte, die einer spezifischen beruflichen Gruppe, dem Militär, zugeordnet wurde und einen spezifischen Zweck verfolgte: die Unverwundbarkeit. Die Rituale und grundsätzlichen Vorstellungen, die das Festmachen prägten, sind jedoch nicht nur für diesen Einzelfall charakteristisch, sondern entstammen dem allgemeinen magischen Repertoire der frühen Neuzeit. Die Verwendung von Hostien, Bibelpassagen oder Kräutern in Amuletten oder das Aufsagen von Zaubersprüchen und Gebeten waren magisches Allgemeingut. Wie stark beeinflusst das Festmachen von der allgemeinen Kultur war, lässt sich an folgendem Beispiel deutlich machen. Dem *HeldenSchatz* zufolge musste das Moos vom Totenschädel gepflückt werden, während man eine Gebetsformel sprach. Hundertzehn Jahre später empfahl Fleming das *usnea* noch immer als Schutz gegen *Hauen und* [31] *Stechen*, erklärte aber deutlich, dass *abergläubische Dinge*, die mit diesem *Arcano* in Verbindung gebracht würden, ruhig unterlassen werden könnten, da sie *nichts zur Sache*

³⁹ Vgl. Don C. Skemer, *Binding Words – Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages*, University Park (PA) 2006, S. 87f.

⁴⁰ Richard Sugg, ‚Good Physic but Bad Food‘: Early Modern Attitudes to Medicinal Cannibalism and its Suppliers, in: *Social History of Medicine*, 19 (2006), S. 225-240.

⁴¹ Siehe hierzu Jutta Nowosadtko, *Scharfrichter und Abdecker – Der Alltag zweier „unehrlicher Berufe“ in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Paderborn u. a. 1994, S. 162 f.

dienten.⁴² Analog zur wissenschaftlichen Entwicklung, die im Laufe des 17. Jahrhunderts die Sphären des Natürlichen und des Übernatürlichen bzw. ‚Abergläubischen‘ immer stärker getrennt hatte, war für Fleming nur noch das Moos, also der greifbare, ‚natürliche‘ Bestandteil, wirkkräftig, während das übernatürliche Element, das Gebet, der Effizienz nichts mehr beizutragen hatte.

Einige wichtige Aspekte der Passauer Kunst entziehen sich der Untersuchung. Am schwersten wiegt, dass dieser Bereich militärischer materieller Kultur lediglich aufgrund von Textquellen untersucht werden kann, da sich Artefakte nicht erhalten haben. Der Hauptgrund hierfür liegt in den verwendeten Materialien wie Pflanzenteile, Papier oder Teig, aus denen ein Großteil der Objekte hergestellt wurden. Einige dieser Gegenstände wurden geschluckt und hatten deshalb ohnehin nur eine kurze Lebensdauer. Dauerhaftere Artefakte, wie der von Staricius genannte Siegelring oder die Nothemden, waren in ihrer Herstellung so aufwendig, dass sie, wenn überhaupt, selten von Individuen angefertigt wurden. Wenn solche Objekte gekauft wurden, ist davon auszugehen, dass der Verkäufer einen so hohen Preis veranschlagte, dass sie nur einem kleinen Käuferkreis zugänglich und zu keinem Zeitpunkt in großen Stückzahlen in Umlauf waren. Nicht zuletzt ist auch zu bedenken, dass diese Gegenstände nur so lange erhaltenswert waren, wie sie die ihnen beigemessene Wirkung hatten. Ein Amulett, dessen Besitzer verletzt wurde oder umgekommen war, hatte sehr eindeutig seine Ineffizienz bewiesen und war bestenfalls noch als Kuriosität von Wert. Bislang war es mir nur möglich ein einziges Objekt aufzufinden, das sich eventuell in den Bereich der Passauer Kunst einordnen lässt.⁴³ Es handelt sich hierbei um ein Medaillon, [32] das aus zwei Portraitmedaillen zusammengelötet ist. Eine der Medaillen bildet Graf Joachim von Ortenburg ab und stammt somit aus der Zeit um 1600. Zwischen die beiden Seiten war ein Zettel eingelegt worden, auf dem sich trotz des schlechten Erhaltungszustands noch immer der Anfang des Johannesevangeliums als auch weitere Passagen mit religiösem Bezug entziffern lassen. Das Amulett war um 2003 auf dem Süllberg bei Wennigsen gefunden worden, wo 1626 Kämpfe zwischen dänischen und Tillyschen Truppen stattfanden. Auch wenn sich dieser Fund mit einigen zeitgenössischen Beschreibungen für die Herstellung von festmachenden Amuletten deckt, lässt sich nicht eindeutig sagen, dass auch dieses Amulett dazu gedacht war, den

⁴² Hannß Friedrich Fleming, *Der Vollkommene Teutsche Soldat*, Leipzig 1726, S. 356.

⁴³ Ich möchte Brage Bei der Wieden herzlich danken, dass er mich auf den Fund hingewiesen und mir eine Beschreibung desselben überlassen hat.

Träger festzumachen oder ob es überhaupt einem Soldaten gehörte, es könnte gleichwohl von einem Zivilisten auf dem Süllberg verloren worden sein.

Die Frage, wie weit verbreitet die Praxis des Festmachens wirklich war, muss letztlich offen bleiben, da den stark obrigkeitlich bzw. theologisch gefärbten Aussagen in den vorhandenen Quellen nur bedingt Glauben geschenkt werden darf. Wie ‚Gefrorene‘ selbst über die Passauer Kunst dachten, ob sie die Bedenken bzw. die Ablehnung der zivilen Betrachter nachvollziehen konnten oder sich eventuell sogar selbst Sorgen machten, ob das Festmachen ihr Seelenheil nachteilig beeinflussen könnte, ist ebenfalls nicht zu beantworten.