Pilgram Marpeck and the Fellows of the Covenant: The Short and Fragmentary History of the Rise and Decline of an Anabaptist Denominational Network

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Abstract: This essay expands on Werner Packull's conclusion that Marpeck was affiliated with the Austerlitz Brethren in Moravia, and that it was this group who commissioned him as an elder or messenger before late summer of 1528, when he arrived in Strasbourg. Against the critique of the Spiritualists, who insisted that the Anabaptists could not form a church since they lacked the ecclesial marks of unity and apostolicity, the Austerlitz mother church in Moravia claimed apostolic authority and tried to establish unity among the Anabaptists. The essay suggests that Marpeck's life work as an Anabaptist leader should be understood as his involvement in the effort to build up something like a supralocal (and even supranational) denominational network spanning from the Alsace to Moravia. In sources from the 1540s and 1550s, this Anabaptist denomination appears under the appellation "Fellows of the Covenant," a more appropriate phrase than the auxiliary term "Marpeck Circle," which has become increasingly popular among historians of Marpeck.

Most of the sources connected with Pilgram Marpeck result from forms of communication beyond the local level of an individual Anabaptist congregation. This is the case not only with ecclesial circular letters, some of which are preserved in the sixteenth-century collection of Anabaptist sources known as the *Kunstbuch*,[1] but also with clandestine prints associated with Marpeck, and texts that circulated in manuscript form.[2] All these texts were produced to establish and to defend the

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1. *Briefe und Schriften oberdeutscher Täufer 1527-1555: Das "Kunstbuch" des Jörg Probst Rotenfelder gen. Maler*, ed. Heinold Fast, Gottfried Seebaß and Martin Rothkegel (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007) [hereafter cited as Fast, *Kunstbuch*]; English translation: *Jörg Maler's Kunstbuch. Writings of the Pilgram Marpeck Circle*, ed. John D. Rempel (Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 2010) [hereafter cited as Rempel, *Kunstbuch*].

2. On source texts, editions and translations cf. Stephen Boyd, "Pilgram Marpeck," in *Bibliotheca Dissidentium. Répertoire des non-conformistes religieux des seizième et dix-septième siècles*, ed. André Séguenny (Baden-Baden & Bouxwiller: Éditions Valentin Koerner, 1995), 33-74; and *Later Writings by Pilgram Marpeck and his Circle*, ed. Walter Klaassen, Werner O. Packull and John D. Rempel (Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 1999) [hereafter cited as Klaassen, *Later Writings*].

identity of an extended Anabaptist community that was distinct not only from the majority religions, whether Catholic or Protestant, but also from competing groups like the Schwenckfelders or other Anabaptist groups like Hutterites, Swiss Brethren and Sabbatarians. This essay argues that Marpeck's activity as an Anabaptist leader—or, more precisely, the two documented phases of his activity from 1528 to 1532 and from 1540 to 1556—should be understood as part of a larger effort to establish an Anabaptist "church" initiated by the Anabaptist congregation in Austerlitz (Slavkov u Brna) in Moravia, also known as the "Austerlitz Brethren," whose early history from 1528 to 1531 played an important role in the narrative of the Hutterite chronicles.[3] The goal of the Austerlitzers was nothing less than the transformation of an amorphous, widely scattered religious movement into a denominational network that extended across territorial boundaries. Beginning with Marpeck's arrival in Strasbourg as early as September in 1528, the Austerlitzers' effort appears to have been the first project of this kind in the history of Anabaptism, and of the evangelical movements in general. Describing the supracongregational *Sitz im Leben* in which the Marpeck texts were produced as a "denominational network" may modify, to some extent, our interpretation of these sources. This essay suggests that Marpeck may have been more sectarian than generally assumed by current scholarship, according to which he was "seeking to reunite Anabaptists."[4] On the other hand, it ascribes to Marpeck credit for playing an important role in shaping an ecclesiological model based on voluntarism, which in subsequent centuries would make Christianity compatible with a modern pluralistic society.

An Alternative Model of Church

By the end of the 1520s many of the scattered local Anabaptist groups appeared to be ephemeral phenomena that would soon disappear from the scene. The initial phase of spontaneous expansion of the baptizing movement had started in 1525. Within two or three years, the new baptism had spread to places all across the geographic region of the Upper and Middle German dialects: Switzerland, South and Central Germany, and Austria, including the Bohemian and Moravian border zones. In this early phase, believer's baptism was not closely connected

3. Cf. *Die älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder. Ein Sprachdenkmal aus frühneuhochdeutscher Zeit*, ed. Andreas Johannes Friedrich Zieglschmid (Ithaca, N.Y.: Carl Schurz Memorial Foundation, 1943), 86-99 [hereafter cited as Zieglschmid, *Die älteste Chronik*].

4. Walter Klaassen and William Klassen, *Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2008), 215 [hereafter cited as Klaassen and Klassen, *Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity*].

with any clear ecclesiological concepts; indeed, some of the adherents of Hans Hut and some Anabaptist Spiritualists did not understand their baptisms to be associated in any way with the entry into a separate religious society.[5] In other cases, even very early in the movement, baptism was linked to seminal forms of congregational practice, including frequent or regular meetings, baptism and communion, ban, and the appointment of formal leaders such as elders and preachers. But even in these cases, the question remains how these acts of usurping ecclesial practices (preaching, sacraments, ban, leadership structures) outside the established church institutions should be characterized. Much of what has been interpreted as the beginnings of a free church can also be understood as oppositional expressions of groups who still hoped to reform the public church and were merely anticipating in private the concerns that they wished to accomplish in public. As Arnold Snyder has argued against Andrea Strübind, the latter is still plausibly the case with the Zürich circle of 1524-1525.[6]

One factor that contributed to the development of an increasingly dualistic Anabaptist separatism—as expressed in the Schleitheim Confession of 1527—was persecution. Early Anabaptism often regarded persecution as the presence of the "great tribulation" predicted in scriptures (Mt. 24:21) and as a prelude of the imminent end of the world. For persecuted Anabaptists it was self-evident to think of themselves as being the true Christians and their meetings, groups and congregations as being the true Church, in contrast to their persecutors and their church. But was persecution alone a sufficient mark of the Church, especially in view of all the obvious tensions and contradictions among both individual Anabaptists and the various Anabaptist groups? Was not unity also an indispensable mark of the Church? The Spiritualists Christian Entfelder and Johannes Bünderlin, both Anabaptist renegades who had moved from Moravia to Strasbourg around 1529, challenged the emerging self-consciousness of separatist Anabaptists by arguing that the Anabaptist gatherings were not churches at all since they lacked the marks of unity and apostolicity. The Spiritualist Caspar

5. Cf. Gottfried Seebaß, *Müntzers Erbe. Werk, Leben und Theologie des Hans Hut* (Gütersloh: Gutersloher Verlagshaus, 2002), [Habil. Erlangen, 1972], 324f; Werner O. Packull, *Mysticism and the Early South German-Austrian Anabaptist Movement, 1525-1531* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1977), 35-61.

6. Cf. Andrea Strübind, *Eifriger als Zwingli. Die frühe Täuferbewegung in der Schweiz* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2003); Arnold Synder, "Swiss Anabaptist Beginnings," in *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521-1700*, ed. John D. Roth and James M. Stayer (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 45-81; and Arnold Snyder, "The Birth and Evolution of Swiss Anabaptism (1520-1530)," *MQR* 80 (Oct. 2006), 501-645.

Schwenckfeld, who lived in Strasbourg as an exile from Liegnitz in Silesia, strongly supported the latter critique. In Silesia it had been exactly a dispute over apostolicity that had prevented Schwenckfeld and his Liegnitz co-reformers from restoring the visible ordinances of the primitive church. Although the Liegnitz circle shared the critique of infant baptism, they thought that the restitution of apostolic baptism required an apostolic legitimation by a divine intervention. As Werner O. Packull has shown, unity and apostolicity were the most challenging issues to the Strasbourg Anabaptists in 1529-1531, and the same was probably true for other Anabaptists far beyond that city.[7]

This critical situation—in which the Upper German Anabaptist movement was struggling with disillusionment over its original concerns for public reform, with the external threat of persecution, and with an equally discouraging internal dispute over its ecclesial identity—was the context in which the "holy Church of Austerlitz in Moravia, established by God the Lord through the word of the Gospel of his Son, which he has revealed anew in these last days of the world, to let her proclaim the hope of eternal life, having sanctified her to please him without any blemish, in order to preserve her until the day of glory of Christ, her Lord and Savior" (as one of its pastors would formulate in a letter written a few years later),[8] sent out about twenty emissaries to South Germany.[9] Among these twenty commissioned emissaries was Pilgram Marpeck, who arrived in Strasbourg late in the summer of 1528. The messengers were sent to gather the persecuted Anabaptists under the wings of the "holy church in Austerlitz" and to implement a new form of ecclesial identity. This new ecclesial model—what might be called an incipient form of "denominationalism"—was as different from the traditional universal Christendom of Rome as it was from the emerging Protestant territorial or municipal church bodies that, in the process of confessionalization, would eventually enter into transterritorial coalitions based on codified doctrinal statements.

I use the term "denomination" here with some caution. It is intended only to denote a voluntary religious community consisting of individual congregations in various places that are tied together by a common set of more or less distinctive religious tenets and practices. In addition, these

7. Werner O. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings. Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 133-158.

8. Kilian Auerbacher to Martin Bucer, Austerlitz, no date, in: *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer, VIII: Elsaß, II. Teil, Stadt Straßburg 1533-1535*, ed. Manfred Krebs and Hans Georg Rott (Gütersloh: Gutersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1960), 401-411, no. 625.

9. Interrogation of Michel Leubel and Thoman Adolff, Speyer, Jan. 8-31, 1533, in: *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer, IV: Baden und Pfalz*, ed. Manfred Krebs (Gütersloh: Gutersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1951), 421-425, no. 410.

congregations share a set of more or less distinctive ethical norms, admit each other's members to communion and other rituals reserved for insiders or members, and have established structures of inter-congregational communication and decision making. In this usage, "denomination" emphasizes the supralocal dissemination of a theologically reflected religious identity. Hence it denotes something substantially more structured than a "movement,"[10] but without the statist and territorial connotations of the term "confession."[11] One may object that it is anachronistic to apply the term "denomination" to early Anabaptism since the concept is usually associated with the evolution of supralocal religious identities and ecclesial structures among the English Dissenters. More specifically, Michael Watts has used the term to describe the transformation of Dissenter groups after the Toleration Act of 1689.[12] Given the very different external conditions, the analogy between Marpeck's oppressed congregations and associations like the eighteenth- or nineteenth-century Baptist are obviously limited. One might also object that the etymology of "denomination" suggests that the various competing Christian groups are merely names, and therefore simply different expressions of Christianity with none of the groups entitled to claim exclusive congruence with the one body and true church of Christ. In fact, Marpeck and his co-believers almost certainly did not share this kind of seminal ecumenism.

In order to clarify that only the structural aspect of the term "denomination" can be applied to Marpeck's congregations, I use it here in combination with the term "network." Again, the term "network" must be used with some caution, since my intention is not to employ here the impressive range of methodological tools developed by network theorists.[13] Nonetheless, "network" seems helpful since it draws more inclusive attention to the various levels of social interaction between individuals and local congregations beyond the explicitly religious bonds that define a denomination. At the same time, network models also helpfully describe communities whose institutional and

10. On the movement character of the radical initial phase of the Reformation, cf. Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Radikalität der Reformation. Aufsätze und Abhandlungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), esp. 11-53.

11. On the connection between the rise of territorial states and confessional ecclesiastic entities, cf. Heinrich Richard Schmidt, *Konfessionalisierung im 16. Jahrhundert* (München: Oldenbourg, 1992), esp. 86-91.

12. Cf. Michael Watts, *The Dissenters, I: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 382-393.

13. For future Marpeck research, however, it may be promising to experiment with how far these methods can be applied to the very fragmentary pool of available data.

organizational structures are less developed than the ecclesiastical structures that we generally expect with the term "denomination." And, indeed, the network of Marpeck's congregations were relatively soft structures.

At the very least, the auxiliary phrase "denominational network" seems to be more appropriate than the terminology used in previous Marpeck research. During the final editing of Heinold Fast's critical edition of the *Kunstbuch*, I began to question the phrase "Marpeck Circle," frequently used in Anabaptist scholarship since Jan Kiwiet's doctoral dissertation of 1955.[14] The word "circle" suggests an analogy with a sodality of Renaissance humanists who cultivated in their gatherings a combination of friendship, reading and writing,[15] or it evokes a seventeenth-century Pietist conventicle, whose members met for discussion of Scripture, singing and praying, while at the same time being reluctant to claim the theological quality of a visible church for these more or less informal gatherings.[16] Hans-Jürgen Goertz's widely used introductory text, *The Anabaptists,* even called the Marpeck congregations "an open circle of dialogue"[17]—a characterization reminiscent of the Rijnsburg Collegiants that clearly overstates the openness and the dialogical aspects of Marpeck's congregations. Thus, the editorial sections of the *Kunstbuch* avoided the appellation "Marpeck Circle" and employed instead the neutral phrase "the Anabaptist congregations connected with"—or "corresponding with"—Marpeck.[18]

But even these phrases were also inappropriate to express the self-understanding of the congregations associated with the Austerlitz church. Marpeck was certainly not personally the catalyst of their religious identity. It seems further that they considered their network as being more than a contingent association of some local churches. This is a substantial difference from the later free church ecclesiology of the Baptist type, especially since the Baptists ascribed ecclesiality[19] only to the local congregations, not to the supralocal denominational structure (accordingly, Baptists did not claim for any visible denomination an

14. Cf. Jan Kiwiet, *Pilgram Marbeck. Ein Führer der Täuferbewegung der Reformationszeit* (Kassel: Oncken, 1957).

15. Cf. the excellent overview on humanist sodalities in Strübind, *Eifriger als Zwingli*, 131-147.

16. Cf. Hartmut Lehmann, "Absonderung und neue Gemeinschaft," in: *Geschichte des Pietismus, IV: Hartmut Lehmann (ed.), Glaubenswelt und Lebenswelten*, ed. Martin Brecht, et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 487-497.

17. Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *The Anabaptists* (London: Routledge, 1996), 26.

18. Cf. *Kunstbuch*, ed. Fast, 418, 423, 441, 476, 637.

19. On "ecclesiality" cf. Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 127: "Exploring the question of ecclesiality means exploring what makes the church the church."

exclusive congruence or subsistence with the invisible one and holy Church).[20] Instead, it seems that Marpeck's congregations explicitly thought of themselves, and the network to which they belonged, as forming nothing less than the "body or Church of Christ," in contrast—as Leupold Scharnschlager expressed it in an undated circular letter to the congregations of the network—to "the whole world, as Papists, Lutherans, Zwinglians, false Baptizers and all other opposing sects and opinions."[21] A similar usage can be observed in another circular letter written in 1543 by Cornelius Veh, one of Marpeck's correspondents in Moravia, who sent his greetings to a congregation in Appenzell and to the "whole Church of Christ"—which clearly denoted nothing else than the network within which the letter was to be forwarded.[22] Still another example comes from the cabinet maker Balthasar Grasbantner, the elder or reader of the congregation in Znaim, who signed a letter written by the Moravian churches to Marpeck in 1553. Asked about his sect in a conversation with the Bohemian Brethren in 1559, he said that his community was separated from "all other Anabaptist sects," like the Sabbatarians and the Hutterites, and that his group had many members in Moravia, Bohemia, Switzerland and Upper Germany.[23]

These are clear statements of a denominational consciousness, as clear as contemporaries of the sixteenth-century process of pluralization and confessionalization of Christianity could formulate. The "Fellows of the Covenant," as the group called itself, ascribed an ecclesial identity to their network or communion, and they even had a tendency to claim that identity exclusively for themselves.

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20. Marpeck may have known the Augustinian distinction between visible and invisible Church, but instead of exploring possible transsectarian and suprasectarian implications of this distinction, he transformed it into an individualistic distinction between the "inner temple"—i.e., the heart of the believer—and the "outward temple"—i.e., the visible church. The metaphor is taken from the temple of Jerusalem with its inner and outer sanctuary.—cf. Fast, *Kunstbuch*, 591 and 564; Rempel, *Kunstbuch*, 623 and 582. Where Marpeck happens to apply the inner-outer distinction to the Church proper, he stressed the congruence between the spiritual and the outward dimension of the Church, e.g. Fast, *Kunstbuch*, 580; Rempel, *Kunstbuch*, 602.

21. Fast, *Kunstbuch*, 539; ed. Rempel, *Kunstbuch*, 543.

22. Fast, *Kunstbuch*, 489; ed. Rempel, *Kunstbuch*, 471.

23. "Čjm se oni od giných nowokřtěnců dělj, a kolik g[es]t gich sekt? Powěděli, že sau oni ode wssech, kolikož g[es]t gich koli sekt, rozdjlnj, y od sabatařů y od společnjků. Sabatáři, že sau napoly židé a neslussné wěcy držj. Společnjcy pak že nepobožné wěcy činj, neb nenáležité spolky magj y w ženách y w giných wěcech, a že sau ti wssecko od nich wylaučenj. Třetj ptáni sau, mnoholi gest gich gednoty bratřj? Odpowěděli, že gich g[es]t mnoho w Morawě, w Čechách, w Ssweycařjch a w hornjch zemjch."—Praha, NA, Depositum Ochranov, Acta Unitatis Fratrum 9, fol. 260r-v; cf. Jarold K. Zeman, *The Anabaptists and the Czech Brethren in Moravia 1526-1628* (The Hague / Paris: Mouton, 1969), 249-259.

A Denomination Needs a Name

Soon after the appearance of the critical edition of the *Kunstbuch*, I encountered a short unpublished treatise in the city archives of Regensburg written in 1555 by a certain Johann Weisenkircher. In the manuscript Weisenkircher reported to the Lutheran city preacher, Nicolaus Gallus (ca. 1516-1570), on his encounters with the "Brethren in Moravia and the names of their sects."[24] Thus far, no additional biographical information about Weisenkircher is available besides what can be concluded from the treatise itself. Weisenkircher writes that he was acquainted with Wolf von Tauffkirchen, a Bavarian baron, and reports some details about Tauffkirchen's discussions with the Hutterites. The reference corresponds with a note in the Hutterite *Chronicle* according to which Tauffkirchen had invited Hutterite missionaries to his castle, Gutenburg near Kraiburg on the Inn, in 1555.[25] All in all, Weisenkircher appears to be a well-informed and nonpolemical source on contemporary Anabaptism, perhaps because he himself was enchanted to some extent by the movement.[26] In interesting detail, Weisenkircher described four main groups of Anabaptists in Moravia: the Austerlitz Brethren; the Sabbatarians; the Hutterites; and the Swiss Brethren. His closest contacts were with the Austerlitz

24. Regensburg, Stadtarchiv, Eccl. I, no. 58-33 (35021-35028).

25. Cf. Zieglschmid, *Die älteste Chronik*, 348-351.

26. Additional documents in the same archives point to certain connections between Regensburg and the Austerlitz Brethren. One is a Latin letter published by Karl Schornbaum in his edition of the Regensburg *Täuferakten*. It was written in 1539 by a certain Wolfgang Lutz in Austerlitz to the Spiritualist or Anabaptist Hans Umlauft in Regensburg, describing the writer's arrival and baptism in Austerlitz. A short time later Umlauft himself emigrated to Moravia and probably joined the Austerlitz Brethren congregation in Butschowitz-Budaspitz, just a few miles from Austerlitz.—cf. *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer, V: Bayern, II. Abteilung*, ed. Karl Schornbaum (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1951), 62f, no. 48. The second document is an undated and anonymous Confession of Faith addressed to the captain of one of the dominions of the Lords of Pernstein in Moravia. This document was published by Hans Hillerbrand in 1959.—Hans J. Hillerbrand, "Ein Täuferbekenntnis aus dem 16. Jahrhundert, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 50 (1959), 40-50. Because of its obvious affinity to Marpeck's theology, some scholars have ascribed it to Marpeck himself, cf. Stephen B. Boyd, *Pilgram Marpeck. His Life and Social Theology* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1992), 98-102. Packull (*Hutterite Beginnings*, 146-154) argued for the authorship of the aforementioned Hans Umlauft. Neither of these ascriptions seems convincing. Since most of the dominions of the Lords of Pernstein were in Moravia, it is more plausible to read the text rather as an apology of some Austerlitz Brethren in Moravia prompted by slandering or an investigation by the local authorities. Occasion for such an apology arose, for example, in 1550 and 1551 when one of the Lords of Pernstein who had converted to Catholicism undertook two attempts to ban Anabaptists from his estates.—cf. Rothkegel, "Anabaptism in Moravia and Silesia," 187. Even a later date is possible, because the Confession indicates that the Brethren were wrongly accused of not believing in the deity of Christ, a charge that may have been crucial in the mid-1550s when Italian antitrinitarian Anabaptists started to seek refuge in Austerlitz.

Brethren. Weisenkircher stated that this group received its name after the market town where they had their first congregation and that a considerable part of their membership left for the Sabbatarians in 1529. The Austerlitz Brethren, he continued,

> have the best reputation and everybody bears witness that they are fine people. They have private property. Each one has his own [possessions], but they practice mutual aid. They call themselves a people of God who have entered a covenant with God—thus their self-appellation *Eidbundsgenossen* [Confederates of the Covenant]. They sing sweetly and can confuse even a scholar.

After a description of their congregational life and their differences with the other groups, Weisenkircher emphasized in a summary at the end of the text:

> Note that the Austerlitz Brethren and the *Bundesgenossen* [Fellows of the Covenant] are one and the same sect. In the beginning they were called Austerlitzers, but now they boast of the name "Fellows of the Covenant" in order to make themselves appear more holy.[27]

Weisenkircher's statement that the group was known in Moravia by the name "Fellows of the Covenant" is supported by a passage in a theological expert opinion on Marpeck's *Vermahnung*, or "Admonition," submitted by the Moravian Utraquist reformer Beneš Optát to one Lord of Pernstein in the mid-1550s.[28] Optát had been asked to comment on the "Admonition" because the young Lord Albert von Pernstein had received the book from a group of Anabaptists, but Pernstein felt that the book was too lengthy and complicated for his command of German. Optát started his survey by stating that the "Admonition" is a book by the Anabaptist group that call themselves "Brethren of the Covenant" (*bratrzij punthu neb umluvy*). Some details of the treatise reveal that Optát did not arrive at this appellation only from the text, but that he knew the group from his own experience in Moravia. For example, he described

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27. "Erstlich hat sich erhebt ein sect im 1529. jar, der namen Auserlutzer genent, welchen sy von einem marckht haben . . . unnd soll jetzt die best sect sein, denn jederman gibt in die zeugnus, sy sein fein leut. Bleiben noch bey dem iren, ein jedlicher beü dem seinen, helfen fein aneinander. Dise nenen sich ein volckh Gottes, die sich mit Gott verbunden haben, daher sy sich aidsbundsgenosen nenen. Dise singen sües und mechten auch einen gelerten ir machen . . . Volgen ire namen etc.: Erstlich Auserlützer unnd Bundesgnosen ist nur ein sect, Auserlützer haisen sy am ersten, mit dem namen Bundtsgnosen schmuckhen sy sich jetzt, das sy dest hailiger angesechen werden."—Regensburg, Stadtarchiv, Eccl. I, no. 58-33 (35021-35028).

28. Cf. Martin Rothkegel, "Beneš Optát, 'On Baptism and Lord's Supper': An Utraquist Reformer's Opinion of Pilgram Marpeck's 'Vermahnung,'" *MQR* 79 (July 2005), 359-381.

some details of their celebration of the Lord's Supper that are not mentioned in the "Admonition." So it seems plausible that in the 1550s, the Marpeck group in Moravia was known by the name "Fellows/Brethren of the Covenant."

In connection with Marpeck, the term *Bundesgenossen* occurs first in a confession submitted by Jakob Kautz and Wilhelm Reublin to the Strasbourg City Council in January 1529. Kautz and Reublin then belonged to the group of Strasbourg Anabaptists with whom Marpeck had achieved spiritual unity. Just a few months after producing that confession, Reublin would emigrate to Moravia and join the Austerlitz congregation. Kautz and Reublin used the term *Bundesgenossen* to denote themselves and fellow believers who had entered a covenant with God in their hearts and had professed this life-changing experience to their fellow covenanters by outward baptism.[29]

Thirteen years later, the term *Bundesgenossen* reappears most prominently in the treatise published by Marpeck in 1542 called "Admonition," which included in its title the phrase: "aiming at a true Christian eternal union of the covenant of all true believers against all presumed Christian covenants which are carried on under the name of Christ." In the preface and body of that discursive elaboration on the two sacraments, the editors refer to themselves as *Bundesgenossen* at least six times.[30] No wonder then that Caspar Schwenckfeld opened his detailed *Judicium*, or refutation of the "Admonition," with several paragraphs in which he expressed his irritation triggered by a group name,

> which they would be better off not using in these dangerous times, lest one might be misled to slander and to understand a conspiracy of seditious peasants, especially since such a phrase, to my knowledge, does not occur in the Holy Scripture.

What Schwenckfeld did understand was that the "Fellows of the Covenant" derived their name from the definition of baptism in 1 Peter 3:21, where the difficult phrase *syneideseos agathes eperotema* was rendered in contemporary German Bible translations as "covenant of good

29. *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer, VII: Elsaß, I. Teil, Stadt Straßburg 1522-1532*, ed. Manfred Krebs and Hans Georg Rott (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus G. Mohn, 1959), 198. This was a rather spiritualistic version of baptismal theology that is not congruent with the position that Marpeck himself expressed in his later writings.

30. *VErmanung; auch gantz klarer/ gründtlicher vn(d) vnwidersprechlicher bericht . . . durch bewerung warer Tauff vnd Abentmals Christi . . . wider alle vermeynte Christ-|liche Pündtnus . . .* [Straßburg: Sigmund Bund, 1542], republished as "Pilgram Marbecks Vermahnung. Ein wiedergefundenes Buch," in: *Gedenkschrift zum 400jährigen Jubiläum der Mennoniten oder Taufgesinnten 1525-1925*, ed. Christian Hege (Ludwigshafen: Herausgegeben von der Konferenz der süddeutschen Mennoniten e.V., 1925), 178-282; the term *Bundesgenossen* occurs on pages 186, 187 (twice), 189 (twice), 281.

conscience."[31] The reference is not to a covenant that the companions had entered with each other, but rather to the fact that their fellowship was based on baptism in which each of them had entered into a covenant with God. In this usage, covenant is more or less a code word for baptism, and "Fellows of the Covenant" is an equivalent of *Taufbrüder* (brothers in baptism), a term that Schwenckfeld used in other places to denote the Marpeck group.

Marpeck and his co-elders answered Schwenckfeld's *Judicium* in the monumental *Verantwortung* ("Response"), the first part of which was written soon after Schwenckfeld's refutation. The second part followed several years later. The opening section of the first part contained a defense of the term *Bundesgenossen* that refuted Schwenckfeld's objections. This defense can be best understood as an apology for the self-designated name of the authors' community.[32] The voluminous "Response" was distributed to members and congregations in handwritten copies, three of which have survived. One of the copies includes a note—much discussed by historians—by Walburga Marschallckhin von Pappenheim, one of the few female aristocratic adherents of the group, that points to a process of collective editing of the "Response." Walburga reported that a board of elders had invested a lot of time and money to discuss and write the long text. From other sources we know the place of residence of most of the elders mentioned: Marpeck lived in Augsburg; Scharnschlager in Ilanz in the Grisons; Sigmund Bosch in or near Strasbourg; Martin Blaichner in Chur in the Grisons; Valtin Werner in Augsburg; Anthonius Müller, whose residence remains unknown; and Hans Jacob, called Schneider, who can be traced to Augsburg. According to Walburga's note, the effort to produce the

31. "Die wörtlin bundtsgenossenn, bundsfereinigung, puntferpflichtenn und dergleichenn hetenn sy diser geferlichenn zeit wol unterlassenn, damit man nit ursach der calumnien daraus nemme und einen pundtschuch versteunde, weil sollich wort ouch inn heiliger schrift (sovil ich waiß) nit bald befunden. Vileicht haben sy es aus 1. Pet. 3 gezogen, do sy fur das wörtlin *eperotema* oder *innterogatio*, das do heist das zusagen, durchfrag[ung] oder vertädigung eines guten gewissens, bundt haben verstannden, daher sy die christlichenn puntsgenossenn und pundsverpflichtenn einfueren, welliches aber nicht wenig irrung mit sich bringt, so es auf den toufhandel und touffbruder wirt gedeuteth," *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum* 8, 173. — In his New Testament of 1522 Luther translated this phrase as "bund eyns guten gewissens mit Got" and did not change this translation in later editions. From 1530, the Luther editions added a marginal gloss, according to which "bund" means a "stipulatio, das Gott sich uns mit gnaden verpflicht und wirs annemen."—cf. WA *Deutsche Bibel* 7, 308f, 2 Pet. 3:21.

32. "Pilgram Marbecks Antwort auf Kaspar Schwenckfelds Beurteilung des Buches der Bundesbezeugung von 1542," in *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte der oberdeutschen Taufgesinnten im 16. Jahrhundert*, ed. Johann Loserth (Wien: Komm.-Verl. Carl Fromme, 1929), 85-87.

"Response" took many years until the whole text was written and edited, and the elders sacrificed considerable means for it, even cutting short on their living expenses.[33] Textual analysis, however, has not produced clear indications for a plurality of authors, and according to Walter Klaassen and William Klassen, it seems more probable that Marpeck himself be regarded as its primary author.[34] In any case, Walburga's note clearly indicates that a board of elders discussed and agreed upon the text—whether in conferences or by correspondence. So the Fellows of the Covenant had apparently developed a clandestine structure of communication and decision-making that allowed them to discuss and agree upon very complex doctrinal issues.

If we accept Weisenkircher's statement that the Austerlitz Brethren intentionally changed their name at a certain point of time to "Fellows of the Covenant," we can conclude that this renaming took place in 1542 at the latest and that the South German network of congregations that modern researchers have been calling the Marpeck Circle actually belonged to the "Fellows of the Covenant." It is strange, however, that the evidence for the use of the group name "Fellows of the Covenant" is quite limited. Many of the Marpeck texts do not include it at all. But we do find similar phrases that might be used interchangeably. At the very end of the "Admonition," for example, the editors called themselves "fellows of the covenant and fellows in the tribulation which is in Christ."[35] This enlarged formula may help to explain the fact that the label *Bundesgenossen* is not found in the letters of the *Kunstbuch*. Instead, the phrase "fellows in the tribulation and in the kingdom" (with some variations; cf. Rev. 1:9) appears regularly in the subscriptions of all included letters, thus serving as a seal or token phrase that indicated group membership and participation in an internal process of communication. The compiler of the *Kunstbuch*, Jörg Maler, added this phrase even to the subscriptions of texts by Hans Hut and Leonhard Schiemer, who died in 1527 and 1528, respectively, before the Austerlitz Brethren were founded. Clearly, these additions were editorial manipulations by Maler or by the scribe of the copies he used, thereby making Hut and Schiemer posthumous members of the group.[36] It seems

33. "Dise zeugnuß haben die alten brüder gestellt widern Schwenckfeldischen irrthumb . . . dies sind die eltisten zeugen Gottes sambt der gantzen gmain und bruederschafft, nemlich Pilgram Marpeckh und Leupold Scharnschlager, Sigmund Bosch, Martin Blaichhner, Valtin Werner, Anthoni Müller, Hans Jacob sambt andern alten brüeder und glaubigen in allen landen."—Loserth, "Pilgram Marbecks Antwort," 49f.

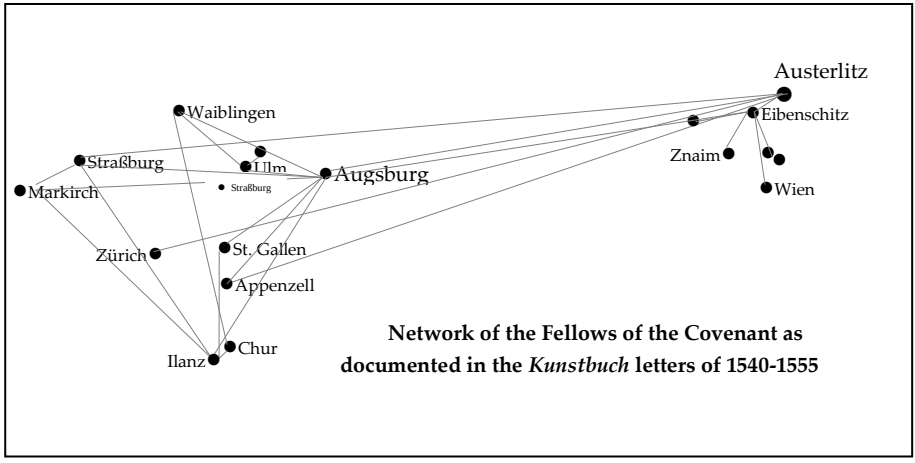
34. Klaassen and Klassen, *Marpeck. A Life of Dissent and Conformity*, 234-237.

35. "Die christglaubigen pundts- und mitgenossen des trübsals, das in Christo ist," Hege, "Pilgram Marbecks Vermahnung," 281.

36. Fast, *Kunstbuch*, 143 (Sigmund Bosch 1548); 147 (Marpeck 1545); 199 ("Hans Hut 1528"); 340 ("Leonhard Schiemer 1527/28"); 387 (Marpeck [1546/47]); 405 (Jörg Maler 1552);

that both phrases, "fellows of the covenant" and "fellows in tribulation," are closely connected, and one might ponder the thought that the first (*Bundesgenossen*) was used as a distinctive appellation especially in communication with outsiders while the latter (*Mitgenossen des Trübsals*) was preferred in internal communication.

Weisenkircher's report from the Regensburg archives turns out to be something like a "missing link" that allows us to understand the South German Marpeck network and the congregations of the Austerlitz Brethren in Moravia as one and the same group. Its enormous geographic extension of about 560 miles (900 kilometers) from Markirch (Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines) in the west to Austerlitz (Slavkov u Brna) in the east and of more than 215 miles (350 kilometers) from Ilanz in the Grisons to Waiblingen in Württemberg becomes evident if one visualizes the connections between the senders and recipients of the letters of the *Kunstbuch* dating from 1540 to 1555.



415 (Marpeck 1555); 422 (Marpeck [1552/53]); 437 (Marpeck 1550); 445 (Leupold Scharnschlager); 476 (Cornelius Veh 1543); 489 (Cornelius Veh 1543); 499 (Sigmund Bosch 1553); 504f (Pilgram Marpeck 1545); 525 (Scharnschlager); 529 (Scharnschlager 1544); 531 (Scharnschlager); 541 (Marpeck 1544); 557 (Marpeck 1551); 585 (Marpeck 1547); 587 (Hans Bichel 1555); 594 (Marpeck); 609 (Marpeck 1547). The same phrase occurs in letters of the network that have been preserved outside the *Kunstbuch*. See, for example, Jacobus ten Doornkaat Koolman, "Leopold Scharnschlager und die verborgene Täufergemeinde in Graubünden," *Zwingliana* 4 (1928), 329-337, 337 (Valentin Werner 1559), and Loserth, "Pilgram Marbecks Antwort," 59 (Marpeck 1544).

THE AUSTERLITZ BRETHREN AND MARPECK

Werner Packull's *Hutterite Beginnings* (1995) offered a detailed reconstruction of the origins of the Austerlitz congregation based on an analysis of the narrative of the Hutterite *Chronicle* with a number of corrections from additional sources.[37] The apocalyptic message of Hans Hut apparently played an important role when the future Austerlitzers, many of whom were refugees from neighboring Austria, separated from the Anabaptist parish churches of the Nikolsburg dominion of the Lords of Liechtenstein during Lent in 1528, just ten weeks before the expected apocalyptic events that Hut had foretold were to take place on Pentecost of that year. Local landlords invited the separatists to Austerlitz, bestowing on them a number of privileges and liberties. Very soon, the fame of the Austerlitz church spread in Anabaptist circles all over South Germany, and for several years Austerlitz was the primary goal of Anabaptist immigrants to Moravia. A papal nuncio reported to Rome in 1531 that he had heard the rumor that the Anabaptists had already built more than 300 houses (which seems to be a much exaggerated number) and that the lord of the dominion favored them a great deal, not because he himself was a member of the sect, but because he hoped that their settlement would grow to a large city to his own benefit.[38] Packull has shown that the Austerlitz community provided an organizational model for all the separatist Anabaptist groups in Moravia that subsequently emerged as a result of schisms and conflicts—the Auspitz congregation, the Hutterites, the Philippites and the Gabrielites. It seems that the Austerlitz Brethren were of key importance for the transition of Upper German Anabaptism from a variety of amorphous movements to structured associations. The fragmentary nature of the sources does not allow the reconstruction of a full or continuous narrative, but it seems justifiable to assume a continuity between the Austerlitz Brethren in 1528 and the Austerlitz church of the 1540s and 1550s that was associated

37. Cf. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings*, 54-76. I have summarized Packull's detailed account and modified it in a few instances in Rothkegel, "Anabaptism in Moravia and Silesia," 177-182, 186-189.

38. Girolamo Aleandro, letter to Jacopo Salviati, Speyer, Oct. 9, 1531: "In camino mi sopragionse un gentilhuomo del re . . . , mi dice haver visto e più volte pratticato in una grande sylva di parecchi leghe di paese, non molto lontano da Vienna, et è di un potentissimo barone, pur suggieto al serenissimo re, in la qual sylva dice essere ridotti gran numero di questi anabaptisti da diversi luochi d'Alemagna fuggiti . . . , et ivi hanno edificato gia piu di 300 case. . . . Quello barone . . . molto li favoreggia, non per esser lui di la setta, ma perche ne spera far una grossa città cum grande suo utile."—*Monumenta Vaticana historiam ecclesiasticam saeculi XVI illustrantia ex tabulariis Sanctae Sedis Apostolicae secretis*, ed. Hugo Laemmer (Freiburg i. Br.: Sumtibus Herder, 1861), no. LIX, 80.

with Marpeck and had a network of filial congregations in Moravia and even one congregation in Vienna.

The Hutterite *Chronicle*, our most important source for the initial years of the Austerlitz Brethren, appears to be heavily biased. For the Hutterite construct of the past, the Austerlitz Brethren were Christ's true Church on earth from their prehistory in the Nikolsburg dominion in 1527 until the winter of 1530-1531. For the Hutterite chronicler, this was a necessary assertion, because the divinely-sent apostle, Jacob Hutter, chose to affiliate with the Austerlitzers when he first arrived in Moravia in 1529, and he belonged to the Austerlitz Brethren until the winter of 1530-1531. Based on the fact that Jacob Hutter himself acknowledged Austerlitz as the true church on earth until his withdrawal in 1531, and since community of goods and pacifism were central dogmas of the Hutterites—indeed, virtually indispensable preconditions for salvation—it followed for the Hutterite chronicler that members of the Austerlitz congregation must have been strictly communitarian pacifists during the time of Hutter's affiliation with it. Hence, the chronicler assumed that Hutter first learned to know the Austerlitzers as strict pacifists and communists, and that the emerging conflicts needed to be explained by an increasing defection of the Austerlitzers from their original tenets, and by the personal deficits of the Austerlitz leaders. After Hutter's separation from the Austerlitzers in early 1531, Austerlitz ceased to be a true church. At this point, the chronicler's narrative leaves the Austerlitz stage and returns to it only very rarely. In 1581, at the time when the *Chronicle* was composed, the chronicler explicitly stated that the Austerlitz Brethren from which Hutter had withdrawn in 1531 continued to exist as a group.[39]

Before returning to the question of Marpeck's affiliation with the Austerlitz Brethren, two additional aspects of the early history of the Austerlitz Brethren should be noted. The first is the political background behind the separation of the proto-Hutterite Auspitz (Hustopeče) congregation from the Austerlitz Brethren in the winter of 1530-1531. Early in 1531 one of the first Auspitz leaders, the Bohemian, David from Schweintz, wrote a "Commentary on Romans 13" that has survived in the Nürnberg archives in Germany along with a cluster of other papers confiscated from a messenger of the Auspitz secessionists.[40] David can

39. Zieglschmid, *Die älteste Chronik*, 172, 224, 98.

40. Nürnberg, Bayerisches Staatsarchiv, Markgrafentum Ansbach, Ansbacher Religionsakten (ARA) 39, fol. 129r-149r (clean copy), fol. 154r-172r (draft). Jonathan Seiling has transcribed this important manuscript and is currently preparing an English translation for publication.

probably be identified as a certain David Burda from the South Bohemian town of Schweinitz (Trhové Sviny), who was chancellor of the Lords of Rosenberg (z Rožmberka) in 1525.[41] An earlier career as a chief administrative officer of one of the leading magnate families of Bohemia would explain David's keen political alertness—what might be called an early example of thinking globally and acting locally. According to his exegesis of Romans 13, Emperor Charles V had lost any legitimacy as a worldly authority because he did not kill the Antichrist pope when it was his divinely-assigned job to do so during the sack of Rome in 1527. As a consequence, God withdrew his favor from Charles and elected the Turk to punish him as an unruly instrument. Since then, resistance against the tyrant Charles is a binding command of Romans 13. So when the Austerlitz Brethren made an arrangement with the local authorities by which they would, at least indirectly, pay their share of a special tax for the war against the Turks, they disobeyed the divine command against paying taxes to anybody other than the legitimate authorities. Thus, David and the other Auspitz secessionists had to cease fellowship with Austerlitz. Neither David's exegesis nor the indirect support of the Habsburg military by the Austerlitz Brethren was strictly pacifist. The "Commentary on Romans 13" is an important example of how embedded Anabaptist theological thinking was in politics. In the Hutterite *Chronicle* this contemporary political context of the origins of Moravian Anabaptist pacifism was largely erased in favor of a dogmatic construction of the past. David bewails the actions of the Austerlitz leaders:

> O Lord God, how could such miserable blindness befall those who had been driving out devils and doing great miracles in thy name? We were convinced that thou had made an irrevocable covenant with them. But now we see that thou wilt remain sovereign and unbound.[42]

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41. David Burda from Schweinitz, chancellor of the Lords of Rosenberg in 1525, is mentioned by Anna Kubíkova, "Historická topografie Českého Krumlova (1424) 1459-1654," pt. III, *Jihočeský sborník historický*, 73 (2004), 195-214, 204. The identification seems probable because a pamphlet published by the Habrovanite Brethren in 1533 alludes to the Austerlitz-Auspitz schism of 1531 as follows: "Teež David Burda na bratržij podruhee křtienee w Slawkowie prosyl klekssi, aby oheň s nebe staupil a spalil ge, newieda sam nebohy žiho gest duchu" ("Also David Burda prayed on his knees that fire may fall from heaven and burn the Anabaptist Brethren of Austerlitz—the man was miserable himself and did not know of whose spirit he is"), cf. *Vkazanij w dwogij ſtrance* [. . .] (Luleč: Kašpar Aorg (Neděle) Prostějovský, 1533), fol. Q2v.

42. "Her Gott, wo khumbt her ßo jämerlich blinthait auff die, die in deinem namen haben teuffl außtriben und grosse wunder gethan? Wir hatten gmaynt, du hettest dich ßo unaufloslich mit inen verknupft. Aber wir sehen, das du frey bleiben wild."—Nürnberg, Bayerisches Staatsarchiv, Markgrafentum Ansbach, Ansbacher Religionsakten (ARA) 39, fol. 143r.

This is not a random expression of deep disappointment. David names exactly the two credentials of true apostles, exorcisms and miracles. The quotation mirrors the claim of the Austerlitz Brethren that their group was the restitution of the apostolic Church because their leaders were endowed with apostolic authority, whatever these alleged exorcisms and miracles may have meant in practice. David's statement further alludes to the prominence of the term covenant in the religious language of the Austerlitz Brethren, which seems to have included the idea of a special covenant between the Austerlitz church and God.

It is also noteworthy that the Austerlitz congregation founded in the spring of 1528 is the first documented case of a specific Anabaptist group whose name joined the general term "Brethren" with a specific modifier, in this case a toponym, "Austerlitzer." We are so used to group names like "Hutterian Brethren" and "Swiss Brethren" that we pay little attention to their origin, especially since some scholars still follow the confusing and erroneous usage popularized by Harold Bender of calling early Swiss Anabaptists, especially those who conformed with the standards formulated in Schleitheim in 1527, by the name "Swiss Brethren." This usage, which made Conrad Grebel the "founder" of the Swiss Brethren, has no basis in the sources. Sixteenth-century documents use the appellation "Swiss Brethren" for a very specific group that was not necessarily linked with the geographic parameters of the Swiss Confederation. One must distinguish between the technical usage of "Brethren" in composite group appellations and the more general adoption of the primitive Christian usage of all believers calling each other brothers and sisters. The latter was a common feature in the early years of the Reformation wherever the pathos of the restitution of original Christianity filled the air. The former, technical usage for Anabaptist group names most likely stems from the cultural and linguistic context of Moravia where the term "Brethren," without any further specification, usually denoted the "Unity of the Bohemian Brethren," or *Unitas Fratrum*. Founded in 1457-1467, they considered themselves as a restitution of the Primitive Church. The *Unitas Fratrum* called themselves "Brethren of the Order of Christ," which alludes to the official names of the mendicant orders, "Brethren of the Order of Saint Francis" (or Dominicus), but with the polemic implication that the monks actually do not follow the rule of Christ. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Czech Brethren were quite respected among Moravian nobles for their piety and ethical conduct. The landlords of Austerlitz, the Lords of Kaunitz, had welcomed a congregation of the Bohemian Brethren in 1510 and granted them several privileges and

liberties.[43] It is obvious that the Lords of Kaunitz reverted to their positive experiences with the Czech Brethren when another persecuted and illegal religious group knocked at their doors in the spring of 1528. A surviving letter of November 1528 indicates that the Lords of Kaunitz called the new Anabaptist inhabitants of Austerlitz "Brethren" by analogy, and even prompted the central leadership of the Unity of Bohemian Brethren to accept these "brethren" into their church communion. The leadership of the Bohemian Brethren responded negatively, because in the course of the merger negotiations the Anabaptist "brethren" did not show the slightest intention of submitting to the ordinances of the Bohemians.[44] In the local property registers of Austerlitz, which are perserved from 1539 on, the Austerlitz Brethren continued to be called simply "German Brethren" as distinguished from the "Bohemian Brethren." This seems to be the origin of the group name "Austerlitz Brethren," which then served as a pattern for other Anabaptist group names.

Wilhelm Reublin, in a letter written to Marpeck after the Austerlitz-Auspitz schism in early 1531, explicitly confirmed Marpeck's affiliation with the Austerlitz Brethren at the time of his activity in Strasbourg.[45] Another key source identified Marpeck as one of approximately twenty emissaries sent out by the Austerlitz Brethren to South Germany with the mandate to baptize and to exercise spiritual authority.[46] Werner Packull has shown convincingly that Marpeck must have been commissioned as a church officer or elder by the Austerlitz Brethren between July 1528, when he fled from his temporary residence in Bohemian Krumlov (Böhmisch Krumau, Český Krumlov), and early September 1528, when he appeared in Strasbourg.[47] It is highly unlikely that Marpeck's primary motivation in going to Strasbourg was to seek a secure haven from persecution for his wife and himself.[48] While it is true that Ferdinand I had launched a number of repressive measures against

43. Cf. Joseph Theodor Müller, *Geschichte der Böhmischen Brüder I* (Herrnhut: Missionsbuchhandlung, 1922); Ferdinand Hrejsa, *Sborové Jednoty bratrské* (Praha: Nakl. vlastnim, 1935), 135

44. Letter of the Elders of the Unity of Brethren to the Moravian Lords, Nov. 11, 1528, Praha, Národní archiv, Depositum Ochranov, AUF 5, fol. 333v-335v; cf. Joseph Theodor Müller, "Die Berührungen der alten und neuen Brüderunität mit den Täufern," *Zeitschrift für Brüdergeschichte* 4 (1910), 180-234, 189-193; Zeman, *Anabaptists*, 177-241.

45. Wilhelm Reublin, letter to Marpeck, Auspitz, Jan. 26, 1531, Nürnberg, Bayerisches Staatsarchiv, Markgrafentum Ansbach, Ansbacher Religionsakten 39, fol. 118-120; Carl Adolf Cornelius, *Geschichte des Münsterischen Aufruhrs in drei Büchern*. Zweites Buch (Leipzig: T. O. Weigel, 1860), 253-259, No. V.

46. *QGT Baden und Pfalz*, 421-425.

47. QGT Elsaß I, 185, fn. 4 (Sept. 19, 1528).

48. Against Klaassen and Klassen, *Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity*, 114-118.

the spread of Anabaptism in Moravia in April 1528, this persecution affected only the free, or royal, cities of Znaim (Znojmo), Brünn (Brno), Iglau (Jihlava) and Olmütz (Olomouc), which were responsible directly to the king.[49] Outside these cities, the persecution caused problems only to a very limited number of nonseparatist Anabaptist preachers who served publicly in parish churches, such as Christian Entfelder in Eibenschitz (Ivančice), who fled to Strasbourg where he launched a publishing offensive against the Austerlitzers that was countered by Marpeck in his Strasbourg pamphlets.[50] Country towns like Austerlitz, being subject to the local lords who took pride in granting toleration to religious separatists in opposition to the mandates of the king, provided optimal protection for the Anabaptists. For Marpeck, moving to Strasbourg in 1528 was more like leaving a secure haven.

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49. A resolute suppression of the practice of rebaptism in the Bohemian countries was planned by Ferdinand I as early as Jan. 21, 1528 (Třeboň, Státní oblastní archiv, Historica Třeboň 3925, fol. 203r). Concrete measures in Moravia started in Feb. 1528 with a royal mandate to the council of the royal city of Brünn (Brno) to take severe steps against a number of Anabaptist captives (Feb. 22, 1528: Brno, Archiv města Brna, A 1/1, Sbírka listin, mandatů a listů, č. 1240). During the Moravian diet at Znaim (Znojmo), March 28-April 1, 1528, a law against public Anabaptist preaching and worship was proposed by the king, but not recorded in the minutes of the diet (non-official reports about this diet by the Brünn city clerk Ivan Munka: Brno, Archiv města Brna, A 1/3, Sbírka rukopisů a úředních knih, rkp. č. 7329, Bl. 128v–129r; further by Ferdinand's historiographer Caspar Ursinus Velius: Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 8055, fol. 5r-6r). Royal mandates to the Moravian royal cities issued on April 13, 1528, ordered the expulsion of Anabaptist preachers within a month and the suppression of Anabaptist worship, and one day later a group of Anabaptists were executed in Brünn (Olomouc, pobočka Zemského archivu v Opavě, Arcibiskupství Olomouc, listiny papírové, inv. č. 1584, Sign. A 32; ibid., inv. č. 1585, Sign. A 33; Jihlava, Státní okresní archiv, MSJ do r. 1848, stará registratura, II A 9, 546/10 b; ibid. II A 9, 546/15; letter by Johann Zvolský to Johann Heß in Breslau, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Depositum Breslau, Stadt-B., Hs. R 245 = Rehdigersche Briefslg. 5, No. 78). An interrogation of Anabaptist citizens in Brno took place on April 20, 1528 (Brno, Archiv města Brna, A 1/3, Sbírka rukopisů a úředních knih, rkp. č. 70, kniha ručení 1522–1582, fol. 60r–v). On May 17, 1528, a messenger of the Nikolsburg Anabaptists reported to Andreas Karlstadt about the measures taken in Moravia (Weimar, Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Ernestinisches Gesamtarchiv, Reg. N, Religionssachen, N 623, 46). Most of the Anabaptist prisoners in Brünn escaped during a fire in June 1528 (report by Caspar Ursinus Velius: Wien, Österreichische Nationabibliothek, Cod. 8055, fol. 26r-v). One of them, Hans Fürstenauer, fled to Nürnberg but was later was later expelled because there was evidence that he was involved in starting the fire in Brünn (Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, Reichsstadt Nürnberg Briefbuch des inneren Rats, No. 99, fol. 128r–129r, and many additional documents in the same archives). On some aristocratic dominions, the landlords may have suppressed public Anabaptist preaching and worship, but this is not documented. The nascent Austerlitz Brethren were welcomed by the Lords of Kaunitz in Lent or Spring, 1528, in the middle of Ferdinand's measures against the Anabaptists, which is a clear proof that the Austerlitz landlords did not pay attention to the royal mandates.

50. Cf. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings*, 139.

During Marpeck's Strasbourg years from late summer 1528 to the beginning of 1532, neither his statements to the authorities nor his printed pamphlets explicitly betrayed the purpose of his semi-clandestine activity among the many Anabaptists who had been flocking to the city since 1526 in search of refuge. There was in fact no reason why he should have done so, provided that he did not want to endanger his own efforts in the vineyard of the Lord. But we know from the testimonies of two Anabaptists from Speyer, Michel Leubel and Thomas Adolf, that the Strasbourg Anabaptists, or at least a significant part of them, had agreed to the view proposed by the messengers from Austerlitz that nobody should exercise the ordinance of baptism unless entrusted with such an office by the church in Moravia, and that Marpeck and Leupold Scharnschlager were such commissioned officers sent out by the Brethren in Moravia. At the time of that testimony in January 1533, Marpeck had already left Strasbourg and Scharnschlager had received orders from the church in Moravia to suspend his baptizing activity until further notice.[51] This testimony is key, because it shows that one strategy by which the Austerlitz Brethren intended to bring structure to the amorphous, spontaneously-grown Anabaptist groups was to prompt these groups to accept the authority of the mother church of Austerlitz in key ecclesiastical matters like the institution of officers and the exercise of sacramental ordinances. Marpeck's forced departure from Strasbourg in the beginning of 1532 and the banishment of Scharnschlager that followed in 1534 must have meant a considerable loss for the Austerlitz project. Probably early in 1532, after Marpeck's expulsion, the learned Austerlitz preacher Kilian Auerbacher sent a long and well-written (but undated) complaint to Strasbourg's chief theologian, Martin Bucer. Auerbacher stated that the Austerlitz mission to Strasbourg was suspended and expressed his indignation and disappointment on behalf of the "holy Church of Austerlitz in Moravia" that Strasbourg had fallen short of her divine calling to become the main refuge for the elected saints within the Empire.[52] The letter is important evidence that the Austerlitz Brethren pursued the project to erect filial churches not only in Moravia, but also throughout the Empire, with Strasbourg as a strategic base, by gathering persecuted Anabaptist groups and individuals and transforming them into organized congregations that would recognize the authority of the mother church in Moravia.

After his banishment from Strasbourg, Marpeck disappeared almost completely from the records for several years. He reappeared with a

51. *QGT Baden und Pfalz*, 424.
52. *QGT Elsaß II*, 401-411.

temporary stay in Austerlitz in May or June, 1540.[53] Another stay in Moravia is documented in 1541 when he supported the unsuccessful efforts of Cornelius Veh, a preacher of the Austerlitz Brethren, to win over part of the Hutterite membership.[54] For the remaining years of Marpeck's life until 1556, his close connection with the Austerlitz congregation and its Moravian filial congregations is well documented in the *Kunstbuch* letters. There is evidence, albeit indirect, that during his time in Strasbourg, Marpeck received instructions from the Austerlitz mother church. During his Augsburg years, from 1542 to 1556, Marpeck may have acted more independently as a coordinator of the intercongregational communication that took place by circular correspondence and messengers traveling back and forth between the Upper German and the Moravian parts of the network. So it seems that from 1528 on, Marpeck derived his authority as an Anabaptist leader from his affiliation with, and appointment to leadership by, the Austerlitz Brethren.

The Austerlitzers, it would appear, were not only the first group with a sharp enough profile to adopt a distinctive group name, but they were also the first group to develop a constructive vision for the future development of Anabaptism after the failure of the original options, options that may have included a victory of the peasants' revolt leading to lasting political changes, or the imminent end of the world with the elect being gloriously rewarded, or taking over parish churches by local Anabaptist reformations. As early as 1528, the Austerlitz Brethren developed the vision of a network of spiritually-united congregations—be they clandestine as in the Empire or openly visible as in Moravia. This vision of alternative ecclesiastic structures was later paralleled by the rise of the Mennonites in the Netherlands and in the Low German territories, and from the seventeenth century onward by the British Baptist associations and the system of supralocal meetings of the Quakers. But in 1528—a clandestine international communion, a minority ecclesiastical structure spanning the huge distance from Moravia in the east to the Alsace in the west—was without parallel. The closest parallel may have been the Unity of Bohemian Brethren, who, however, had a centralized

53. Wolf Sailer in a letter to Caspar Schwenckfeld, Austerlitz, Juni 4, 1540: "Es ist zu mir komen zu Austerlitz mein sonderlicher freund und bruder im Herren, Pilgram Marpeckh, und mir ahngezeigt, das er bei dir sei gewest und mit dir geredt habe, in welcher red auch meiner gedacht sei worden, dermassen wie das ich ich dir nichtz schreibe, hettest sorge, das ich deiner nicht gar vergessen hette."—Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. 49.9 Aug. 2°, fol. 362v.

54. Zieglschmid, *Die älteste Chronik*, 224.

structure of clerical leadership and were limited to the geographical space of the two provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, where they generally enjoyed much more favorable conditions than the Anabaptists.

Possible Shifts in Our Perception of Marpeck

Scholars have been reluctant to conclude that Marpeck was a representative of a denomination. But if this was indeed the case, which seems at least quite plausible, the corpus of Marpeck texts should be read in the functional context of intercommunication, conflict resolution and apologetics within a nascent denominational structure. One consequence of this interpretation is that Marpeck's life work was a great failure. His denomination ceased to exist quite soon, and the whole enterprise was without lasting success. In the South German imperial cities, the conforming pressures of confessionalization made the survival of clandestine Anabaptist congregations impossible. After the passing away of high-profile leaders and organizers like Marpeck, the extremely costly and difficult maintenance of communication channels between the local groups came to an end. From its beginnings, the network had recruited its membership by gathering survivors of the first wave of spontaneous Anabaptist expansion of the late 1520s. As Friedwart Uhland has shown for the group in Augsburg, the Marpeck congregations included hardly any new first-generation converts from outside Anabaptist circles. The congregational life of the Augsburg group had practically come to an end when it was eventually suppressed by the authorities in 1573.[55] In the same year, the aged last member of the Moravian congregation of the Fellows of the Covenant in Znaim had to leave the city.[56] When Marpeck died in 1556, the Anabaptists who had converted in the late 1520s may have had an average age between 50 and 60. Within two decades after Marpeck's death the South German congregations of the Fellows of the Covenant had died out. In Moravia local congregations continued to exist only in a few places into the seventeenth century until they were extinguished by the Counter-Reformation after 1620. There may be some individual cases of a genealogical connection between the Marpeck congregations and the surviving Anabaptist communities in Switzerland or in the Alsace, but Marpeck is not a predecessor of modern Swiss Brethren-Mennonites. Rather, Marpeck represents a branch of Anabaptism that has simply died

55. Cf. Friedwart Uhland, "Täufertum und Obrigkeit in Augsburg im 16. Jahrhundert," (Ph.D. diss., Tübingen, 1972), 257-273.

56. Cf. *Znojmo, Státní okresní archiv ve Znojmě, AMZ, kniha 273 (89/1), Kniha výpovědí (Prothocol der verhörtage etc.) 1556-1599, fol. 132v*; Martin Rothkegel, "Täufer und ehemalige Täufer in Znaim," *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* 58 (2001), 37-70.

out. Admittedly, traces of Marpeck's influence seem to be present in late-sixteenth-century Swiss Anabaptist writings.[57] And there are even more evident examples of Marpeck's reception by the Hutterites. Yet it would still it not be justified to call the Hutterites Marpeck's spiritual heirs.[58] There can be no doubt that Marpeck decisively disapproved of the Swiss Brethren as well as of the Hutterites, or that he would have agreed with the Austerlitz elder Cornelius Veh, who called both groups "dangerous and destructive sects."[59]

Another consequence from this reading of Marpeck is a greater attentiveness to the complexities of the question of ecclesiality in the sixteenth-century context. Modern historians of Anabaptism whose perspective on Anabaptism is shaped by contemporary Free Church congregational life often assume, based on Matthew 18:20, that wherever believers are gathered with the intention to form a church, ecclesiality automatically results. This simple view is often combined with the idea that the local gathered church is fully autonomous and needs no additional authority—whether derived from history or from a supracongregational structure—to be a visible Church of Christ exercising full authority in matters of doctrine, discipline and polity. This view is typically Baptist and has its origin in the conflict between the scrupulous John Smyth and the radical anti-successionist Thomas Helwys in 1610.[60] According to the Baptist tradition, neither historical succession nor extraordinary divine intervention is needed to bestow apostolic authority on a gathered group of believers. This tradition also ascribes minimal theological relevance to supracongregational structures. For modern historians who, consciously or unconsciously, draw an analogy between Anabaptism and modern Free Churches of the Baptist type, the Anabaptist movements of the sixteenth century appear to be a plurality of independent, self-organized local congregations.

Against such an anti-authoritarian scenario, Packull has shown that the question of ecclesial authority—more precisely the question of

57. Cf. Arnold Snyder, "The (Not-So) 'Simple Confession' of the Late Sixteenth-Century Swiss Brethren," *MQR* 73 (Oct. 1999), 677-722; 74 (Jan. 2000), 87-122.

58. Cf. Matthias H. Rauert, "'Ein schoen lustig Buechlein': The Influence of Pilgram Marpeck's 'Admonition' on True Baptism and Communion in a Hutterite Polemic," *MQR* 83 (July 2009), 425-470.

59. In a letter of 1543, cf. Fast, *Kunstbuch*, 483; Rempel, *Kunstbuch*, 465.

60. Cf. James R. Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation: English Separatism, Mennonite Influence, and the Elect Nation* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1991), 97-104; Barry R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, 2nd ed. (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1996), 20-22.

apostolic sending and empowerment for the restitution of the apostolic Church—was a crucial problem of the Anabaptist movements in the late 1520s and early 1530s.[61] Sixteenth-century Anabaptists would probably not believe in the nineteenth-century revivalist concept of receiving full redemption by nothing other than a subjective, individual and internal experience of conversion and rebirth. Instead, they would be seriously concerned about the role of the church in soteriology, and whether the fellowship of believers to which they belonged was truly an authorized church of Christ. Whereas modern Evangelicals easily ascribe ecclesiality to a fellowship of believers, but are inclined to think that the church does not contribute anything relevant to salvation, sixteenth-century Anabaptists would probably be more likely to resolve their doubts in the radical way propagated by Schwenckfeld—namely, that for the time being there was no authorized visible Church at all.

The small and frustrated Anabaptist conventicles may have found temporary stability by deriving spiritual authority from the "holy Church of Austerlitz in Moravia, established by God the Lord . . . in order to preserve her through until the day of glory of Christ, her Lord and Savior,"[62] as Kilian Auerbacher had put it in his letter to Bucer. Substantiating this claim by theological reflection, Marpeck's incarnational and sacramental theology sought to define and to defend an instrumental role for the visible Church and her ordinances for salvation against the Spiritualists' denial of the divine authorization of any of the existing churches. The Spiritualist challenge came not only from outside. Giving up the claim to be a visible church, which would primarily mean giving up the practice of the sacraments, must have been a crucial temptation for the small Upper German congregations in the increasingly repressive religious climate of their urban environments. In fact, the authorities probably would not punish mere informal conversation on matters of faith; but they did strictly persecute the illegal exercise of baptism and Lord's Supper by dissenting groups. The *Kunstbuch* contains one text, a poem by the Augsburg book peddler Leonhard Schönherr, that expresses Schönherr's disappointment with certain persons who claimed apostolic authority and explicitly suggests giving up the practice of baptism and Lord's Supper in times of persecution.[63]

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61. See above, note 7.

62. *QGT Elsaß II* 401f.

63. Fast, *Kunstbuch*, 671f, lines 320-329, and 673, lines 382-392; Rempel, *Kunstbuch*, 722, 724; on Schönherr (Schienherr) as an Augsburg book peddler see the archival documents of 1554 quoted by Hans-Jörg Künast, *"Getruckt zu Augspurg." Buchdruck und Buchhandel in Augsburg zwischen 1468 und 1555* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997), 128, 137.

I have published elsewhere a more detailed characterization of the Fellows of the Covenant.[64] In contrast to the radical counter-society promoted by the Hutterian Brethren, the Austerlitz Brethren, or Fellows of the Covenant, were fairly integrated in their urban environments. This included citizenship, guild membership and participation in communal self-administration, all of which required a readiness to take oaths and an affirmation of the legitimacy of temporal authority. The theological rationale of the Austerlitzers must have been expounded in a printed *Confession of Faith*, which Kilian Auerbacher announced in his letter to Bucer was soon to appear, and copies of which were available to the Hutterite chronicler as well as to Johann Weisenkircher.[65] Unfortunately, copies of that confession have not yet been found, nor are there any traces of the *Sixteen Articles of Faith of the Church in Moravia* that Marpeck mentioned as a dogmatic authority in his treatment of original sin in the *Response* to Schwenckfeld.[66]

Clearly, the Moravian archival material is extremely fragmentary, partly because there was no persecution to produce court files and testimonies as there was in the territories of the Empire (good for the Anabaptists, bad for the historian), and partly because the Austerlitzers lived on dominions of Protestant lords who lost their possessions during the Counter-Reformation following the Battle at the White Mountain in 1620. The historical discontinuities caused by the Counter-Reformation and the Thirty Years War resulted in the loss of most local and aristocratic archives of the period prior to 1620. Furthermore, in contrast to the Hutterites, the Austerlitzers in Moravia did not survive the Counter-Reformation of the 1620s as a group, so there were no descendants to preserve remnants of the religious group literature. Today the whole body of extant Marpeck source texts—all the preserved copies of manuscripts and printed books taken together—would fit into a small suitcase. It is mere chance then that these few dozen volumes have survived and that we know about this stream of Anabaptism at all.

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64. Martin Rothkegel, "Die Austerlitzer Brüder: Pilgram Marpecks Gemeinde in Mähren," in *Grenzen des Täufertums / Boundaries of Anabaptism. Neue Forschungen*, ed. Astrid von Schlachta and Anselm Schubert (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2009), 232-270.

65. *QGT Elsaß II*, 409; Zieglschmid, *Die älteste Chronik*, 98; Weisensteiner reports: "Os [als] ich von sölchem volckh gehört hab, das sich mit solchem heiligen namen schmuckht, hab ich mich fürbas erkunt und erfraget, und hab ein suma irer religion begert. Hat man mir ein kleins buchel gelüchen, darinen sy die kindertauf verlaugnet haben und 2 kirchen gemacht, ein tauffte aus den alten, wen sy sy getaufft unnd der kürchen eingeleibt, unnd aus den kindern, ehe sy zu solchem alter komen, ein ungetaufte."—Regensburg, Stadtarchiv, Eccl. I, no. 58-33 (35021-35028).

66. Loserth, *Pilgram Marbecks Antwort*, 268.

Indeed, just a century ago nobody knew about the Austerlitzer Brethren except the Catholic Austrian historian Johann Loserth, whose merit it was to reintroduce Marpeck to the Mennonites.[67]

Fellows of the Covenant vs. Schwenckfelders and Swiss Brethren

Another shift in our perspective may be from a focus on Marpeck as a person to the study of the structure of the community in which Marpeck's theological thinking originated. In 2006, Caroline Gritschke published an inspiring study of the South German Schwenckfelders that impressively demonstrates how network models might be employed, even with a very fragmentary source base. Unfortunately, Gritschke did not pay any attention to Marpeck and seems to be completely unaware of the complex interrelation between Spiritualism and Anabaptism in general. She tends to treat them as two completely separated phenomena. In contrast to Gritschke's view, source evidence indicates quite a lot of contact and common development between both expressions of religious opposition. The process of mutual exclusion and demarcation fought out following Schwenckfeld's reaction to the "Admonition" in 1542 was slow and painful.[68]

Numerous names that figure in her scenario either came to Schwenckfeld's "School of Christ" from Anabaptism or were somehow in contact with both Schwenckfeld's and Marpeck's networks. Looking at Gritschke's prosopography of the Augsburg Schwenckfelder community from the 1540s to the 1560s, a student of Anabaptism will find a number of old acquaintances from the Augsburg Anabaptist community of the second half of the 1520s, especially the educated and wealthy ones, leaving those of somewhat lower social rank for Marpeck's less and less attractive Anabaptist congregation.[69] All of Marpeck's female aristocratic adherents in South Germany belonged to families that were also involved in the South German Schwenckfelder network—namely, the von Pappenheim, von Bubenhofen and von Freyberg families.[70] Schwenckfeld and Marpeck were competing players trying to build up mutually exclusive bonds of loyalty with persons from overlapping milieus. Besides being rivals, they may have also influenced

67. The first publication in which he dealt with Marpeck was Johann Loserth, "Zwei biographische Skizzen aus der Zeit der Wiedertäufer in Tirol," *Zeitschrift des Ferdinandeums für Tirol und Vorarlberg* 39 (1895), 277-302.

68. Caroline Gritschke, *'Via Media': Spiritualistische Lebenswelten und Konfessionalisierung. Das süddeutsche Schwenckfeldertum im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006); cf. my review in *Freikirchenforschung* 18 (2009) 311-314.

69. Cf. Gritschke, *Via media*, 28f.

70. On Schwenckfeldian aristocrats, cf. ibid, 309-329.

each other. Marpeck's efforts as a publisher[71] may have been inspired by the intensive book production of the Schwenckfelders[72] that found readers also in the congregations of the Fellows of the Covenant. Schwenckfeld and Marpeck were fishing in the same pond by offering two sharply contrary theories of Christian community. In practice, however, there was not too much difference throughout the year between the community life of Marpeck's Augsburg congregation and the religious practice of the Schwenckfelder circle in the same town.

In Augsburg as well as in other places in South Germany, the Fellows of the Covenant pursued a purposeful policy of reducing worship to informal gatherings with reading, discussion and, maybe, singing.[73] This was done in order to avoid confrontations with the political authorities, as Marpeck explicitly explained in his last extant circular letter of 1555. For a group whose theology was so focused on the ecclesiality of their fellowship, on the visibility of the church and the contribution of the external ordinances to salvation, this was an almost unbearable situation. Thus Marpeck's references in that letter to Christology. Analogous to Christ *in statu exinanitionis*, the church painfully experiences the deep humility of Christ's humanity.[74] As Friedwart Uhland has demonstrated, the entire membership of Marpeck's congregation in Augsburg, even though they numbered only a handful, hardly ever gathered all at once. Sharing the Lord's Supper and celebrating the baptism of new members were extremely rare occasions. The last documented baptism performed by Marpeck took place in 1555. After Marpeck's death, not a single new member is known to have joined the tiny group until 1573, when a visiting elder from Württemberg performed one baptism that led to investigations by the local authorities. As a result of that investigation, the congregation ceased to exist. Its last leader or reader, Hans Büchel, left the city and joined the Swiss Brethren in Württemberg. [75]

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71. Cf. Werner O. Packull, "Preliminary Report on Pilgram Marpeck's Sponsorship of Anabaptist Flugschriften," *MQR* 75 (Jan. 2001), 75-88; Gisela Möncke, "Friedrich Huber, ein pseudonymer Verfasser zweier Straßburger Täuferdrucke," *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* 60 (2003), 80-88.

72. On Schwenckfeldian book production and reading culture, cf. Gritschke, *Via media*, 115-128.

73. Cf. the interrogations of Jörg Maler in Augsburg, 1550.—Fast, *Kunstbuch*, 706f, 713; a similar minimalization of congregational life and worship practices took place in Znaim in Moravia, cf. Martin Rothkegel, "Täufer und ehemalige Täufer in Znaim," 37-70.

74. Fast, *Kunstbuch*, 408-415; Rempel, *Kunstbuch*, 358-366.

75. Cf. Uhland, *Täufertum und Obrigkeit*, 257-273.

Which brings us back to the Swiss Brethren. In *Hutterite Beginnings*, Werner Packull demonstrated that this group name did not appear before the late 1530s or early 1540s. The first occurrence associated with a specific date comes from the Hutterite *Chronicle* in a report about former Philippites who had been expelled from Moravia and returned to the Palatinate and the Rhineland, where they joined with the "Swiss Brethren" by 1542. Another group of Philippites was captured in 1535 in Passau during their attempted remigration to the Empire. In prison, they authored several songs that were printed in 1564 in the *Ausbund*, which claimed on its title page that these Passau prisoners had been "Swiss Brethren." Packull insinuated that the origins of the label "Swiss Brethren" had nothing to do with the geographic region of Switzerland.[76] As we have seen, this type of group name probably originated in Moravia. It is a pity, then, that the 2009 volume of *Mennonitica Helvetica* devoted to the history and theology of the Swiss Brethren uses the term throughout in the uncritical meaning that Bender had ascribed to it.[77]

But who were the historical Swiss Brethren? Obviously they were another supraregional Anabaptist denomination competing with the Fellows of the Covenant. But several Moravian sources describing the Swiss Brethren suggest that they were possibly not exactly the type of Anabaptists that historians have often assumed when they use the term. Johannes Weisenkircher, the author of the treatise in the Regensburg archive, wrote about the Swiss Brethren in 1555:

> They have this name because one of their elders came from Switzerland. They have private property like the Austerlitz Brethren. I have often conversed with them and asked them what distinguishes them from the Austerlitz Brethren, that they cannot agree in matters of faith. They say that the Austerlitzers are drinkers and lead a proud and worldly life. "We separate ourselves from a person before he sins." This is the main reason why they cannot be united with them. The Swiss Brethren have about 300 members. They live around Olmütz and in various other places in Moravia. They worship in private homes and refuse to enter church buildings that contain idols.[78]

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76. Cf. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings*, 287-289; see also the earlier critical reflections by James M. Stayer, "The Swiss Brethren: An Exercise in Historical Definition," *Church History* 47 (1978), 174-195.

77. Cf. *Mennonitica Helvetica* 31 (2008)—"Neue Forschungen zu den 'Schweizer Brüdern' im Rahmen des europäischen Täufertums. Nouvelles recherches sur les 'Frères suisses' dans le contexte de l'anabaptisme européen."

78. "Zum 3. ist ein sect verhannden, die sich die Schweitzerischen Bruder nenen. Sölchen namen haben sy, das ein vorsteer aus dem Schweitzerlandt herabkomen ist. Dise bleibent auch bey dem iren, in aller mas wie die Auserlützer. Dise Schweitzer hab ich selbst

This statement fits quite well with the polemics against the Swiss Brethren in the letters of the *Kunstbuch*.[79]

Another source from the Regensburg archives, also from the 1550s, is a handwritten booklet on the Anabaptists in Moravia authored by a former Hutterite. There the anonymous writer asserts:

> The Swiss Brethren consider baptism and the sacraments as unnecessary for salvation. . . . They are Anabaptists like the Hutterites, but they do not hold baptism as being important. They say that all will be saved who call upon the name of the Lord. They support the poor in their congregations.[80]

Still another Moravian source on the Swiss Brethren is the very strange report on a visit of Greek Brethren to Moravia in 1540 that was written down in Amsterdam in 1627 by an Anabaptist refugee from Moravia and later reprinted in the *Martyrs Mirror*. The text occasionally comments on the label "Swiss Brethren," noting that the group received its name after its founding leader, Hans Schweitzer, and that the group of Passau prisoners led by Hans Beck belonged to them.[81] A last witness,

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angeredt, dan sy viell bey mir gewesen sindt, was sy wider die Auserlitzer bundtsgnosen haben, das sy nit ains sind der religion halben. Haben sy gesagt, die Auserlutzer bundtsgnosen sein drunckhen leut unnd sy sin hoch vor der welt. Mir schliesen ain ehe aus, wen er sündiget, als sy, das sey inen genueg, das sy es mit in nicht halten. Diser Schweitzer sein bey 3 hundert berson, hausn zu Ulmütz unnd hin und wider im lannd zu Märhen, haben ir versamlungen in heüsern unnd stuben, koment in kain kürchen nit. Wen man sy aber fragt, warumben sy nicht hineinkomen, sagen sy, es sind gotzen drinen. Also fürcht das lebendig das todt, darmit sy der teüfel nur aufhalt, das sy zu kainer evangelischen bredig nit komen, wiewoll ich die götzen nicht verdettig, allein das man am ersten darvon bredig etc."—Regensburg, Stadtarchiv, Eccl. I, no. 58-33 (35021-35028).

79. Cf. Fast, *Kunstbuch*, 200-241, 483, 532; Rempel, *Kunstbuch*, 137-201, 465, 534.

80. "Alda seind nun ausprungen mancherlei widertaufferische secte und rotte von der ceremonien wegen, als Zwingel, Austerletzer, Sabather, Schweitzer, sindt schir durchaus mit den Hutterischen eins in glauben, dan in den ceremonien sindt sie ungleich, den das etliche unther obgemelten tauffern, als nemlich Schweitzer Bruder, hallten die tauff und sacrament gar nichts nutz zur seelen seligkheit. . . . Schweitzer bruder send thauffer wie die Hutterische, den allein halten sie etwaß geringerß von der thauff, sagen, eß wer alle menschen selig, die den namen deß Herrn anruffen. Lassen kheinen under inen betteln."—Regensburg, Stadtarchiv, Eccl. I, no. 43c, 10 (25187-25227).

81. "De Switsersche ghemeynte . . . die haren naem voeren van Hans Switser, die door eenen man van hare broederen , genaemt Jan Peck, die met Hans Voerman ende noch twaelf ander persoonen op et huys Passau, in Beyeren aen de Donauw gelegen, om't getuygenis der waerheydt gevangen gelegen hadden. . . . Wy hebben hier voor aengeroert, hoe Hans Voerman en Jan Peck mit noch XII andere persoonen IX jaer op't slot Passauw gevangen gelegen hebben, zijn van soodanighen langduerigen gevanckenis verlost door borgtocht van eenen heer van Jamits, de welcke 36 mijlen ghereyst is, om die ghevangenen met selfs borge voor haer te worden uyt te lossen, de welcke in sijn stad Jamits een grote gemeynte der self der onder zijn bescherminge hadde woonen."—*Het Brilleken: Waer deur*

Martin Zeiller, the author of the description of Bohemia and Moravia published by Matthäus Merian in 1650, only adds to the confusion. Zeiller collected information about the state of Moravia before the devastating war and the recatholization in the 1620s. He presented the following details about the Swiss Brethren congregation at Eibenschitz that ceased to exist in 1622:

> In a suburb of that town, the Swiss Brethren had their privately owned dwelling houses and estates. Part of their income went to their community house, in which their preacher lived and services were held and strangers were offered hospitality. These people were not baptized in their whole life, they did not bear arms, and their celebration of breaking of the bread, or Lord's Supper, took place every year on Pentecost.[82]

These sources, independent of each other, seem to indicate that the Swiss Brethren were named after a founder, Hans Schweizer—a person that is no more than a phantom to us at the moment—and that at least at Eibenschitz, Moravia, there was a congregation of unbaptized Swiss Brethren. For the time being, we have not yet brought together the suitcase full of sources that would enable us to reconstruct what exactly was the essence of their faith.

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de Eens-gheloofsdoops-gesinde sien mogen/ in wat gevoelen sy met met den anderen stonden (Harlem: Hans Passchiers, 1630), 44f, 47.

82. "An einem andern Ort vor der Stadt, so gleichsam ein ziemlich eigne Vorstadt, hatten die Schweitzer Brüder ihre eigne Haüser und Güter, von welchen sie ein gewisses in ihr Gemeind-Hauß, in welchem ihr Prediger wohnte und predigte und die Frembdlinge beherberget wurden, lieffern mussten. Diese Leut wurden auch ihr Lebenlang nicht getaufft, trugen keine Wehren und hielten ihr Brodbrechen oder das Abendmahl jährlich allwegen auff Pfingsten."—Martin Zeiller, *Topographia Bohemiae, Moraviae et Silesiae* (Frankfurt a.M.: Matthäus Merian, 1650), 96.