Lutheran Churches during the Thirty Years War

Die Türme stehn in Glut, die Kirch' ist umgekehret.

Das Rathaus liegt im Graus, die Starken sind zerhaun,

Die Jungfern sind geschänd't, und wo wir hin nur schaun

Ist Feuer, Pest, und Tod, der Herz und Geist durchfähret.

From Andreas Gryphius, 'Tears of the Fatherland Anno 1636'.[1]

The Thirty Years War (1618 – 1648) was Germany's first Great War: Europe had experienced nothing like it before and would experience nothing like it again until the twentieth century.[2] It brought with it an unprecedented level of material destruction and a population loss of up to two thirds in the worst-affected areas of Central Europe.[3] In both Protestant and Catholic territories, religious life was thrown into confusion. Writers and artists provided vivid accounts of the chaos. Andreas Gryphius' *Tears of the Fatherland* contains one such account, with its references to burning towers, a town hall in ruins and a church laid waste. Grimmelshausen's 1669 novel, *Simplicissimus*, offers another. Its eponymous hero sought guidance from a local pastor following the death of the hermit who had instructed him in the rudiments of religion but found that he had been taken prisoner and beaten by troops. 'I could expect no assistance from him', he lamented, 'as I could see with my own eyes, both his church and parsonage were in flames'.[4] Jaques Callot's image of a burning convent [figure 1], which forms part of his 1633 series depicting the 'Miseries and Misfortunes of War', provides a visual counterpart. And such accounts of religious ruin were not, of course, mere literary or artistic tropes. During the sack of Magdeburg in May 1631, six parish churches and almost all the city's cloisters were destroyed. One, St Katharinen,

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[1] A translation can be found in George Schoolfield, 'A Sonnet by Andreas Gryphius: Tears of the Fatherland Anno 1636', *German Quarterly* 25, 2 (1952), p.110.

[2] Thank you to members of Lyndal Roper's early modern German history workshop for their wonderfully helpful comments on a draft of this article: Mette Ahlefeldt, Martin Christ, Kat Hill, Lyndal Roper, Alan Ross, Carla Roth, and Jenny Spinks.

[3] For an overview see Peter Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy: A History of the Thirty Years War* (London, 2009), pp. 779-806

[4] Johann Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, *Simplicissimus*, trans. Mike Mitchell (Sawtry, 1999), p.47.

1

became, in the words of an eighteenth-century commentator, a 'murderers' pit': there

soldiers executed 53 women, before burning the building. Of the city's numerous

ecclesiastical buildings, only the cathedral and one cloister survived, along with the cell in

the Augustinian foundation where Luther had once stayed. This cell was, apparently,

'wonderfully' preserved as the city burned to ashes.[5]

Such attacks on sacred buildings and religious personnel were judged particularly heinous by

seventeenth-century observers. The Christian tradition of forbidding violence against men

and women of God had been complicated by the confessional conflicts of the post-

Reformation era.[6] But the etiquette of war still prescribed restraint, and military articles –

the legal codes drawn up for armies in the field – still sought to protect the ecclesiastical

sphere. Gustav Adolph's seminal 1621 ordinance stipulated, for example, that:

> No man shall set fire upon any Church, Hospitall, Schoole, or Mill, or spoyl them any
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> way, except hee bee commanded. Neyther shall any tyrannise over any Churchman,
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> or aged people, Men or Women, Maydes or Children, unless they first take Armes
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> against them, under paine of punishment at the discretion of the Judges.[7]

Military capitulations negotiated by individual cities with both Swedish and imperial troops

also attempted to protect ecclesiastical property from destruction and looting.[8] In practice,

however, as the war progressed and discipline deteriorated, such legal codes and

agreements had limited impact on the ground.[9]

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[5] Johann Vulpius, *Magnificentia Parthenopolitana das ist der uralten weltberühmten Haupt- und Handel-Stadt Magdeburg soderbare Herrlichkeit* (Magdeburg, 1702), pp. 57, 61, 253-4. On visual representations of Magdeburg see Jeffrey Chipps Smith, 'The Destruction of Magdeburg in 1631: The Art of a Disastrous Victory' in Jennifer Spinks and Charles Zika (eds), *Disaster, Death and the Emotions in the Shadow of the Apocalypse, 1400-1700* (London, 2016), pp. 247-70.

[6] Geoffrey Parker, *Empire, War and Faith in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2003), p.152.

[7] Article 100, here from William Watts' 1632 translation: *The Svvedish discipline, religious, civile, and military* (London, 1632).

[8] See, for example, the Zwickau Accord of 1632, given in Tobias Schmidt, *Chronica Cygnea Oder Beschreibung Der sehr alten, Löblichen, und Churfürstlichen Stadt Zwickau. 2: Chronici Cygnei Pars Posterior* (Zwickau, 1656), pp. 517-8. On capitulations see Hans Medick, *Der Dreissigjährige Krieg. Zeignisse vom Leben mit Gewalt* (Göttingen, 2018), pp. 196-8

[9] Holger Berg, 'Administering Justice and Bending the Legal Code. The Contested Implementation of the Swedish Articles of War, 1621-1650', in Jutta Nowosadtko, Diethelm Klippel and Kai Lohsträter (eds), *Militär und Recht vom 16. bis 19. Jahrhundert. Gelehrter Diskurs – Praxis – Transformationen* (Göttingen, 2016), pp. 227-49

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The gap between prescription and practice was obvious to contemporaries. Callot's burning convent is taken from a series published in Paris in 1633 that, when read as a whole, provides a sophisticated commentary on the proper conduct of war. Here the destruction and desecration of something that should have been held sacred indicates a failure of military discipline.[10] In Germany the violent behaviour of supposedly Lutheran Swedish troops towards Lutheran churches attracted particular condemnation, as we shall see. And observed from England, attacks on churches and clergy were read as an indication of the depths to which the European conflict had descended.[11] *The Lamentations of Germany*, published in London in 1638, included vivid accounts and woodcut images ('the more to affect the reader'), of murder, mutilation, and destruction. Its author, Philip Vincent, wrote that 'For burning, pulling down and ruining of Churches, Cities, Villages, the like hath not been heard' and added that 'No Chappell, Church or place consecrated hath beene free from the filthiest of pollutions, or most sacrilegious barbarismes'. One such barbarism occurred, for example, near Freiberg, when General Holck's imperial soldiers 'cut in pieces a reverend Minister, a man of rare learning and piety' [figure 2].[12]

Destruction

It would be easy to conclude from such highly emotive accounts that the war brought with it three decades of relentless violence, and threw religious life into disarray. The 'myth of the all-destructive war' remains powerful, even today.[13] In fact, however, the wholesale destruction of churches was relatively rare. Magdeburg's fate was sealed by the fire storm that broke out after imperial soldiers breached the city walls. The ruination and loss of life that occurred there was atypical. Swedish propaganda depicted Tilly's actions as imperial

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[10] Paulette Choné, 'Die Kriegsdarstellungen Jacques Callots: Realität als Theorie', in Benigna von Krusenstjern and Hans Medick (eds), *Zwischen Alltag und Katastrophe. Der Dreißigjährige Krieg aus der Nähe* (Göttingen, 1999), pp. 409-26, here pp. 414-15

[11] On English reports see Charles Carlton, *Going to the Wars: The Experience of the British Civil Wars 1638-1651* (Routledge, 1992), pp. 14-30

[12] Philip Vincent, *The lamentations of Germany: wherein, as in a glasse, we may behold her miserable condition, and reade the woefull effects of sinne* (London, 1638), pp. 17, 29, 33. See Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, p. 779

[13] On contemporary perceptions of the violence see John Theibault, 'The Rhetoric of Death and Destruction in the Thirty Years War', *Journal of Social History*, 27, 2 (1993), pp. 271-90. See also David Lederer, 'The Myth of the All-Destructive War: Afterthoughts on German Suffering, 1618-1648', *German History* 29, 3 (2011), pp. 380-403

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tyranny, and he was forced to deny that he had intended the city's destruction.[14] Widely reported in broadsheets, pamphlets and newspapers, the events of May 1631 sent shock waves across the Empire and beyond.[15] Of course, there were plenty of examples of brutal reprisals against cities and towns that refused to surrender, and of deliberate devastation in rural areas to deny the enemy food and supplies. In general, however, urban centres – and their churches – were too valuable to destroy.

Evidence from Electoral Saxony, the focus of this article, confirms that the fate that befell Magdeburg's churches was exceptional. Saxony had been the heartland of the Reformation during the sixteenth century and had become a bastion of Lutheran orthodoxy in the seventeenth. It escaped the worst predations of the opening decade of the war by remaining loyal to the Catholic emperor, resisting calls for religious solidarity from members of the Protestant Union and from the Protestant Bohemian Estates.[16] From 1631, however, when Elector Johann Georg I declared his reluctant and temporary support for Gustav Adolph, it became one of the main theatres of war.[17] The territory became a thoroughfare: because of its proximity to Habsburg Bohemia, there were numerous transit marches by both imperial and Swedish troops. These brought billeting, demands for contributions and plundering. Armies also, of course, spread disease. Saxony's 1630 population of around 1,500,000 had been reduced by approximately a third by 1645, and it did not recover its pre-war levels until well into the eighteenth century.[18]

In terms of physical destruction, the territory's main cities – Dresden and Leipzig – escaped relatively lightly, though demands for war-time contributions, the billeting of soldiers, the need to accommodate refugees, and the spread of disease all took their toll. Dresden was protected by strong fortifications, but its *Vorstädte* – the areas outside the city walls – were

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[14] Peter Wilson, 'Strategy and the Conduct of War', in Olaf Asbach and Peter Schröder, *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Thirty Years' War* (London, 2016), pp. 269-281, here pp. 277-78

[15] See Hans Medick, 'Historical Event and Contemporary Experience: the Capture and Destruction of Magdeburg in 1631', *History Workshop Journal*, 52, 1 (2001), pp. 23 - 48

[16] Axel Gotthard, 'Johann Georg I. 1611-1656', in Frank-Lothar Krell (ed.), *Die Herrscher Sachsens. Markgrafen, Kurfürsten, Könige 1089-1918* (Munich, 2004), pp.137-47, here pp. 146-7

[17] Alexander Zirr, *Die Schweden in Leipzig. Die Besetzung der Stadt im Dreißigjährigen Krieg (1642-1650)* (Leipzig, 2017), pp. 59-61

[18] Alexander Schunka, *Gäste, die bleiben. Zuwanderer in Kursachsen und der Oberlausitz im17. und frühen 18. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg, 2006), p. 154

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badly damaged.[19] Leipzig was more immediately affected by military campaigning, with three key battles taking place on its doorstep. It was briefly occupied by imperial troops in 1631 and 1632, and in 1633 it was subjected to a brutal siege by General Holck.[20] During this siege the Nikolaikirche, one of the city's two parish churches, was badly damaged when a cannon ball hit its roof.[21] Another church, the university's Paulinerkirche, provided shelter for women and children during the bombardment. According to a local chronicler 'as they started to sing spiritual songs, and the enemy heard them, he directed several mortars at the church, and had shells thrown in'.[22] After Saxony's political realignment, Leipzig was bombarded by the Swedish Field Marshall Johan Baner in 1637 and captured by his successor Lennart Torstensson in 1642. Ultimately, however, as in Dresden, the most extensive physical destruction took place in the *Vorstädte*.[23]

Saxony's smaller towns were, not surprisingly, more vulnerable. During the later phases of the war some urban centres, such as Chemnitz and Zwickau, changed hands repeatedly, and were subject to a seemingly endless stream of military demands. There was extensive destruction: in Chemnitz, for example, only 270 of the 960 pre-war houses in the town centre were still habitable by 1647.[24] Yet town churches generally remained if not untouched then at least structurally intact. It would seem logical to expect that village churches, which were largely undefended, suffered more. It is, however, very hard to gauge the extent of destruction in the countryside. Commissioners were sent out during the 1650s

[19] Ernst Sparmann, *Dresden während des Dreißigjährigen Krieges* (Dresden, 1914), pp. 76-7

[20] On Leipzig during the Thirty Years War see Uwe John, Enno Bünz, Detlef Döring (eds), *Geschichte der Stadt Leipzig, Band 2: Von der Reformation bis zum Wiener Kongress* (Leipzig, 2016), pp. 47-70

[21] Hans Medick, 'The Thirty Years' War as Experience and Memory: Contemporary Perceptions of a Macro-Historical Event', in Lynne Tatlock (ed), *Enduring Loss in Early Modern Germany: Cross Disciplinary Perspectives* (Leiden and Boston, 2010), pp. 25-49, here p. 45; Johann Christian Crell, *Das In gantz Europa berühmte, galante und sehenswürdige Königliche Leipzig in Sachsen…* (Leipzig, 1725), pp. 36-7

[22] John et al (eds), *Geschichte der Stadt Leipzig, Band 2*, p. 63

[23] On Leipzig under Swedish occupation see Zirr, *Die Schweden in Leipzig*.

[24] Irene Crusius, *Atlas Crusius – Bürgermeister in schwerer Zeit. Die Stadt Chemnitz nach dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg* (Chemnitz, 2004), p. 25. On Chemnitz see also Helmut Bräuer, *Chemnitz zwischen 1450 und 1650. Menshen in ihren Kontexten* (Chemnitz, 2005), pp. 314-20 and Uwe Fiedler (ed.), *Der Kelch der bittersten Leiden. Chemnitz im Zeitalter von Wallenstein und Gryphius* (Chemnitz, 2008). On Zwickau see M. Schilling, 'Zur Geschichte der Stadt Zwickau während des dreissigjährigen Krieges 1639, 1640', *Neues Archiv für Sächsische Geschichte*, 9 (1888), pp. 271-321

to survey the state of the post-war Saxon church, but no records survive.[25] The petitions (*Klag-* and *Bittschriften*) relating to destruction and rebuilding that passed between villages and the territory's major towns do provide at least a partial picture, however. Amongst those sent to Leipzig's city council during the 1630s and 1640s, four mention churches destroyed during the war, and another four refer to 'burned churches' without giving detail.[26] Even in these cases, however, the stone structure of the church usually survived. It was the roof and the furnishings that needed replacing.

If destruction was relatively rare, plundering was very common indeed, which is a hardly surprising during an age in which war was chronically underfunded and soldiers' pay was inadequate and irregular.[27] In the Erzgebirge, south of Chemnitz, the pastor and chronicler Christian Lehmann reported on a 1640 transit march of Swedish troops, during which

> they spared no church, broke into every sacristy, mutilated the altars, tore down the organs, [and] stole the vestments, altar cloths and chalices. Everything became their loot: churches, liturgical vessels, graveyards, epitaphs, crucifixes, which they mutilated and burned; in some churches, the detritus from horses lay a cubit high.

He added a wonderful detail that testifies to the determination of the looters, and to the passage of ecclesiastical time: 'In [some] churches they found hidden holes, in which our ancestors had walled up papist liturgical vessels, monstrances, and holy water stoups and sprinklers, which no-one knew about, and took them away'.[28]

There was, of course, violence on both sides.[29] But there is no doubt that from a Lutheran perspective it was the Swedes' behaviour that was the most reprehensible, as Lehmann's

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[25] Karl Pallas (ed), *Die Registraturen der Kirchenvisitationen im ehemals sächsischen Kurkreise. Allgemeiner Teil* (Halle, 1906), pp. 188-9

[26] Stadtarchiv Leipzig, Tit. LXII B Nr. 1a, Quittungen, über die in Leipzig veranstaltenden Sammlungen für auswärtige Brandbeschädigte, zur Kirchenbauten, Rathhausbauten... 1606-1670. See especially fol. 386-99 on the destruction in Ruppertsgrün near Plauen in 1640. Unfortunately the equivalent records in Dresden cannot be accessed due to their fragility: Stadtarchiv Dresden, B.XIII, Armen-, Almosen-, Bettelwesen (in particular B.XIII.3, B.XIII.4, B.XIII.10) [July 2023].

[27] On plundering see Ronald Asch, ''Wo der soldat hinkömbt, da ist alles sein': Military Violence and Atrocities in the Thirty Years War Re-examined', *German History* 18/2 (2000), pp. 291-309 and Peter Burschel, *Söldner im Nordwestdeutschland des 16. und 17.Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 1994), pp. 206-9

[28] Christian Lehmann, *Die Kriegschronik*, ed. Hendrik Heidler (Scheibenberg, 2013), p. 117

[29] See, for example, Asch, ''Wo der soldat hinkömbt', p. 303 on the destruction of Calw in Württemberg in 1634 by imperial troops.

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comments suggest. Gustav Adolph had arrived in the Holy Roman Empire in 1630 as the self-styled saviour of Protestantism, and pro-Swedish pamphlets, tracts, and broadsheets had welcomed his invasion as a defence of true Christianity.[30] His army was initially famed for its religiosity: it was well supplied with chaplains, its soldiers were expected to pray daily, and special prayer books were printed for distribution to the troops.[31] Contemporaries commented on the Swedes' habit of praying and singing hymns before battle, most famously at Lützen where the king himself led their observances.[32] But German Protestants were soon alienated by the poor behaviour of Swedish troops.[33] By the final years of the war, commentators lambasted them as instruments of divine punishment, invaders from the desolate north who had come merely to fill their empty stomachs. Gunde Rosenkrantz, the Danish author of the 1644 *Schwedischer Meyneyd=Spigel*, wrote that even children had recognized their true nature, and had changed the wording of Luther's famous hymn accordingly: 'Erhalt vns Herr bey deinem Wort / vnd stewr der Schwed'n vnd Türcken mordt'.[34]

The Swedes' treatment of churches was read as confirmation that their purported religious mission was no more than a pretext for insatiable greed. In practice the designation 'Swede' covered armies that were multi-confessional and of mixed nationality, both at the level of infantry and at the level of command.[35] Yet even if the Swedish armies were, in practice, made up of potentially iconoclastic Calvinist Scots and many others they should still, according to Lutheran commentators, have behaved better. In *Der Soldaten=Teufel*, published in several editions from 1633 onwards, Halle's Lutheran superintendent Arnold Mengering looked back with nostalgia to the supposed piety of Gustav Adolph's army, and argued that Swedish troops had since then been led astray by the devil. Among their many

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[30] John Roger Paas, 'The Changing Image of Gustavus Adolphus on German Broadsheets, 1630-3, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 59 (1996), pp. 205-44

[31] Ryan Crimmins, 'Religion in the Armies of the Thirty Years War' (D.Phil. Thesis, Oxford, 2022), especially pp. 140-68, 222, 287

[32] Hans Medick, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg. Zeugnisse vom Leben mit Gewalt* (Göttingen, 2018), pp. 251-61

[33] Martin Wrede, *Das Reich und seine Feinde. Politische Feinbilder in der reichspatriotischen Publizistik zwischen westfälischem Frieden und siebenjährigem Krieg* (Mainz, 2004), p. 219. See also Berg, 'Administering Justice', p. 228

[34] Gunde Rosenkrantz, *Schwedischer Meyneyd=Spigel* (n.p., 1644), fol. C v

[35] See, for example, Medick, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, p. 232 on the Swedish army at Lützen.

misdeeds, attacks on churches appeared, to the eyes of this Lutheran churchman, especially reprehensible. It was, Mengering wrote, the very people who wanted to be famed as defenders of Lutheranism who were 'the worst attackers and breakers of churches, robbers and plunderers'.[36] The Swedes took money collected for the poor, vestments, and chalices as well as the goods that townspeople and villagers had hidden in their local churches for safekeeping.[37] Gunde Rosenkrantz also argued that Swedish behaviour towards churches and clerics demonstrated that their purported defence of the evangelical faith was no more than a cloak. While the 'fierce Swedish warriors [*Kriegsgurgeln*]' play at religious war, 'churches, in which God's word and piety are taught and learned, are devastated, [and] pastors and servants of the church together with their belongings are ransacked, killed and hunted'.[38]

For Mengering, the Swedes' behaviour was the fulfilment of the prophecy contained in Psalm 74, an account of the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem. He lamented that beautiful churches had been burned to the ground, or if not burned, then 'pitifully ruined', their windows, doors and pews smashed. The soldiers had also, Mengering added, 'shamefully dishonoured Christ's relic and sacrament [the Eucharistic host] […] and committed terrible indecency and sodomy in the churches and at the altars'. And they had shot and burned Lutheran sacred texts: bibles and prayer books.[39] Mengering's comments suggest that for Lutherans this was not just about material loss. It was also about desecration, about the 'Entheiligung' or 'Entweihung' (de-consecration) of sacred space and sacred objects.[40] Recounting Torstensson's attack on Freiberg in 1643, the town's municipal scribe wrote, in a similar vein, that the Swedes had 'shamefully desecrated the beautiful […] hospital church, reviled in an unchristian manner with fire the crucifix on the altar […] stabled horses there, and slanderously deformed everything'.[41]

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[36] Arnold Mengering, *Perversa Ultimi Seculi Militia, Oder Kriegs-Belial, Der SoldatenTeuffel* (Altenburg, 1638), p. 169

[37] Mengering, *Perversa Ultimi Seculi Militia*, p. 163

[38] Rosenkrantz, *Schwedischer Meyneyd=Spigel*, fol. Biv r

[39] Mengering, *Perversa Ultimi Seculi Militia*, pp. 165-6

[40] For a discussion of Swedish soldiers as desecrators see Thomas Kaufmann, *Dreißigjährige Krieg und Westfälischer Friede* (Tübingen, 1998), p. 108.

[41] Andreas Mollerus, *Theatrum Freibergense Chronicum, Beschreibung der alten löblichen BergHauptStadt Freyberg in Meissen…* (Freiberg, 1653), p. 653. See also Stadtarchiv Freiberg, Aa

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It is difficult to determine how much of the wartime destruction was motivated by

religion.[42] There were some clear examples of anti-Catholic violence: in 1634, for example,

the Swedish chancellor Axel Oxenstierna mocked and attacked wooden statues of two local

saints in Erfurt's cathedral.[43] And destruction was certainly weaponized for confessional

purposes. In Catholic Bavaria, Maurus Friesenegger reported that when Swedish troops

occupied the monastery of Andechs in 1632 the church was used as a stable but there was

only limited damage to the sacred altars and images. A statue of the Virgin Mary proved

particularly resilient: no matter how much force they used, the 'blasphemers' could not

move or topple the image from its free-standing position.[44] Often, however, soldiers'

behaviour seems to have been shaped by a broader sense of hostility towards religious

authority and by the desire for financial gain.[45] 'Protestant' troops were, as we have seen, as

likely to stable their horses in Protestant churches as in Catholic and as likely to steal

chalices as monstrances.

Reconstruction

The rebuilding of churches was a key part of post-war recovery, second only to the

regeneration of economic life. Unlike in the twentieth century, there was no inclination to

leave war-time destruction visible. The types of carefully curated ecclesiastical ruin that

form such a striking part of some modern war commemoration were inconceivable in the

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Abteilung II, Sekt. I, Nr.136, Wiederaufbau der bei feindl. Belagerung demolierten Hospital-Kirche. On Lutheran consecration rituals and concepts of sacred space see Vera Isaiasz, '»Architectonica Sacra«: Ferer und Semantik städtischer Kirchweihen im Luthertum des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts', in Vera Isasiz, Ute Lotz-Heumann, Monika Mommertz and Matthias Pohlig (eds), *Stadt und Religion in der frühen Neuzeit: Soziale Ordnungen und ihre Repräsentationen* (Frankfurt and New York, 2007), pp. 125-46. See also Andrew Spicer (ed.), *Lutheran Churches in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham, 2012).

[42] For a discussion of religiously motivated destruction during the British Civil Wars see Carlton, *Going to the Wars*, pp. 86 and 265. On iconoclasm in sixteenth-century Germany see, for example, Bridget Heal, 'Visual and Material Culture' in Ulinka Rublack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Protestant Reformations* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 601-20.

[43] Medick, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, pp. 62-70. See also Hans Medick, 'Orte und Praktiken religiöser Gewalt im Dreißigjährigen Krieg' in Kaspar von Greyerz and Kim Siebenhüner (eds), *Religion und Gewalt. Konflikte, Rituale, Deutungen (1500-1800)* (Göttingen, 2006), pp. 367-82

[44] Maurus Friesenegger, *Tagebuch aus dem 30jährigen Krieg*, ed. Willibald Mathhäser, 3rd ed. (Munich, 2007), pp. 17-9

[45] Crimmins, 'Religion in the Armies of the Thirty Years War', p. 203

seventeenth century: there could have been no Dresden Frauenkirche or Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächntis-Kirche in the aftermath of the Thirty Years War. Matthaeus Merian's famous *Topographia Germaniae*, a multi-volume publication depicting and describing the towns and villages of the Empire in their pre-war state, testifies powerfully to the desire to restore what had been lost. In the preface to the 1642 *Topographia Helvetiæ*, Merian wrote of the beauty that had existed before the war, when the landscape had been full of towns, castles, fortresses, cloisters, villages and hamlets. All was, he lamented, now 'disfigured'. His work was intended, therefore:

> to remind us, with grateful hearts, of the former happiness and magnificence of our now universally suffering fatherland, [and] to put the same before the eyes of our descendants, in case a zeal for godly order can be awoken in them, i.e. to keep in good condition what is still standing, to erect again what is fallen, and to bring back what has been lost with devout and virtuous behaviour.[46]

The most famous theoretical response to the challenge of post-war church reconstruction was the *KirchenGebäw* of Joseph Furttenbach, municipal architect in Ulm.[47] Published by his son in 1649, it was intended primarily as a guide for the rebuilding of Augsburg's Lutheran churches. At a basic level, Furttenbach's tract was all about infrastructure: about the quick and cheap provision of a physical space for worship. Furttenbach emphasizes the need 'to moderate and cut down the building costs', and to complete the church swiftly.[48] He also, however, took the opportunity to design an ideal-type Lutheran church. In his preface to the tract, Joseph Furttenbach the Younger reflected that churches should be constructed 'so that both teacher and listener are well accommodated, and that no hindrance is given in any form to the Word of God'.[49] Predictably enough, Furttenbach placed great emphasis on the proper arrangement of pulpit, altar and pews. The space should, he suggested, should not be too large and should not be vaulted so that there were no columns to stand 'annoyingly in [front of] the listener's face'. 'The church should be simple', he wrote, 'but also fine and respectable in its appearance'. Furttenbach suggested, for decoration, ornamental painting

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[46] Matthaeus Merian, *Topographia Helvetiae, Rhaetiae, Et Valesiae...* (Frankfurt/Main, 1642), p. 5
[47] Joseph Furttenbach, *Lebanslauf 1652-1664*, ed. Kaspar von Greyerz, Kim Siebenhüner and Roberto Zaugg (Colongne, 2013)
[48] Joseph Furttenbach, *KirchenGebäw: Der Erste Theil...* (Augsburg, 1649), n. p.
[49] Ibid, 'Dedication'

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on the walls and the addition of epitaphs and coats of arms of 'of those persons who had

been well-disposed [i.e. given money] to services, to churches and to schools'. He was also

concerned about comfort, about keeping the church and its clergy warm in winter and cool

in summer. The sacristy should be heated with a stove for the sake of the pastors, and the

children and elderly parishioners who could wait there in comfort.[50]

Furttenbach emphasized function, appearance, comfort, and decorum, and these were

concerns that underpinned all theoretical reflections on church design. In reality, however,

the restoration of war-scarred churches was shaped by practical constraints. In rural Saxony,

for example, villages took a very long time to recover from the material and economic

damage of war. Even at the end of the seventeenth century, tax registers still contained

plenty of references to deserted estates, smallholdings and houses.[51] In some cases, when

churches had been destroyed or rendered unusable, villagers put up interim church

buildings, but there was a clear determination to rebuild or restore a proper church as soon

as possible.[52] The point of reference for this rebuilding was not, however, the south-German

and Italian-influenced cosmopolitanism of Joseph Furttenbach, but the 1580 Saxon church

ordinance that laid out the teaching, ritual and structure of the territorial church.[53]

How was rebuilding or restoration to be financed? In general, help might come from a

number of places: from within local communities; from noble patrons or territorial rulers; or

from trans-regional co-operation, in this case shaped by confession. In Saxony, the elector,

provincial estates and upper consistory were well aware of the problems facing the church;

in practice, however, local initiatives were key to getting the work done. The 1580 church

ordinance had stipulated that the construction and maintenance of churches and parish

buildings should, as far as possible, be financed from church income. Where that proved

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[50] Ibid, n. p.

[51] See, for example, Markus Walter, 'Die Überwindung der materiellen Schäden des Dreißigjährigen Krieges in den Chemnitzer Amtsdörfern in der 2. Hälfte des 17. Jahhunderts', *Mitteilungen des Chemnitzer Geschichtsvereins* 73 (2003), pp. 9-34

[52] Interim churches are very difficult to trace in the sources but see, for example, Stephan Schmidt-Brücken and Karsten Richter (eds), *Der Erzgebirgschronist Christian Lehmann. Leben und Werk* (Marienberg, 2011), p. 81

[53] Emil Sehling (ed), *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts. Erster Abtheilung. Sachsen und Thüringen, nebst angrenzenden Gebieten* (Leipzig, 1902), pp. 359-457

11

insufficient, parishioners were expected to contribute money and labour.[54] This remained the default position.

The church in Wiesenthal, on the border with Bohemia, provides a fascinating example.[55] Here, the problems were not a direct result of war-time damage. Rather, they emerged immediately after the war, when the continued Habsburg re-catholicization of Bohemia split the village in two. In 1650, the Bohemian inhabitants of Wiesenthal built a new Catholic church. A new free-standing bell tower for the evangelical parish was completed in 1659, and a new evangelical church followed.[56] Wiesenthal's Lutheran pastor, Peter Adam Diez, himself a convert, recorded the problems that he faced because of the hardening of the confessional border, from poverty amongst his parishioners because of the disruption of regular economic activity, to villagers attending Catholic Mass and visiting soothsayers in Bohemia. He also, however, proudly told representatives of the Saxon territorial church that his congregation had built their new church, completed in 1669, almost entirely with voluntary donations from parishioners rather than with the help of 'foreign' contributions.[57] In his correspondence with his superintendent in Annaberg, he expressed some of the same design concerns as Furttenbach: the need for a well-lit, comfortable and functional space.[58] And he devoted considerable attention to the musicians' choir. Singing was, of course, central to Lutheran confessional culture, and we can recreate the musical culture of this remote parish in remarkable detail. [59]

Wealthy nobles, above all the churches' patrons, might also play an important role in reconstruction. The church in Rödern, just outside Dresden, was completed in 1651. Here the church's patron, Reinhard von Taube, master of the horse to the Saxon elector, had the remains of the small church that had been badly damaged during the war removed. According to documents placed in the capsule at the top of the tower, he donated 2,000

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[54] Ibid, p. 445

[55] On Wiesenthal see Schunka, *Gäste*, pp. 201-5

[56] 'Wiesenthal' in *Sachsens Kirchen-Galerie. Zwölfter Band* (Dresden, 1845), pp. 146-8, here p. 147

[57] Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, Bestand 10088 Oberkonsistorium, Loc. 1979/2, fol. 1049-77, especially fol. 1056

[58] Ephoralarchiv Annaberg, 4897, Acta den Wiesenthaler Kirchbau betr. Ergangen 1665

[59] SHStAD, Bestand 10088 Oberkonsistorium, Loc. 1979/2, fol. 1063 r

Gulden to build the replacement.[60] The provision of noble patronage was not always, however, welcome. In Wiesenthal, Pastor Diez objected to the proposed construction of a pew for six to eight of 'the local high office holders and those travelling in these mountains' for which the electoral *Amt* had donated money. Diez argued that there was no suitable place for such a pew, and that it would stand locked and empty for most of the time, occupying a space that could otherwise be used by up to 40 people on feast-days. He added that it would cause so much 'trouble and anger' amongst his parishioners, who had undertaken the work themselves at great cost and without external help, that they would refuse to contribute further. He had, he warned, already heard talk to that effect.[61]

In the absence of noble munificence, and if local parishioners could not finance the rebuilding themselves, towns and villages might appeal to their wealthier neighbours. Amongst those who petitioned Leipzig's town council, for example, was Dippoldiswalde near Dresden, 'burned and ruined by imperial troops' in 1632.[62] In response, councils, or in some cases the elector himself, authorized collections. These were announced from the cities' pulpits and gathered either house-to-house or outside churches after Sunday services.[63] Leipzig's inhabitants donated alms totalling 87 *Gulden* for Dippoldiswalde; very small change in terms of what was needed, but testimony nonetheless to Lutheran charitable sensibilities and to the efficacy of pastors' promises that that those who gave willingly could expect to be rewarded by God.[64] When necessary, confessional solidarity might also extend beyond territorial borders. The post-1648 reconstruction of Augsburg's Hl Kreuz Church provides the most famous example: its pastor, Thomas Hopfer, raised a total of 46,000 Gulden through letter writing and begging tours of Protestant Europe in a campaign that owed its speculator success to the city's symbolic significance as the home of the Augsburg Confession.[65]

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[60] Fiedler (ed.), *Der Kelch der bittersten Leiden*, p. 44. On tower ball archives see Beat Kümin, 'Nachrichten für die Nachwelt. Turmkugelarchive in der Erinnerungskultur des deutschsprachigen Europa', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 312/3, 2021, pp. 614-648.

[61] Ephoralarchiv Annaberg, 4897, Acta den Wiesenthaler Kirchbau betr. Ergangen 1665, letter dated 25 March 1669

[62] Stadtarchiv Leipzig, Tit. LXII B Nr. 1a, Quittungen, über die in Leipzig veranstaltenden Sammlungen für auswärtige Brandbeschädigte, zur Kirchenbauten, Rathhausbauten... 1606-1670, fol. 348-9

[63] See, for example, Bräuer, *Chemnitz*, 292

[64] Stadtarchiv Leipzig, Tit. LXII B Nr. 1a, Quittungen, über die in Leipzig veranstaltenden Sammlungen für auswärtige Brandbeschädigte, zur Kirchenbauten, Rathhausbauten... 1606-1670, fol. 348-9

[65] See Emily Fisher Gray's essay in this volume.

13

Restoration and Refurnishing

Even where churches remained intact, congregations needed to replace the goods that had been plundered or damaged: altarpieces, liturgical vessels, and textiles. The attention paid during and after the war to the accoutrements of religious ritual confirms (if any further confirmation is needed) that Lutheranism, though a religion of the Word, was far from dematerialized.[66] The stakes were not, perhaps, as high as they were for Catholics. While Lutherans valued images and objects greatly, they did not attribute sacred power to them. In Catholic Bavaria, Abbot Maurus Friesenegger reported on the efforts that were made to save the relics and treasures of Andechs Monastery, which were repeatedly packed and moved to safety. On one occasion, a prelate wore the monastery's three miraculous hosts on his breast to transport them to Munich. Friesenegger reported that in February 1632 the relics were unpacked and put back in their place to calm people's fears. Their restoration promised, according to the abbot, joy and the hope of peace for Bavaria.[67]

Lutherans had no relics and no miraculous pilgrimage images to protect. But the traumas of war intensified their desire to mark churches out as sacred spaces and reinforced their already strong proclivity for orderly and ornate places of worship. Figure 3 shows, for example, the altarpiece of the church of St Afra in Meissen. Meissen had suffered badly during the war: in 1637, half the town had been destroyed by Swedish troops, and 50 years later 200 houses were still in ruins.[68] The pastor of St Afra, Abraham Werdermann, preached a consecration sermon for this new altarpiece in 1653, invoking the story of Gideon and the Midianites. He compared the suffering of Meissen's inhabitants to that of the Israelites: 'For much longer than the Israelites, not for seven but for four times 7 years and more, native and foreign enemies oppressed us and our neighbours because of our great sins'. St Afra was not, itself, badly damaged during the war. As Werdermann stated, God had protected his 'dwelling place here in St Afra from Papist horrors, [and] from fire, theft and

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[66] Bridget Heal, *A Magnificent Faith: Art and Identity in Lutheran Germany* (Oxford, 2017)

[67] Friesenegger, *Tagebuch aus dem 30jährigen Krieg*, pp. 15-6

[68] Georg Dehio, *Handbuch der Deutschen Kunstdenkmäler. Sachsen I. Regierungsbezirk Dresden* (Munich and Berlin, 1996) p. 555

14

destruction'.[69] But the new altarpiece was given as a thank-offering, a marker of peace, following the examples of Moses, who had built an altar after the Israelites' victory over Amalek (Exodus 17), and Gustav Adolph, who had built a commemorative column ('Ehren=Seule') at the point at which his troops crossed the Rhine in November 1631.[70]

Werdermann cited the accounts of wartime destruction and desecration given in Mengering's *Soldier-Devil* and wrote that Lutherans must mark the difference between churches and common buildings. Altars such as this, by Valentin Otte, were, he argued, necessary 'If we wish to [worship in] a sacred place rather than a stable or pigsty'.[71] The altarpiece was financed by donations from local nobles and officials, from Werdermann himself, and from 'a few peasants', as well as from fines imposed on sabbath-breakers.[72] Otte also created a memorial for one of the donors, Heinrich von Schleinitz auf Jahna, colonel to the Saxon elector [figure 4]. Schleinitz had served during war, most notably defending the Saxon border against Imperial troops in 1632.[73] His epitaph, which adorns the wall of the choir, includes militaria: armour, standards, and a flaming cannon ball.

Saxony's rural churches could not aspire to such elaborate visual ensembles. But order and beauty were still important. In an inventory presented to the 1673 Saxon church visitation, Pastor Diez wrote that the Wiesenthal church had new pews, 'all beautiful work, and skilfully made', a new and 'beautifully painted' organ, and a pulpit that was 'skilfully made and coloured with gold'.[74] The parish church was a place, as it had been for centuries, for individual, dynastic, and communal representation. Wiesenthal's pulpit, for example, was decorated with four evangelists and supported by a sculpted figure of a miner. It had been

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[69] Abraham Werdermann, *Altar Afranum. Oder Schrifftmessige Einweihungs-Predigt des Neuen Altars/ Welcher Anno 1653, den 18.Maij in der Kirchen zu S. Afra in Meissen gesetzt...* (Dresden, 1653), pp. Bii r – Biii r. For another example see Nicodemus Lappe, *Inauguratio Renovati Altaris Arnstadiensis, Das ist: Christliche Einweihung Deß ernewerten Altars zu Arnstadt...* (n. p., 1642)

[70] See Heal, *A Magnificent Faith*, p. 175 and Hans Medick, 'The Thirty Years' War as Experience and Memory: Contemporary Perceptions of a Macro-Historical Event' in Lynne Tatlock (ed.), *Enduring Loss in Early Modern Germany. Cross Disciplinary Perspectives* (Leiden and Boston, 2010), pp. 25-49, here pp. 43-4

[71] Werdermann, *Altar Afranum*, pp. D r and Diii v

[72] Ibid, p. J r

[73] Heal, *A Magnificent Faith*, p. 178

[74] SHStAD, Bestand 10088 Oberkonsistorium, Loc. 1979/2, fol. 1056 r

15

given by Johann Fischer, the proprietor of a local forge.[75] Less prosperous parishioners

donated according to their means, from a widow, Catharina Wirth, who gave a silver flagon,

to offerings of much less costly cloths for the altar and pulpit. It was often women who gave

textiles. In Scheibenberg, for example, Christian Lehmann noted that female parishioners

gave altar cloths, shrouds for coffins, and vestments. 'God bless such benefactors with

prosperity and eternal blessedness', their pastor commented.[76]

Chalices feature particularly prominently in the records as they were obvious targets for

looters and were also key to Lutheran ritual.[77] Nineteenth-century inventories testify to how

many were donated during the 1650s and 1660s as replacements for those lost during the

war, and in some cases, we can trace the histories of individual objects.[78] Volkmar Happe,

councillor at the small court of Schwarzburg-Sondershausen in Thuringia, recorded that in

Greußen in 1632 'godless soldiers' (in this case Pappenheim's troops) had broken into the

church and stolen the new chalice. Happe had had this chalice made the previous year after

the old one had fallen victim to Tilly's plundering.[79] In Wiesenthal, Pastor Diez reported that

in 1646 'the new sacristy had been broken [into] by the Swedes and the chalice stolen. I

however went quickly from house to house and collected money for another, which still

survives'.[80] Some were given by soldiers: in Wolkenstein, south of Chemnitz, there was a

chalice donated by the officers and soldiers of Colonel von Taube's Saxon regiment in

1637.[81] Sometimes congregations had, however, to do without. In Scheibenberg

parishioners complained in 1673 that Pastor Lehmann never used the 'good chalice'. He

replied that there was no 'good chalice': the gilded silver one had been saved from one set

of Swedish soldiers but had eventually fallen prey to the troops of Field Marshall

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[75] Ibid and *Sachsens Kirchen-Galerie*, p. 147

[76] Christian Lehmann, *Chronicon Scheibenbergense*, ed. Lutz Mahnke (Scheibenberg, 1992), pp. 44-5

[77] See Johann Michael Fritz, *Das evangelische Abendmahlsgerät in Deutschland. Vom Mittelalter bis zum Ende des Alten Reiches* (Leipzig, 2004), especially pp. 81-2

[78] Many are mentioned in Steche and Gürlitt's multi-volume *Beschreibende Darstellung der älteren Bau- und Kustdenkmäler des Königreichs Sachsen* (Dresden, 1882-1923)

[79] Volkmar Happe, *Chronicon Thuringiae,* ed. Hans Medick, Norbert Winnige and Andreas Bähr, in *Mitteldeutsche Selbstzeugnisse der Zeit des Dreißigjährigen Krieges,* http://www.mdsz.thulb.uni-jena.de/sz/index.php, Part I, fol. 285 v

[80] SHStAD, Bestand 10088 Oberkonsistorium, Loc. 1979/2, fol. 1056 r

[81] Richard Steche, *Beschreibende Darstellung der älteren Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler des Königreichs Sachsen. Fünftes Heft: Amtshauptmannschaft Marienberg* (Dresden, 1885), p. 32

Königsmarck.[82] Christian Lehmann took the opportunity to reprimanded his parishioners for their materialism: 'whoever receives the most precious sacrament worthily, it will not damage them, if they receive it … from tin or [from] silver'.[83]

Great efforts were also made to protect parish records: *Taufbücher*, *Traubücher*, and *Totenbücher*. Since the Reformation, the keeping of these records had become one of the key secular duties of Lutheran clerics.[84] The Saxon pastors and church elders were admonished in the 1580 church ordinance to ensure that they remained in their churches, and were not stolen or removed when an incumbent died or left, 'so that when needed they are available as true and constant testimony'.[85] The records were of value not only to the territorial church and evolving state, but also to local families and communities.[86] For the nobility, they demonstrated social status. An entry from Scheibenberg, for example, records the 1636 baptism of the daughter of Georg Friedrich Hofer von Lobenstein, a Bohemian refugee. It lists 28 witnesses including Countess Elisabeth Schlick von Hauenstein, the unofficial leader of the region's exiles.[87] In this case, the baptism and its record constituted part of the process by which Lutheran refugees became members of a local community.[88]

Church records also allowed a place for clergy and their assistants to record and justify their actions in exceptional times. One wrote, for example, that 'if sooner or later someone who was baptized in these times wants to know his date of birth but this information cannot be provided to him from this book, the blame should not be placed on the pastor', particularly if no-one had asked him to enter the baptism in to the register.[89] An entry in a Scheibenberg baptism book testifies to the importance ascribed to making such entries. Pastor Lehmann

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[82] Lehmann, *Chronicon Scheibenbergense*, p. 4

[83] Schmidt-Brücken and Richter (eds), *Der Erzgebirgschronist Christian Lehmann*, pp. 18-9

[84] Stefan Dornheim, *Der Pfarrer als Arberiter am Gedächtnis. Lutherische Erinnerungskultur in der Frühen Neuzeit zwischen Religion und sozialer Kohäsion* (Leipzig, 2013), p. 143

[85] Quoted in ibid, p. 144.

[86] See William Theiss, 'The Registration of Souls in Central Europe, 1517-1945', PhD, Princeton University (forthcoming, 2023)

[87] Pfarrarchiv Scheibenberg, Taufanseiger für Scheibenberg mit Oberscheibe von 1630-1696, 1636. On Schlick see Schunka, *Gäste*, pp. 75, 232.

[88] On religious refugees in this region see Schunka, *Gäste*, especially pp. 154-211 and Katrin Keller, *Landesgeschichte Sachsen* (Stuttgart, 2002), p. 174

[89] Geoff Mortimer, *Eyewitness Accounts of the Thirty Years War* (London, 2002), p. 186

recorded that when he was asked to baptize Andreas Künzel, on 14th May 1641: 'The danger

from the war was so great that I had to have myself accompanied from the forest by a

convoy at my own cost; there was neither ink, paper nor quill; the child died soon'.[90] Other

marginalia in parish records reference the impact of the war on local communities, so that

they can be read as basic chronicles of the war years.[91]

Pastors and their assistants went to great lengths to protect these records. In 1673, Pastor

Diez of Wiesenthal assured representatives of the territorial church that all of the key

records were still in the parish, and that the baptism books had not been damaged during

the war 'by the frequent hiding and dragging to and fro.' [92] The fate of some was much more

dramatic. In Elterlein in 1632, during an attack by the imperial general Hendrick Holck, the

pastor's deputy, Johann Teucher, was killed, his head split open with a sword, while trying

to flee with the *Kirchenbücher*.[93] Such incidents created an acute awareness of the

transitory nature of historical records and encouraged some Lutheran clergymen to put pen

to paper to record their and their parishioners' experiences. Christian Lehmann wrote a six-

volume polyhistory of the Upper Erzgebirge after the war, in part because 'all the old

documents and most of the parish records that could have served him had been devoured

and lost'.[94]

For learned Lutheran clergymen, the plundering of their own libraries was particularly

painful. Christian Lehmann lamented during the 1673 Saxon church visitation that he could

not present the correct books (the Bible, Formula of Concord and Melanchthon's *Loci*

Communes) for inspection as his whole library (40 or 50 volumes) had been stolen by a

Swedish army chaplain in 1639.[95] In a letter to his son, deacon in Annaberg, Lehmann

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[90] Pfarrarchiv Scheibenberg, Taufbuch, 1641, 14 May

[91] See, for example, Rudolf Großner and Berthold Frhr. von Haller (eds), '"Zu kurzem Bericht umb der Nachkommen willen". Zeitgenössische Aufzeichnungen aus dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg in Kirchenbüchern des Erlanger Raumes', *Erlanger Bausteine zur fränkischen Heimatforschung*, 40 (1992) pp. 9-107.

[92] SHStAD, Bestand 10088 Oberkonsistorium, Loc. 1979/2, fol. 1065 v

[93] Lehmann, *Chronicon Scheibenbergense*, p. VI. See also Christian Lehmann, *Christian Lehmanns Sen. weiland Pastoris zu Scheibenberg Historischer Schauplatz derer natürlichen Merckwürdigkeiten in dem Meißnischen Ober-Ertzgebirge*... (Leipzig, 1699), p. 788

[94] Ibid, p. b (Vorrede)

[95] SHStAD, Bestand 10088 Oberkonsistorium, Loc. 1979/2, fol. 1015 r

warned against spending too much money on books, recounting tales of the libraries of local clergymen and magistrates that had been dispersed or destroyed. He praised clerics who had assembled great libraries through borrowing and copying, thus avoiding such risks. He himself had, he added, held back from making new acquisitions after the war, and relied on excerpting from texts lent by friends. He would, he wrote, leave to others their often poorly selected and unread piles of books.[96]

War Commemoration

To what extent did the traumas of the Thirty Years War register in the material culture of Germany's churches? And what can we learn from them about attitudes towards the military dead? There were, of course, individual memorials to senior officers, such as that for Heinrich von Schleinitz in St Afra in Meissen (figure 4). The burial chapel of Carl von Bose (1596-1657), colonel in the Saxon army, from the Marienkirche in Zwickau, provides a more spectacular example (figure 5). It consists of a stone tomb, epitaph, and coat of arms surrounded by trophies and flanked by soldiers (1654).[97] Life-sized sculptures of soldiers also adorn the exterior of the chapel. Sometimes such memorials incorporated real weapons. Volkmar Happe reported that during their plundering of a church Swedish soldiers had stolen the swords that hung beside the standards of two nobles.[98] Some remained in place for centuries, for example in Pegau, where the sword of a Swedish commander born locally and killed at Lützen was still hanging in the church in the nineteenth century.[99] Such memorials provided very visual testimony to the Protestant belief that 'the profession or work of the soldier' is 'right and godly', as Luther had put it in 1526, provided it is performed by 'godly and upright' persons.[100] They were certainly not, however, universally approved.

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[96] Schmidt-Brücken and Richter (eds), *Der Erzgebirgschronist Christian Lehmann*, pp. 221-3

[97] Richard Steche, *Beschreibende Darstellung der älteren Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler des Königreichs Sachsen. Zwölftes Heft: Amptshauptmannschaft Zwickau* (Dresden, 1889), pp. 114-5

[98] Happe, *Chronicon Thuringiae*, fol. 234 v – 235 r

[99] Richard Steche, *Beschreibende Darstellung der älteren Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler des Königreichs Sachsen. Fünfzehntes Heft: Amtshauptmannschaft Borna* (Dresden, 1891), p. 93

[100] Martin Luther, 'Whether soldiers, too, can be saved', in *Luther's Works, Volume 46: Christian in Society III,* ed. Helmut Lehmann and Robert Schultz (Philadelphia, 1967), pp. 88-137, here p. 94. For a broader discussion see Cornelia Moore, 'Discussion of the Just War in the Lutheran Funeral Sermons of the Seventeenth Century', in Gerhild Williams, Sigrun Haude and Christian Schneider (eds), *Rethinking Europe: War and Peace in Early Modern German Lands* (Leiden, 2019), pp. 39-52

In Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus*, Oliver complains that on entering a church 'if you look up you will see more shields and helmets, swords and daggers, banners, boots and spurs and the like than they have in some armouries'.[101]

Exceptional war-time events were also sometimes commemorated. In 1666 a tin representation of a flaming canon ball was hung in Leipzig's Nikolaikirche in remembrance of the bombardment that had damaged the church three decades earlier.[102] Kötzschenbroda, just outside Dresden, provides another example. It was here, in 1645, that an armistice between Elector Johann Georg and the Swedes was negotiated. The village and its church had been comprehensively destroyed by Swedish troops in 1637. The foundation stone for the new church was laid in August 1637, and the rebuilding was financed by, amongst other things, donations collected at a dance hosted by the elector in Dresden. When the church was finally completed in 1656, documents recording the story of the its destruction and rebuilding were placed in the capsule that topped its tower.[103] One of the bells placed in the tower bore a poignant inscription, 'da pacem domine in diebus nostris', the opening of a Latin hymn paraphrased by Luther as 'Verleih uns Frieden'.[104] And in 1678, the church acquired a more obvious reminder of its role in the ending of the war, a panel with this inscription:

> As our German empire stood in flames, and this land of Meissen suffered […] the greatest heat […] our good God told the bloody sword to lie still, and the Saxon warriors entered into a truce.[105]

Conclusion

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[101] Grimmelshausen, *Simplicissimus,* p. 331

[102] Medick, 'The Thirty Years' War as Experience and Memory', p. 45. For an example from Magdeburg see Vulpius, *Magnificentia Parthenopolitana*, p. 57

[103] Cornelius Gürlitt, *Beschreibende Darstellung der älteren Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler des Königreichs Sachsen. Sechsundzwanzigstes Heft: Amthauptmannschaft Dresden-Neustadt* (Dresden, 1904), pp. 44-56; Lieselotte Schließer, 'Kötzschenbroda im 30jährigen Krieg', *Sächsische Heimatblätter* 41/6 (1995), pp. 338-42

[104] Gürlitt, *Beschreibende Darstellung ... Sechsundzwanzigstes Heft,* p. 49

[105] Heinz Duchardt, 'Kötzschenbroda 1645 – ein historisches Ereignis im Kontext des Krieges und im Urteil der Nachwelt', *Sächsische Heimatblätter* 41/6 (1995), pp. 323-9, here p. 327

Churches in flames; altars desecrated; treasures and liturgical vessels and vestments stolen; and men and women of God brutally killed. The disjunction between ideal and reality, between the promise of a war fought in part at least in defence of religious freedom and the truth of poorly disciplined military campaigning, shocked seventeenth-century observers. The scale of destruction was, of course, nothing compared to that of the twentieth century. But in Electoral Saxony, and other badly affected parts of the Empire, communities were left without proper – or at least properly equipped – spaces for worship. The restoration and refurbishment of churches was a pressing concern. It sometimes took decades: in Freiberg, for example, the replacement for the hospital church that had been destroyed by Torstensson in 1643 was completed in 1661, after a long struggle over costs.[106] Sometimes, however, it was accomplished remarkably quickly thanks either to the donations of wealthy patrons or to the sustained efforts of the local community. Figure 6 shows the interior of the parish church in Dippoldiswalde, the town for which Leipzig's citizens had donated alms in 1634, with its new vaulting and ornamental frescoes, completed in 1636-8. The swiftness with which this restoration was accomplished in the midst of the ongoing war is still proudly noted on the parish website.[107]

Whether or not we consider Thirty Years War to be Europe's last 'religious war', the study of church buildings proves the importance of religion in understanding its course and its consequences on the ground.[108] It helps us to navigate between sober statistics of destruction and death on the one hand and highly emotive literary accounts on the other. The ruination of sacred sites contributed to disillusionment with the war. But religious belief and practice continued to play an important role in helping both individuals and communities to weather decades of disruption and fear. And when war abated or ended, the restoration of parish churches provided hope. A 1665 dedicatory poem for the new furnishing of the village church in Schmilkendorf outside Wittenberg declared that

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[106] Georg Dehio, *Handbuch der Deutschen Kunstdenkmäler. Sachsen II: Regierungsbezirk Leipzig und Chemnitz* (Munich, 1998), pp. 274-5; Stadtarchiv Freiberg, Aa Abteilung II, Sekt. I, Nr.136: Wiederaufbau der bei feindl. Belagerung demolierten Hospital-Kirche
[107] *https://www.kirche-dw.de/index.php/kirchen*, accessed 06/01/2023
[108] Konrad Repgen, 'Was ist ein Religionskrieg?', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 97 (1986), pp. 334-49

21

As our Germany was laid waste with sword and flames, this church and others were ravaged. Now the tide is turning: the destruction is made good, the pulpit is seen in its place. The altar shines, the confessional is built, so that one looks at one's desire and heart's joy. Oh reader, call always on the Highest, so that he lives here again as he did before.[109]

If war was a punishment sent by God, then the restoration of sacred space was an expression of renewal and regeneration. Eventually a new church, a new interior, or even just a new altarpiece or chalice, stood as a sign of the return of God's favour.

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[109] Quoted in Hartmut Mai, ‚Kirchliche Bildkunst im sächsischen-thüringischen Raum als Ausdruck der lutherischen Reformation', *Sächsische Heimatblätter* 6 (1983), pp. 244-50, here p. 249. See also Ingrid Schulze, *Lucas Cranach d. J. und die protestantische Bildkunst in Sachsen und Thüringen. Frömmigkeit, Theolgie, Fürstenreformation* (Jena, 2004), p. 51.

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List of illustrations

Figure 1 Jacques Callot, Destruction of a Convent, etching, c. 1633, from *The Miseries and Misfortunes of War*. Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection.

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Figure 2 Philip Vincent, *Lamentations of Germany* (London, 1638), pp. 26-7. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

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Figure 3 Valentin Otte, altarpiece from the Church of St Anfra, Meißen, 1653.

Photo: author's own

Figure 4 Valentin Otte and Johann Richter, memorial for Heinrich von Schleinitz (d.1654), Church of St Afra, Meißen.

Photo: author's own

Figure 5 Zwickau, Marienkirche, grave and arms of Carl von Bose (1596-1657).

Deutsche Fotothek

Figure 6 Dippoldiswalde, interior of the Marien- und Laurentiuskirche.

Photo: Hans P. Szyska / Alamy Stock Photo

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Figure 1 Jacques Callot, Destruction of a Convent, etching, c. 1633, from The Miseries and Misfortunes of War. Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection.
Public domain

1444x645mm (72 x 72 DPI)

Figure 2 Philip Vincent, Lamentations of Germany (London, 1638), pp. 26-7. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
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1209x905mm (72 x 72 DPI)

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Figure 3 Valentin Otte, altarpiece from the Church of St Anfra, Meißen, 1653.
Photo: author's own

111x188mm (300 x 300 DPI)

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Figure 4 Valentin Otte and Johann Richter, memorial for Heinrich von Schleinitz (d.1654), Church of St Afra, Meißen.
Photo: author's own

126x177mm (300 x 300 DPI)

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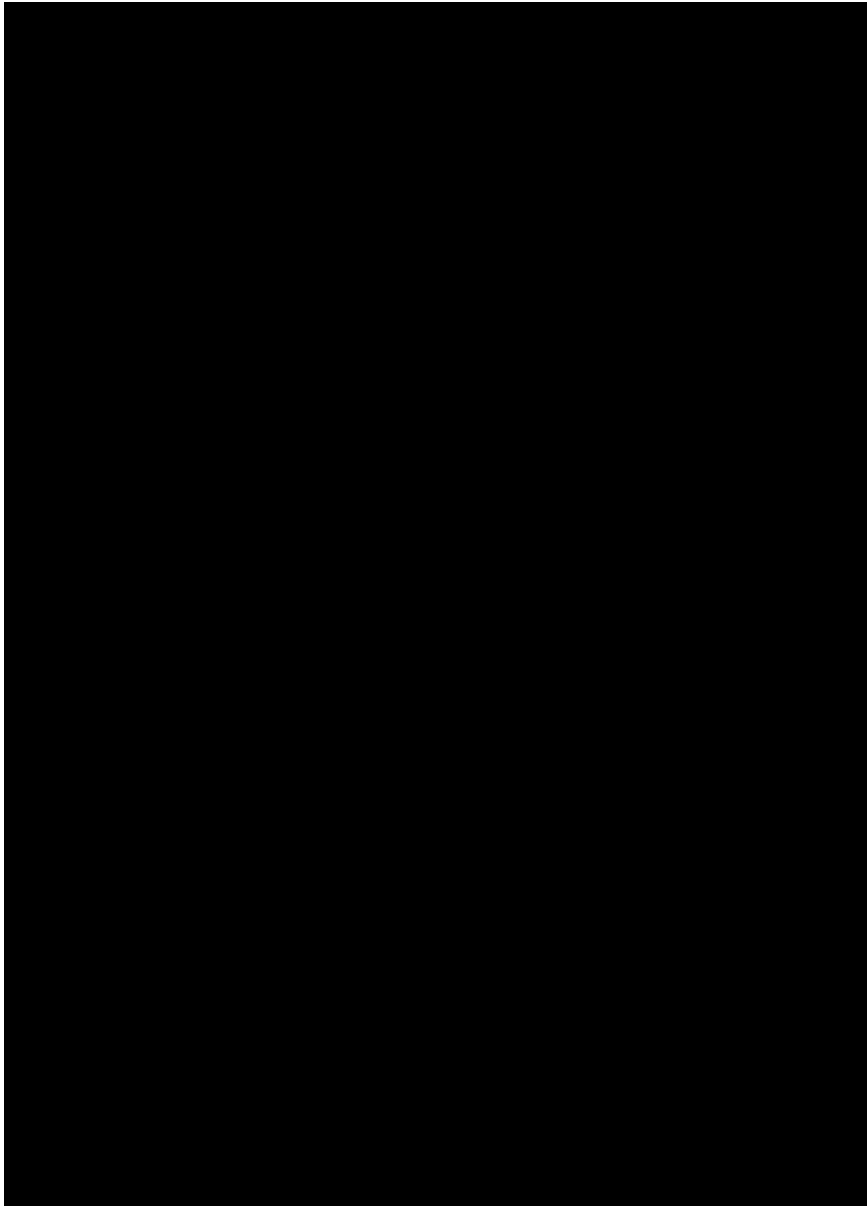48
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Figure 5 Zwickau, Marienkirche, grave and arms of Carl von Bose (1596-1657).
Deutsche Fotothek

224x311mm (72 x 72 DPI)

Redacted. Image available in the final published version

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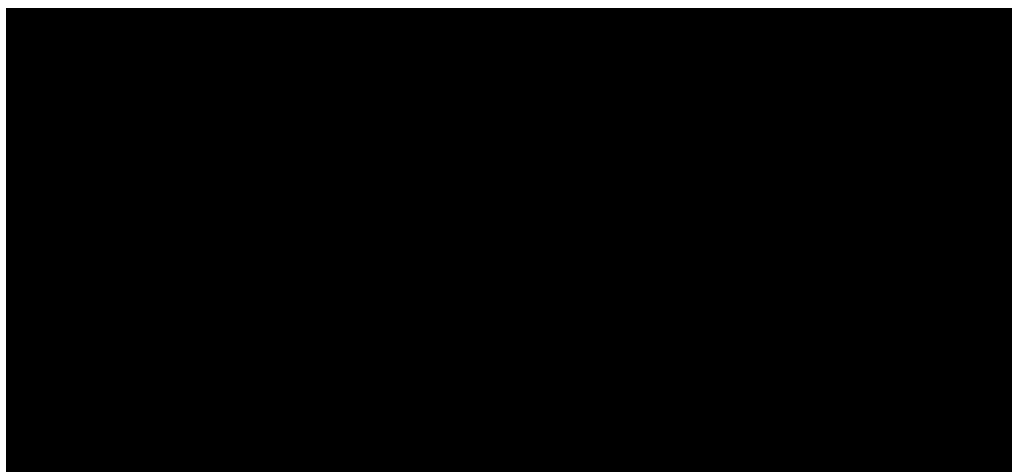51
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Figure 6 Dippoldiswalde, interior of the Marien- und Laurentiuskirche.
Photo: Hans P. Szyska / Alamy Stock Photo

700x321mm (300 x 300 DPI)

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