The Religious Allegiances of Sixteenth-Century Peasant Rebels.

by

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Abstract

The peasant revolts which occurred frequently throughout the sixteenth century all included an inherent religious dimension. Historians have tried to place the peasants' religious allegiances within confessional boundaries. However, peasants determined their own religious priorities from the variety of movements created by the Reformation. The peasants who rebelled in the German Peasants' War of 1525 were inspired by Reformation teachings, especially the emphasis on the Gospel, yet rejected the exhortations of both radical and moderate reformers. English peasants participating in Kett's Rebellion of 1549 absorbed the Evangelical messages of Christian equality and justice, yet Traditionalist, Evangelical and folk practices decisively influenced their actions. French peasants who revolted in 1561 and 1578-80, during the Wars of Religion, rejected confessional divisions; instead, Catholics and Protestants cooperated. The actions of sixteenth-century peasant rebels demonstrate that they did not simply follow religious leaders but chose their own religious allegiances.

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Introduction

As the sixteenth century was a period of religious ferment and rural upheaval, it is natural to be curious about how the two events are connected. How did the Reformation affect peasant revolts? What religious factors influenced peasant behaviour? These are difficult questions to answer, given the many causes which inspired peasant revolts and the different forms which religious influence took. They are made even more difficult to answer by the paucity of sources about and by the peasants themselves. It is therefore not surprising that, as Norman Housley points out, there is a lack of comparative studies that relate religion to peasant revolts, although there are many individual case studies.[1] An exception is the 1982 conference on Religion and Rural Revolt, held at the University of British Columbia, but even there, Harvey Mitchell noted in his "Preface" to the section on Western and Southern Europe: "Religion lurks on the edges of and rarely becomes an integral part of the central concerns of the authors of the papers in this section."[2] With this in mind, the present study examines part of the link between religion and peasant revolts in the Reformation period in Germany, England and France. Even in revolts caused mostly by economic grievances, there was a significant inherent religious dimension. Peasants made their own religious choices and displayed remarkable

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[1] Norman Housley, "Insurrection as Religious War, 1400-1536," *Journal of Medieval History* 25 (1999): 141.

[2] Harvey Mitchell, "Preface," in *Religion and Rural Revolt: Papers Presented to the Fourth Interdisciplinary Workshop on Peasant Studies, University of British Columbia, 1982*, ed. Janos M. Bak and Gerhard Benecke (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 65.

independence when faced with confessional division and the exhortations of respected, forceful and dynamic religious leaders.

Who exactly participated in these revolts? Reinhard Wenskus offers several criteria that describe a peasant, including the production of vegetable and animal foodstuffs and personally working the land.[3] To this definition Tom Scott adds power-relations: a peasant is someone who owes tribute or rent "to power-holders beyond their own ranks."[4] This definition adequately describes many small European farmers, but other categories need to be added. Agricultural workers whose land was insufficient to sustain them and who had to engage in some wage labour were also part of the peasantry, and indeed are included as peasants by Jonathan Dewald and Liana Vardi.[5] Dewald and Vardi also affirm that workers in rural industries were peasants. Claims to the contrary "rest on an unduly narrow conception of peasants' behaviour and ideals."[6] Most rural inhabitants who belonged to the commoner estate, except members of professions, can thus be regarded as peasants.

An associated group that plays an important role in the events under discussion are urban residents who also worked in agriculture, especially as vinedressers or gardeners. Although living in towns and cities, not villages, they would have shared some of the concerns and problems of peasants. On occasion, even urban workers joined the peasants. That is why Peter Blickle prefers the term "Revolution of the Common Man," to the "German Peasants' War," although Tom Scott disputes his argument that

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[3] Werner Rösener, *The Peasantry of Europe*, trans. Thomas M. Barker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 18.
[4] Tom Scott, "Introduction," in *The Peasantries of Europe: From the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries,* ed. Tom Scott (London: Longman, 1998), 3.
[5] Jonathan Dewald and Liana Vardi, "The Peasantries of France, 1400-1789," in *The Peasantries of Europe: From the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries*, 29.
[6] Ibid., 32.

townspeople and the peasants were closely allied.[7] However, the majority of the participants in the rebellions discussed here are peasants (according to the above definition), and so the participants of the revolt will be described as peasants, except in rare cases where it appears that townspeople made up the majority of participants, in which case the term commoners will be used.

One difficulty in understanding the nature of peasant religious allegiances is the tendency of historians to associate peasants with a single motivation or outside influence. Heiko Oberman, for example, believes that Luther's teachings were instrumental in causing the German Peasants' War of 1525, while Blickle has argued the same for Ulrich Zwingli.[8] In England, historians remain particularly divided on confessional lines. Concerning Kett's Rebellion, for example, Diarmaid MacCulloch believes that the camp-men of Mousehold Heath were evangelicals, while Eamon Duffy has emphasized the traditionalist behaviour of the same peasants.[9] Some historians have also privileged economic aspects of peasant revolts at the expense of other factors. Henry Heller argues that Protestant revolts in France aimed to secure economic and social advantage while, until the fall of the Berlin Wall, East German historians emphasized the communist and revolutionary aspects of Thomas Müntzer's activities.[10] Alongside this tendency are those

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[7] Peter Blickle, *The Revolution of 1525: The German Peasants' War from a New Perspective*, trans. Thomas A. Brady, Jr., and H.C. Erik Midelfort (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 124; Tom Scott, "The Peasants' War: A Historiographical Review: Part II," *The Historical Journal* 22 (1979), 955-966.

[8] Heiko A. Oberman, "The Gospel of Social Unrest," in *The German Peasants' War of 1525: New Viewpoints*, ed. Bob Scribner and Gerhard Benecke (London: Allen and Unwin, 1979), 40-43; Blickle, *The Revolution of 1525,* 160-161.

[9] Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 5th ed. (New York: Pearson/Longman, 2004), 86; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), 121; Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 130-131.

[10] Henry Heller, *Iron and Blood: Civil Wars in Sixteenth-Century France* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1991), 13; Heller, *The Conquest of Poverty: The Calvinist Revolt in Sixteenth-Century*

historians who, when faced with brutality, deny religious motivation and insist on self-interested motives. Oberman holds that the German peasants ceased being influenced by religious ideas when violence erupted, while Janine Garrisson-Estèbe attributes particularly bloody French Protestant actions to economic motives.[11] More nuanced are historians of religious violence such as Natalie Davis, Mack Holt and Denis Crouzet. They emphasize confessional division, making it difficult to understand why cooperation might sometimes replace conflict.[12]

Two main difficulties are apparent in the survey of the above authors: the denial or selective application of religious motivation, and the restriction of religious allegiance to a single influence or confession. Yet the desire for salvation and the belief that divine power controlled natural events were constant.[13] Any rebellious peasant, even if not explicitly acting for a religious cause, would have been concerned with these issues and acted accordingly. Housley states: "In the Middle Ages and Early Modern period religious values did not simply provide terms of reference but a specific world-view which profoundly shaped the way contemporaries approached the practices of organized violence."[14] Furthermore, the influences on the religious beliefs and practices of peasants

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France (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 23; Henry Heller, "Les Artisans au début de la Réforme Francaise: hommage à Henri Hauser," trans. M. Allen and Jean Delumeau, in *Les Réformes: enracinements socio-culturel,* ed. Bernard Chevalier and Robert Sauzet (Paris: Éditions de la Maisnie, 1982), 139; Norman Housley, *Religious Warfare in Europe, 1400-1536* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 93; Tom Scott, "From Polemic to Sobriety: Thomas Müntzer in Recent Research," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 39 (1988): 572, 569.

[11] Janine Garrisson-Estèbe, *Les Protestants du Midi: 1559-98* (Toulouse: Privat, 1980), 166-167; Oberman, "The Gospel of Social Unrest," 48.

[12] N.Z. Davis, "The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France," *Past and Present* 59 (1973): 57-59; Mack Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-2. Denis Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu: la violence au temps des troubles de religion vers 1525-1610* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1990), 517.

[13] Robert W. Scribner, "Cosmic Order and Daily Life: Sacred and Profane in Pre-Industrial German Society," in R.W. Scribner, *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (Ronceverte, W.V.: Hambleton Press, 1987), 1-2.

[14] Housley, *Religious Warfare in Europe 1400-1536*, 1.

cannot be restricted to a single external source. Sixteenth-century peasants actively chose their own religious priorities; they might be tolerant of fellow peasants with different beliefs, practices, or confessional associations; they made decisions about which religious teachings they would follow and which they would not; and they combined practices of different confessions and even folk beliefs into a coherent system. In sum, peasant rebellions always had some religious dimension that reflected the choices of the peasants themselves.

These choices are evident in peasant rebellions in Germany, England and France. Chapter 1 indicates that German peasants participating in the revolts of 1525 chose their preferred religious allegiance. Peasants in both Thuringia and Alsace held to the program of the Twelve Articles, which called for economic reforms based on the Gospel. In Thuringia, peasants supported a movement based on the Twelve Articles rather than the revolutionary and apocalyptic agitation of Thomas Müntzer. In Alsace, peasants persisted in rebelling on the basis of the Twelve Articles, as well as asserting the Christian nature of the rebellion, despite the emphatic disapproval and condemnation of several popular and respected preachers. In both cases, peasants insisted on choosing their own version of Christianity.

Chapter 2 emphasizes the many religious practices which influenced Kett's Rebellion. The rebellion had an inherent religious dimension that combined traditional, evangelical and folk elements. The peasants' demands were phrased in terms of the evangelical Commonwealth movement, yet their belief in folk prophecy contributed to the violent end of the revolt.

Chapter 3 demonstrates the cooperation between French Catholic and Protestant peasants. Members of the other confession were not identified as the enemy. Instead, Catholic and Protestant peasants were united by the oppression of a local noble in Fumel in 1561 and by the fear of marauding soldiers in the Dauphiné in 1578-80.

These revolts occurred over fifty-five years and five different regions in three different realms. In each, the peasants' own religious choices determined their religious allegiances and behaviour. They did not simply follow the leadership of religious élites. They made decisions about which religious interpretation to follow, and rejected confessional exclusivity to form their own allegiances.

The main concerns of the rebellious peasants were exploitation by landlords and taxation. While the sixteenth century was a prosperous period for farmers who occupied large lands, many peasants were unable to benefit. The agrarian, or feudal, crisis, occurred after the Black Death in the fourteenth century and caused a decrease in population. This led to a decrease in the demand for grain, which led to an over-supply, thus reducing prices. After 1470, population and agricultural prices began to rise again.[15] This created prosperity among already successful peasants and nobles. However, feudal dues remained high for many peasants. In Germany, much of the arable land that had been abandoned in the fourteenth century reverted to forest, and so was unavailable to sixteenth-century peasants seeking new farmland. Landlords often divided up and rented out common lands to increase rental income, generating disputes over pastures, woods and bodies of water.[16] In western Germany, landlords made an effort to raise rents and dues and to convert hereditary tenures to life-long leases, thus allowing them to raise the

[15] Werner Rösener, "The Agrarian Economy 1300-1600," in *Germany: A New Social and Economic History*, vol.1, ed. Bob Scribner (London: Arnold, 1996), 70.
[16] Ibid., 71.

rent upon the death of the tenant.[17] They also used their judicial powers to increase fines. Middling and small peasants were, as Werner Rösener puts it, "scarcely touched by such increases in prosperity. Their situation remained precarious, their dues high, and they generally had only the bare necessities for subsistence."[18] Whether one agrees with Blickle and sees this as part of the agrarian/feudal crisis, or Scott, who interprets it as "the aftermath of the feudal crisis," it is clear that seigneurs imposed difficult burdens on the peasantry.[19]

The tensions between peasants and landlords produced much discontent. Most notable were the *Bundschuh* rebellions of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries along the upper Rhine, and the "Poor Conrad" revolt in Württemberg in 1514.[20] However, the spread of the Reformers' message of Christian liberty after 1517 allowed the leaders of the peasant bands that formed in the winter of 1524-1525 to find a common justification. Influenced by evangelical ideas, they called themselves "Christian Assemblies" and demanded agrarian reforms. The peasants formulated their demands in a series of grievances, the most widespread of which was the Twelve Articles, which was written by Sebastian Lotzer and Christoph Schappeler in Memmingen. Rebels throughout Germany adopted the Twelve Articles, completely or in variation.

England too experienced economic instability in the sixteenth century. A significant rise in the population (from 2,500,000 in 1520 to 4,000,000 in 1600) meant

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[17] Ibid., 74; Tom Scott, *Society and Economy in Germany, 1300-1600* (Basingstoke: Palgrave 2002), 234; Thomas Robisheaux, "The Peasantries of Western Germany, 1300-1600," in *The Peasantries of Europe: From the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries*, 134.

[18] Rösener, "The Agrarian Economy 1300-1600," 74.

[19] Scott, *Society and Economy in Germany, 1300-1600*, 239.

[20] Ibid., 218-219, 230-233.

that the price of bread rose by a factor of six between 1500-1600.[21] Real wages declined, affecting the labouring poor who relied on waged employment to supplement their subsistence-level farming. As agricultural prices rose, landlords attempted to increase rents, which caused resentment amongst the peasant farmers. The conversion of arable land to pasture prior to 1550 turned many middling peasants into the labouring poor.[22]

Religious turmoil exacerbated the social conflicts caused by economic changes. King Henry VIII's need for an heir forced him to seek a divorce from Katherine of Aragon, which in turn caused him to break with the Roman Church in 1534. The Act of Supremacy made the monarch the head of the English Church. Henry used his newly assumed powers to issue a series of reforms in English church practice. While retaining some essentially Catholic beliefs, Henry seized the properties of monasteries and chantries, eliminated images, statues and other ritual items from English churches and allowed the partial circulation of the Bible in English. He executed both firm Catholics and Evangelicals but encouraged Evangelical churchmen such as Thomas Cranmer, whom he nominated archbishop of Canterbury in 1533. On his death in 1547, his son Edward VI, aged nine, became king. He was surrounded by evangelical ministers who introduced a series of changes in English religious practices. The most important of these was the Prayer Book of 1549, which called for services to be held in English, not Latin. Associated with Edward VI were the commonwealth men, a group of evangelicals who believed that Church reform meant spreading the ideas of fairness and justice to include the common people.

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[21] J.A. Sharpe, "Economy and Society," in *The Sixteenth Century*, ed. Patrick Collinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 33.
[22] Ibid., 34.

In France, the peasantry made up 90 percent of the population until the nineteenth century.[23] Conditions for peasants were relatively tolerable from the end of the Hundred Years' War in 1453 to the start of the Religious Wars in 1562. During this period, land was available and cheap, taxes were relatively low and landlords, needing tenants, offered favourable terms.[24] However, poor harvests forced peasants into crushing debt.[25] Furthermore, under the seigneurial system the lords, in addition to exacting feudal dues of fixed rents and labour services, also held monopolies on milling, markets, hunting and fishing. They owned woods and water, and exercised judicial and regulatory functions.[26] Taxes on French peasants were also high, and the combination of tithes, feudal dues, and taxes often came to two thirds of the harvest.[27] The Price Revolution of the sixteenth century, caused in part by a growing population that outstripped the supply of food, caused grain prices to rise. From a fifteenth century base of 100, the price index for wheat rose to 481 by 1591.[28] The Wars of Religion, which began in 1562, aggravated these burdens. The peasants had to feed and quarter soldiers, pay extra tributes and endure marauding, undisciplined troops.

The French Wars of Religion began in 1562, sparked by the Duke of Guise's massacre of Protestants at Vassy in March of that year. Tensions between Catholics and Protestants had been growing since the 1520s, and especially since inflammatory anti-Catholic placards had been publicly posted in 1534.[29] Civil wars between Catholics and

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[23] Dewald and Vardi, "The Peasantries of France, 1400-1789," 22.
[24] Ibid., 24-25.
[25] Ibid., 28.
[26] Ibid., 34; Robert J. Knecht, *The French Civil Wars, 1562-1598* (Harlow: Pearson, 2000), 8-9.
[27] Dewald and Vardi, "The Peasantries of France, 1400-1789," 29.
[28] Knecht, *The French Civil Wars,* 12; Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Peasantry 1450-1660*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1987), 12.
[29] Knecht, *The French Civil Wars*, 46-47.

Protestants occurred endemically from 1562 to 1589. Initially, the wars consisted of pitched battles, but as these took a great toll on the nobility, guerrilla warfare and sieges replaced full-scale battles. If anything, this style of warfare placed a greater burden on the peasantry.[30]

The peasant revolts in Germany, England and France were all the result of economic burdens. Yet the peasants' world-view was profoundly religious and was an important element of their revolts. The religious element must be examined from the point of view of the peasants, not confessional leaders. This examination reveals a peasantry who thought for themselves on religious issues.

[30] Ibid., xii.

Chapter 1: The German Peasants' War

The German Peasants' War began during the winter and spring of 1525, when peasants gathered to demand social and economic reforms. Throughout the rebellion, the peasants, and the townspeople and miners who also rebelled, justified their demands by appealing to the Gospel and asserting that they were acting to honour "God and confirm his word."[1] The peasants owed no allegiance to any prominent reformer, however. While peasants adopted some Reformation ideas they rejected others. In the rebellions in Thuringia and Alsace, peasants did not obey the exhortation of prominent reformers but made their own decisions about which Reformation teachings they accepted.

The most popular articulation of their demands was the Twelve Articles which originated in Upper Swabia. The Twelve Articles, composed in 1525 by the Memmingen furrier Sebastian Lotzer with the help of the pastor Christoph Schappeler, demanded the abolition of serfdom. The peasants also asserted their rights to hunting, fishing and wood gathering and called for reductions in labour services, rents and fines, the redistribution of the great tithe to parish pastors and the poor, and the abolition of the small tithe and death taxes.[2] Furthermore, they wanted parishes to be allowed to elect and remove their own pastors. These demands aimed at improving the economic and social position of the peasantry.

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[1] "Gerber's Proclamation of 29 April 1525," in *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents,* ed. Robert Scribner and Tom Scott (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1991), 244.

[2] Peter Blickle, *The Revolution of 1525: The German Peasants' War from a New Perspective*, trans. Thomas A. Brady, Jr., and H.C. Erik Midelfort (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 17-19.

The Twelve Articles expressed the peasants' desire to live according to the teachings of the Gospel, and the peasants wanted their demands judged according to Scripture.[3] The first occasion on which the peasants justified their demands by appealing to the Gospel occurred in January 1525 in the Klettgau, west of Lake Constance, and in mid-February, the Baltringen band northeast of the lake became the first peasant army to adopt the Gospel as the basis of their demands.[4] By mid-March, the peasant bands of Upper Swabia had created the "Christian Union of Upper Swabia" and from there the use of Christian ideals to legitimize the rebellion spread to southwestern and central Germany.[5]

Heiko Oberman and Peter Blickle have both posited theories about the influence of the Reformation on the German Peasants' War. Oberman is the strongest exponent of Luther's influence on the Peasants' War. He argued that the revolt was based on the concept of Christian freedom, which had been popular for over a century before the Reformation.[6] Luther revitalized these ideas and transformed "the appeal to godly justice" into "an explicit appeal to the Gospel."[7] The peasant leaders, pastors, nobles, artisans and innkeepers, were familiar with and remained true to Luther's thoughts.[8] Furthermore, contemporaries, both those sympathetic and those opposed to the war, thought that the origin and initial stages was essentially a religious movement.[9] Oberman asserted that the peasants betrayed the religious principles of the Reformation when they

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[3] "The Twelve Articles," in *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents*, 253, 257.
[4] Robert Scribner and Tom Scott, "Introduction," in *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents*, 25.
[5] Ibid., 26-27.
[6] Heiko A. Oberman, "The Gospel of Social Unrest," in *The German Peasants' War of 1525: New Viewpoints*, ed. Bob Scribner and Gerhard Benecke (London: Allen and Unwin, 1979), 42.
[7] Ibid., 43.
[8] Ibid., 40, 42.
[9] Ibid., 49.

became impatient and "the original vision of justice for all collapsed under the weight of ungovernable fanaticism."[10] Oberman's argument supposes an adherence to Lutheranism, which is disputed by Blickle. Oberman also assumes that the violent rebellion of the peasants was no longer inspired by Christian ideas. Yet right up to the final defeat, the rebels asserted that they were rebelling for the honour of God, and they were accompanied by parish priests, who assured them that they were acting on God's behalf.[11] Oberman too easily assumes that the violence and disobedience of the peasants meant that the peasants were no longer acting on religious motives.

Blickle denies the importance of Luther and argues that the rebels were influenced by the ideas of Ulrich Zwingli, who called for a state based on the Gospel, and that they embraced the Reformation because the popular election of pastors allowed them to extend their control over the peasant communes.[12] Zwingli believed that a faith based on the Gospel required a complete change in the social and political organization of the state.[13] Laws had to be in harmony with "God's law of neighbour and nature," and rulers were responsible for enforcing Godly laws.[14] Pure preaching of the Gospel would create a "peaceful and God-fearing regime." Blickle argues that the rebels of 1525 shared this

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[10] Ibid., 48.

[11] Tom Scott, *Thomas Müntzer: Theology and Revolution in the German Reformation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 165; Thomas Müntzer, *The Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, ed. and trans. Peter Matheson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 159; "Gerber's Proclamation of 29 April 1525," in *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents,* 244; Gautier Heumann, *La Guerre des Paysans d'Alsace et de Moselle (avril-mai 1525)* (Paris: Éditions Sociale, 1976), 190; Tom Scott, "The Common People in the German Reformation," *Historical Journal* 34 (1991): 190.

[12] Peter Blickle, *The Communal Reformation: The Quest for Salvation in Sixteenth-Century Germany,* trans. Thomas Dunlap (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1992), 32; Blickle, *The Revolution of 1525,* 160-161.

[13] Blickle, *The Revolution of 1525*, 158-159.

[14] Ibid.,159.

idea of a Christian state based on Godly Law, and claims that the Peasants' War "was an unfolding of the Reformation itself."[15]

While Zwingli may have influenced the Twelve Articles, the peasants did not adhere to all of his teachings. Zwingli believed that salvation came through election by God, so external acts were not needed for salvation.[16] The Swiss pastor was vigorously opposed to the Mass, images, penance, purgatory, salvation through good works, the cult of the saints and the authority of the Catholic Church hierarchy.[17] The Ordinance of the Upper Swabian Peasantry, however, required that "every person should fervently pray his beads."[18] A 1523 pamphlet, which Blickle himself describes as being "very close to the common man's concept of the Reformation," describes what a town required of its pastor.[19] The townspeople sought a pastor who would teach a consistent doctrine, as contradictory preaching created division within the town. The town specifically demanded that its new pastor teach the importance of both faith and works.[20] The townspeople valued unity more than the teachings of a particular position and did not adhere to a Zwinglian rejection of works as a means to salvation. In Alsace, despite enthusiasm for Gospel preaching, peasants retained a vision of God that "harks strongly back to Catholic supplicatory and intercessory religion."[21] While Zwinglian notions of a state based on Christian laws may have spread throughout the rebel bands in 1525, Zwingli's teachings were not accepted in their entirety.

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[15] Ibid.,161.

[16] Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1996), 180.

[17] Gregory J. Miller, "Huldrych Zwingli," in Carter Lindberg, *The Reformation Theologians* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2002), 158; Lindberg, *European Reformations*, 179.

[18] "Ordinance of the Upper Swabian Peasantry," in *The German Peasants War: A History in Documents,* 134.

[19] Blickle, *Communal Reformation,* 130.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Scott, "Common People," 189

The peasants cannot be considered Catholic or Protestant, Lutheran or Zwinglian. They chose between different versions of the Reformation, and accepted parts of religious doctrines while rejecting others. By insisting on the Christian nature of their rebellion, despite the disapproval of Reformers, the peasants chose their own version of Christianity.

Thuringia

Peasant indifference to the theology of the reformers can be seen in the reaction of the Thuringian peasants to the violent, revolutionary and egalitarian agitation of the pastor Thomas Müntzer. The rebellion in Thuringia started in mid-April 1525 at Fulda where the rebels demanded evangelical preachers, "secularization of evangelical property and the adoption of the Twelve Articles."[22] On 20 April, peasants in the Werra valley assembled, demanded the adoption of the Twelve Articles, and attacked castles and monasteries. The Werra band dispersed once the local noble, Count Wilhelm, agreed to uphold the Twelve Articles, and the Fulda revolt was defeated by Landgrave Phillip of Hessen on 3 May.[23] The most important peasant band gathered during early May at Frankenhausen, in northern Thuringia, where several thousand peasants supported demands based on the Twelve Articles. These peasants were routed and slaughtered on 15 May by an army led by the princes Phillip of Hessen, Duke George of Saxony and

[22] Scribner and Scott, "Introduction," 38.
[23] Ibid., 39.

Duke Henry of Brunswick.[24] Urban commoners throughout Thuringia also revolted, venting their rage at the Catholic clergy and seeking more autonomy for their towns.

Historians have credited Thomas Müntzer with leading the Thuringian peasant revolts. Scribner and Scott, for example, state: "In retrospect the Thuringian phase of the rebellion can be said to have possessed a more powerful ideological thrust than any other, driven by the revolutionary vision of Thomas Müntzer."[25] This fascination with Müntzer among historians means there is little modern scholarship centered on the peasants themselves. However, an examination of the scholarship focused on Müntzer and Müntzer's own correspondence indicates that the Thuringian peasants did not rise in support of his new order. The peasant aims were based on a more moderate program, especially the Twelve Articles. For the most part, the peasants restricted Müntzer's role to that of a pastor and chose their own goals and strategies.

Müntzer believed that those chosen and guided by the Holy Spirit, the elect, were responsible for fulfilling God's plan on earth.[26] He was determined to establish a Christian, egalitarian covenant of the elect, led if possible by the nobility.[27] Once the elect had been properly purified of temporal desires, then the Last Days would come and they would rise against the godless.[28] In the years 1523-25, Müntzer increasingly came to

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[24] Jurgen Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer*, trans. Jocelyn Jacquiery, ed. Peter Matheson (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 187.

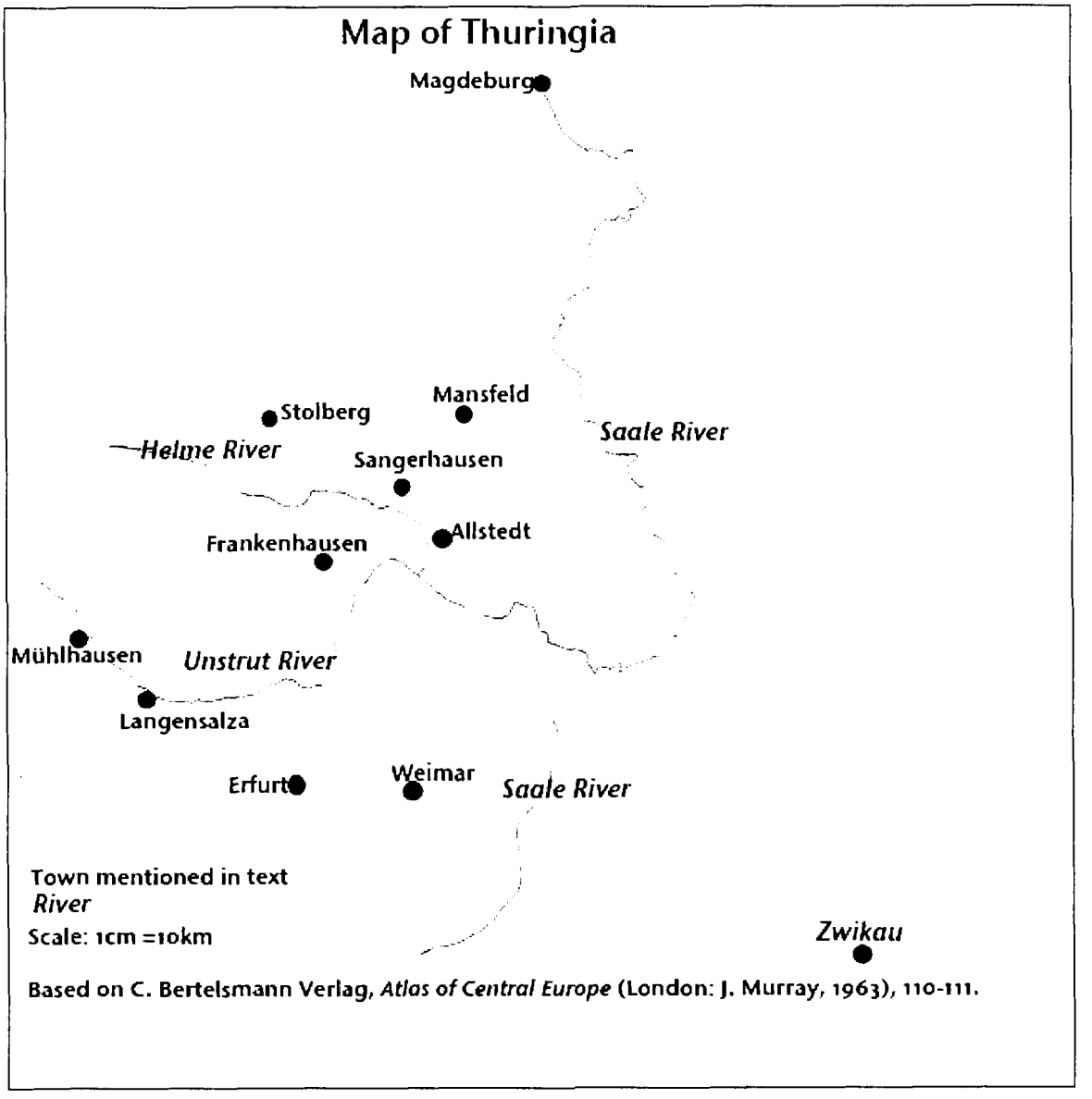
[25] Scribner and Scott, "Introduction," 43.

[26] George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd ed. (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992), 130, 126; Gordon Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 166.

[27] Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 138; Müntzer, *Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, 101.

[28] Tom Scott, *Thomas Müntzer*, 58-59; Müntzer, *Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, 63.

believe that the Lutheran preachers and the nobility were the godless and the common people the elect.[29]



Map 1: The Frankenhausen Region

[29] Müntzer, *Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, 70, 150, 155, 157.

Müntzer predicted their imminent violent destruction, and called on the peasants to destroy them.[30] However, the behaviour of the peasants and the inhabitants of small towns, until their defeat at Frankenhausen on 15 May, indicates that their goals were not the same as Müntzer's, and they did not share his view of the rebellion as an apocalyptic battle of the elect against the godless.

Müntzer served as one of two pastors in Allstedt, a town of between six and nine hundred inhabitants, mostly farmers, in 1523-1524. Allstedt participated in several disturbances between 1523 and 1525, and almost all the townspeople joined the peasant band at Frankenhausen.[31] Müntzer was a talented preacher, and his theological concerns would have been obvious to members of his congregation, especially through the new German liturgy which he introduced.[32] Müntzer based the liturgy on existing missals but tried to eliminate what he thought was corrupt in the old services.[33] Up to two thousand people from surrounding areas came to hear the liturgy.[34] The peasants would have heard some examples of Müntzer's anti-noble position, such as his replacement of "Deliver us from the yoke of evil," in Psalm 140 with the more explicit and immediate "Deliver us from the anti-Christian government of the godless," or a setting of Psalm 93, where Müntzer rendered the final line as "The tyrants will be overthrown; the splendour of this world cannot co-exist with that of God."[35]

The inhabitants of Allstedt and surrounding regions soon became enthusiastic evangelicals, which created conflict with nearby Catholic lords, especially Count Ernst

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[30] Ibid., 140, 141-143, 156.
[31] Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer*, 98; Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 242.
[32] Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation,* 161; Scott, *Thomas Müntzer*, 17.
[33] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer*, 50.
[34] Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer,* 103; Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation,* 188.
[35] Williams, *The Radical Reformation,* 128; Scott, *Thomas Müntzer*, 54.

von Mansfeld. A major act of defiance occurred on the night of 13-14 June 1524. When the local ducal official Hans Zeiss, supported by local peasants, attempted to arrest those responsible for the burning of a Marian chapel, the population of Allstedt mobilized to protect the suspects.[36] Müntzer rang the tocsin that summoned the population and preached to the crowd from his window.[37] However, Scott thinks that the Allstedters threatened to break their allegiance to the lords, despite Müntzer's preaching against doing so.[38] In July, townspeople still appeared to be using the disturbances as an excuse not to pay feudal dues, a development that Müntzer tried to halt.[39]

A second disturbance was the formation of a league in July 1524 made up of Allstedters and refugees from surrounding territories.[40] The league members swore to defend the Gospel and "to protect the elect from the schemes of the tyrannical authorities" in an open, public event outside the town hall.[41] The league was formed after Müntzer delivered a sermon which called for a covenant between God, the rulers and the people against the godless, i.e., the Catholic nobles.[42] Müntzer may have intended this covenant league to be the start of the apocalyptic rising of the elect against the godless.[43] Scott, however, suggests the refugees and Allstedters formed the league for mutual defense as much as to fulfill Müntzer's vision.[44] Supporters of Müntzer's evangelical preaching from surrounding areas, especially the Mansfeld county, were fleeing to

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[36] Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 199; Scott, *Thomas Müntzer*, 77.
[37] Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 199.
[38] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 85.
[39] Müntzer, *Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, 102
[40] Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation,* 198; Scott, *Thomas Müntzer*, 83.
[41] Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer*, 131; Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 83.
[42] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 81-83; Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer,* 131.
[43] Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer,* 132.
[44] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 85.

Allstedt following persecution by their Catholic lords and needed protection.[45] Yet according to Scott, these commoners did not unconditionally agree to all of Müntzer's teachings. He believed that "all goods should be held in common" yet members continued to trade property, evidence that they were not following Müntzer's communism.[46]

Despite the apparent popularity of the league, the members of the town council readily agreed to disband it and disavowed covenants of the type Müntzer advocated when they and Müntzer were summoned before Duke John of Saxony at Weimar on 1 August 1524. The councillors blamed Müntzer for the disturbances, which had the effect of protecting his fellow pastor Simon Haferitz, who had been at least as active as Müntzer. While Müntzer was defending himself in Weimar, Haferitz was preaching a sermon in Allstedt that "denounced all secular lords as knaves" and threatened violence.[47] The Allstedters seemed to have extended limited loyalty to Müntzer, who fled Allstedt shortly after his hearing at Weimar.

Almost the entire population of Allstedt joined the peasant army at Frankenhausen in May 1525.[48] Their motives are unknown, but a letter to them from Müntzer accused them of having fallen and of seeking "relief from the messenger of the devil," which, Peter Matheson suggests, meant the Lutherans.[49] This indicates that the Allstedters were not following his ideal of Christian behaviour, and in fact turned to Lutheran preaching.[50] Meanwhile, nearby Sangerhausen sent fifteen hundred protestors to

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[45] Ibid., 77, 85, 87; Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation,* 204.
[46] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 87.
[47] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 90.
[48] Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 242.
[49] Müntzer, *Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, 137.
[50] Ibid.

Frankenhausen.[51] But the Sangerhausen peasants based their demands on the Twelve Articles, which were incompatible with Müntzer's vision of an egalitarian revolution.[52] While the commoners of Allstedt and the surrounding areas liked Müntzer's new liturgy, there is little evidence to suggest that their rebellious actions were in support of Müntzer's new godly order. What evidence exists suggests that their rebellious actions were in support of the Twelve Articles with its more moderate reforming influence.

The inhabitants of the villages surrounding Mühlhausen also refused to back Müntzer's extreme vision of rebellion, although the town was a center of unrest in 1525. Since the winter of 1523, the evangelical preacher Heinrich Pfeiffer had been organizing support for a program that demanded economic and social justice and the preaching of the pure Gospel.[53] Müntzer arrived in the late summer of 1524 and joined the agitation. Müntzer and Pfeiffer composed a set of articles, which they circulated in the villages around Mühlhausen. The articles demanded a political and social order based on the Bible, so that "the poor are treated in the same way as the rich."[54] Although they emphasized the necessity of acting both in accordance with God's will and in the interests of the commoners, the articles did not win Müntzer and Pfeiffer the support they needed among the peasants.[55]

After a revolt aiming to establish an "eternal council" to rule on the basis of "the Word of God and divine justice" failed, the townspeople of Mühlhausen expelled both

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[51] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 170.

[52] Ibid., 172-173.

[53] Scribner and Scott, "Introduction," 37; Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 162; Scott, *Thomas Müntzer*, 115; Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation*, 223; Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer*, 161.

[54] "The Mühlhausen Articles," in *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents,* 103.

[55] Ibid.

Müntzer and Pfeiffer on 27 September.[56] Their expulsion was not a rejection of evangelicalism. In the town a faction supported a Lutheran preacher, and the peasants who helped suppress the revolt had already driven out their own Catholic clergy.[57]

In the spring of 1525, the Mühlhauseners cooperated with Pfeiffer in electing an "Eternal Council" on 17 March. This new council included wealthy as well as poor members. At this time, Müntzer preached that poverty was necessary for salvation and that the people must get rid of their jewelry, silverware and coins, for "as long as you love these, the spirit of God will not dwell in you."[58] Müntzer frequently told correspondents that the love of possessions was holding them back from salvation.[59] The election of a council which included wealthy members suggests that the townspeople did not embrace Müntzer's vision of reform.

An incident at the gathering of the town militia in March for exercises demonstrates the limits of Müntzer's influence. Müntzer interrupted the exercises to preach and demand that the militiamen swear an oath to defend the Gospel, telling those who refused to stand aside.[60] This interruption angered the militia captain, who told him that, of course, the townspeople wanted to defend the Gospel, but that "since Müntzer had come to town they had sworn basketfuls of oaths, and that if he wanted to preach, his place was in the church and not on the field of war."[61] The militia refused to take the oath, and Müntzer left.[62] The incident indicates that the militiamen did not see Müntzer's

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[56] Scribner and Scott, "Introduction," 37-38; Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation,* 226: Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer,* 164, 165; Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 111.
[57] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer*, 120, 133.
[58] Ibid., 143.
[59] Müntzer, *Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, 87, 115.
[60] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 144.
[61] Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation,* 237; Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer,* 169.
[62] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 144.

role as extending beyond the church. Furthermore, the assembled men did not link defending the Gospel to Müntzer's apocalyptic struggle. They saw Müntzer as a preacher, not a revolutionary leader.

Elsewhere in Thuringia, the spread of the Twelve Articles led to full-scale rebellion by mid-April.[63] Soon the rebel camp at Frankenhausen became a gathering point for the rebellion in northern Thuringia.[64] Seven thousand peasants from the towns of Allstedt, Sangerhausen and Stolberg as well as from the Mansfeld, Schwarzburg and Saxon territories gathered at Frankenhausen. Their demands reflected the economic, social and religious concerns of the Twelve Articles. They demanded the "free and unadulterated preaching of Gospel," free access to fishing and forests as well as hunting rights, the "destruction of excessive noble castles," and the "abandonment of noble titles," although nobles could retain their properties and those of monastic estates on their lands.[65]

In Mühlhausen, four hundred followers joined Pfeiffer and Müntzer on 26 April in forming a rebel band.[66] However, divisions appeared between Müntzer and Pfeiffer. Müntzer wanted to attack Ernst, Count of Mansfeld and then join the rebel army at Frankenhausen, while Pfeiffer wanted to sack monasteries. On 29 April, the band marched against the monasteries.[67] Goetz does not think that the division indicates a theological split between the two, rather the difference was merely that Pfeiffer preferred a defensive strategy, Müntzer an offensive one.[68] This is an odd claim, since Müntzer's

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[63] Scribner and Scott, "Introduction," 38.
[64] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 161-2.
[65] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 162,174.
[66] "Mühlhausen Chronicle," in *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents,* 146.
[67] Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer,* 180; Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 156; Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation,* 241.
[68] Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer,* 180.

belief in the imminence of an apocalyptic battle between believers and unbelievers is a constant element of his revolutionary thought. Müntzer was not just seeking to defeat the nobles' armies but to establish the kingdom of God on earth.[69] If he headed to Frankenhausen, it was clearly because he thought such a battle would be fought there. Pfeiffer and the townspeople who supported him did not share this belief.

Müntzer's own writings indicate that the commoners were choosing not to follow him. In a letter to the residents of Schmalkalden he wrote that "it is proving extraordinarily hard to work [our brothers] into shape, for they are much coarser than anyone could conceive. For in many respects you have become conscious of what it is that oppresses you, while we are not able to make our folk here aware of this in any wholehearted way."[70] In a letter to the Mühlhausen town council, Müntzer further referred to "those causing such disruption," describing an unknown resident as a "Judas" who was threatening the interests of the town.[71] For the most part, the inhabitants of Mühlhausen opposed Müntzer's plans. After receiving repeated requests for military assistance from the peasants assembled at Frankenhausen, only three hundred supporters left with Müntzer on 10 May.

The Mühlhausen force arrived at Frankenhausen on 12 May at noon. The peasant army was under the command of Bonaventure Kürschner, although upon his arrival Müntzer started taking charge.[72] How much authority the peasants recognized in Müntzer is open to question. Hans Zeiss, who knew Müntzer from Allstedt, denied that he was a particularly important figure, saying, "it is not the case that Müntzer is a captain or in

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[69] Müntzer, *Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, 141-142.
[70] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 159; Müntzer, *Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, 148.
[71] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 160; Müntzer, *Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, 149.
[72] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 164

command of the troop, as is alleged. He is simply the Mühlhauseners' preacher. There are many other preachers in the troop, who preach the Gospel according to Luther's interpretation. They pay no particular regard to Müntzer."[73] The peasants in the army had a choice of preachers, and many chose not to listen to Müntzer. However, Müntzer was able to order the execution of the captured officials of Count Ernst of Mansfeld.[74] Of course, it was politic for the survivors of battle of Frankenhausen to blame Müntzer for this killing.

On 15 May, finding themselves surrounded by the nobles' army, the rebels sent a desperate appeal for peace.[75] The nobles promised to consider the request if Müntzer and his immediate following were handed over.[76] Perhaps the princes recognized that the majority of the peasants might turn against Müntzer and his supporters. However, the rebels either refused to surrender him or did not have time to consider properly the request before the nobles attacked. An estimated four to six thousand peasants died fleeing.[77] Müntzer was found hiding in Frankenhausen, and the noble army delivered him to Count Ernst for torture and execution.[78]

It is evident that while Müntzer was present at several peasant uprisings between 1523 and 1525 it does not appear that significant numbers of peasants looked to him in

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[73] "Hans Zeiss Electoral Saxon Official in Allstedt, to his cousin Christoph Meinhard, in Eisleleben, 5 May 1525," in *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents,* 238.

[74] "The Frankenhausen Council to Dr. Dietrich von Werther, Melchior von Kutzleben, and Fritz Steiger, Ducal Saxon Officials in Sangerhausen and Sachsenburg, 5 September 1527," in *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents,* 239.

[75] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 165; Müntzer, *Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer,* 159.

[76] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 166; Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation,* 244; Goertz, *Thomas Müntzer,* 184; Müntzer, *Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer,* 160.

[77] "Count Phillip von Solms's report to his son Reinhard, 16 May 1525," in *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents,* 291; Müntzer, *Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer,* 161; Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 168.

[78] "Count Phillip," 291; "Johann Ruhl, Mansfeld Councilor, to Martin Luther, 21 and 26 May 1525," in *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents,* 292.

particular for leadership. As Scott concludes, the links between Müntzer's expectations and the peasants' demands were "fitful, fragile and fortuitous."[79] Peasants often followed more moderate leaders and programs despite Müntzer's frequent and repeated calls for a bloody revolution. The peasants were not seeking to bring about the last days but to ease their economic situation and secure evangelical preachers.

Alsace

The Alsatian peasants were exposed to more moderate reforming influences than the Thuringian peasants yet proclaimed their rebellion in 1525 to be for the "honor of God."[80] Many disturbances had occurred in the Upper Rhine region before 1525, including a *Bundshuch* conspiracy in 1517.[81] In the 1520s, disturbances occurred that combined secular complaints, religious demands, and anti-clericalism. A particular problem faced by the peasants was perpetual indebtedness caused by poor harvests.[82] Peasants began to gather in the beginning of April 1525, and on 15 April elected Erasmus Gerber, an "allegedly illiterate peasant" from Molsheim as leader.[83] The peasants attacked monasteries and convents and demanded Gospel preaching and the implementation of the Twelve Articles from their lords.[84] By May, Gerber's band, based at Altorf had assumed the leadership of several bands active throughout Alsace.[85]

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[79] Scott, *Thomas Müntzer,* 182.
[80] "Gerber's Proclamation of 29 April, 1525," 244.
[81] Scribner and Scott, "Introduction," 44.
[82] Francis Rupp, "The Social and Economic Prehistory of the Peasant War in Lower Alsace," in *The German Peasants' War of 1525: New Viewpoints,* 58-62.
[83] Scribner and Scott, "Introduction," 45.
[84] Scribner and Scott, "Introduction," 44.
[85] Ibid., 45.

Although the peasants were unable to obtain the support of Alsatian towns the bands did include urban recruits, especially gardeners and agricultural workers living in towns.[86]

Leading the Reformation in Strasbourg, the largest city in Alsace, were the preachers Matthias Zell, Wolfgang Capito and Martin Bucer. These Reformers did not advocate violent rebellion. They gave no active support to the disaffected peasants, as they believed that injustice was a natural part of God's creation and so could only be changed by God, not man. As Miriam Usher Chrisman states, they held that "man's task, therefore, was not to concern himself with the immediate economic, social, political or social world, which was at best ephemeral."[87] The peasants ignored this aspect of the Reformers' thought and hoped for their support in implementing concrete change. However, when the preachers ordered them to disband, the peasants defied the appeals and persisted in justifying their revolt through Christian ideals, proclaiming that they would "stand by one another in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, to the praise and honor of God, to confirm his word."[88] The rebels claimed religious justification, ignored the Reformers and interpreted the Reformation in a way favourable to themselves.

The Reformers had been active in Alsace for four years before the rebellion. Zell, who enjoyed a considerable following, became the first Reformer to preach in Strasbourg in 1521, and to marry and administer communion in both kinds.[89] He and his colleagues attacked institutions of the Church, such as the usefulness of works for salvation and the

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[86] Ibid.

[87] Miriam Usher Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform: A Study in the Process of Change* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 153-154.

[88] "Gerber's Proclamation of 29 April 1525," 244.

[89] Williams, *The Radical Reformation,* 364-5; Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform,* 100; Greschat, *Martin Bucer,* 60.

cult of the saints.[90] They emphasized the importance of the Gospel to salvation and Bucer in particular held that the most important Christian law was to love one's neighbour.[91] He believed that the teachings and pastoral activity of the Christian Church should be based on the Bible and that it should focus its care on the common man.[92]

Bucer demonstrated the inflammatory nature of his preaching in the Alsatian town of Wissemburg in 1523, where he told his listeners, "that with you rests the judgment to decide who are true and who are false, and also the power to remove the false and install the truthful."[93] He encouraged the commoners to judge and overthrow religious and political authorities.[94] Nonetheless, he refused to participate in the attacks on monasteries that his preaching apparently caused.[95] Bucer did not support commoner violence in Strasbourg either. In fact, in his first sermon to the parishioners of St-Aurelian he preached "the faith that enables and readies one to endure suffering and injustice."[96] He believed in the hierarchical order of society, and he held that the cooperation of the magistrates was essential for the creation of a Christian society.

Peasants as well as urban residents listened to these preachers. Peasants frequently traveled to Strasbourg to listen to the sermons.[97] They went to the city on weekly market days and had close ties to members of Strasbourg's Gardener's Guild.[98] In fact, the peasants believed with the preachers that the Gospel was a practical guide to Christian

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[90] Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform,* 119, 121; Martin Greschat, *Martin Bucer: A Reformer and his Times*, trans. Stephen E. Buckwalter (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press: 2004), 62.
[91] Greschat, *Martin Bucer,* 56-57; Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform*, 122, 124.
[92] Ibid., 53-54.
[93] Blickle, *Communal Reformation,* 124.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Greschat, *Martin Bucer,* 44.
[96] Ibid., 60.
[97] Scott, "Common People," 189.
[98] Greschat, *Martin Bucer,* 65.

living.[99] The peasants thought themselves as "standing on God's side" and assumed that Strasbourg was their ally.[100]

By February 1524, Strasbourg craftsmen were preaching in the villages.[101] This preaching intensified in the winter of 1524-25, and a ban by Strasbourg city council on 25 February 1525 was ineffectual.[102] The most radical of these preachers was Clement Ziegler, a member of the gardeners' guild. He was neither wealthy nor well-educated, yet in his pamphlets Ziegler demonstrated a good knowledge of the Bible and wrote with "forceful prose."[103] Preaching to agricultural workers, he emphasized the importance of the Spirit and condemned tithes and feudal obligations because they were not mentioned in Scripture. He called for the extermination of "all plants that my divine father hasn't planted."[104] Ziegler pointed out that Jesus was the friend of the poor.[105] The lay preacher also attacked the cult of the saints, the veneration of idols, the authority of the Pope and church councils, infant baptism and church laws. He envisioned a peaceful brotherly community in which goods were shared.[106]

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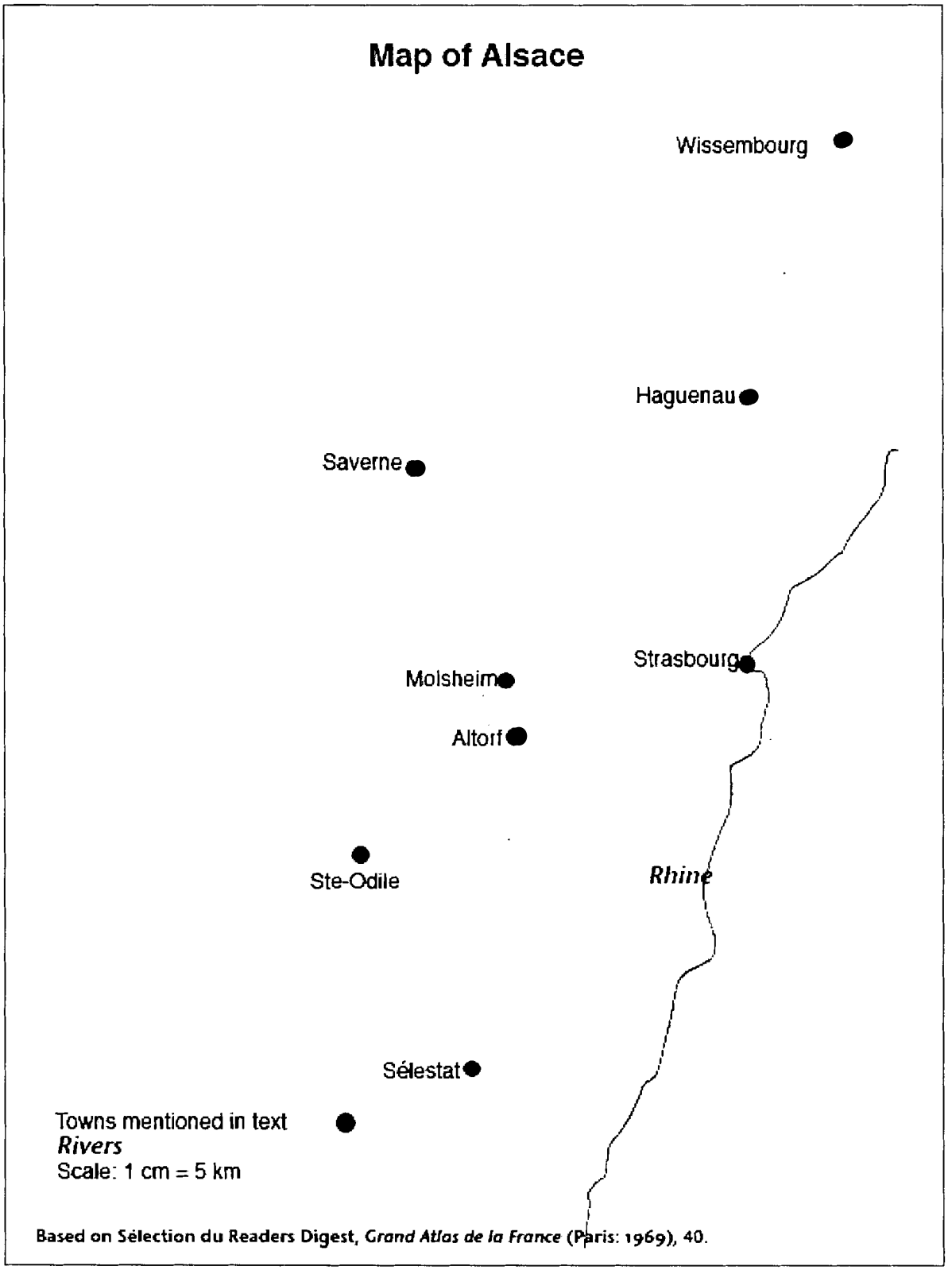
[99] Scott, "The Common People," 189.
[100] Greschat, *Martin Bucer,* 65.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Jean-Michel Boehler, "Clément Ziegler, un prédicateur populaire au pied du Mont Sainte-Odile," in *La Guerre des Paysans, 1525.* ed. Alphonse Wollbrett (Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Saverne et Environs, 1975), 15; Chrisman, *Conflicting Visions of Reform,* 174-175.
[104] Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform,* 146; Boehler, "Clément Ziegler," 15, 17; Williams, *The Radical Reformation,* 369.
[105] Heumann, *La Guerre des Paysans*, 26; Williams, *The Radical Reformation,* 368.
[106] Boehler, "Clément Ziegler," 17.



Map 2: The Alsatian Revolt

The peasants who lived at the foot of Mont-Sainte-Odile were growing discontented in the winter of 1525. In January 1525, the magistrates of the region had heard rumours of a new *Bundschuh* spread by evangelical preachers. Ziegler started preaching in the area in February 1525.[107] On 2 April, the magistrates used armed force to break up a gathering of peasants listening to Ziegler.[108] He then moved on to the valley of Bruche, where people had been listening to the preacher Andreas Preulin since the beginning of 1525.[109] The peasant leaders, including Gerber, dismissed Preulin's teachings and preferred Ziegler as their spokesman.[110] Although the peasant leaders wanted to put his preaching into practice, Ziegler himself seemed less involved in Gerber's movement, and quickly disappeared from the records, probably returning to Strasbourg.[111] He refused to participate in the violent phase of the movement, most likely believing that the peasants should pursue their demands through peaceful assemblies.[112] Nonetheless, Ziegler's message remained influential, and it is ironic that the Alsatian rebels adopted the slogan "For the Gospel, Christ and Clement Ziegler."[113]

Gerber began to organize an armed peasant band in early April, and initial demands focused on providing evangelical preaching in the countryside. The peasants also demanded the implementation of the Twelve Articles and the resolution of local grievances. According to Blickle, almost all the local and regional grievances in Alsace mentioned the Reformation and also addressed the problems of lordship, economics and

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[107] Ibid., 16.

[108] Williams, *The Radical Reformation,* 369; Boehler, "Clément Ziegler," 16.

[109] Boehler, "Clément Ziegler," 17.

[110] Scribner and Scott, "Introduction," 45.

[111] Boehler, "Clément Ziegler," 17. Chrisman states that the Strasbourg Town Council invoked his oath to compel him to return. Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform,* 146.

[112] Boehler, "Clément Ziegler," 17; Williams, *The Radical Reformation,* 369.

[113] Williams, *The Radical Reformation,* 369; Heumann, *La Guerre des Paysans*, 91.

communal constitutions.[114] On 12 April, Gerber appealed to the council of Strasbourg, asking for help for the Christian preachers in the countryside.[115] Two days later, two emissaries from Strasbourg met with the peasants and asked the peasants belonging to Strasbourg's villages to return home, as the city council had already addressed their complaints by replacing inadequate priests. The peasants refused and claimed that they were only gathered to discuss the Gospel.[116] They also invited Strasbourg's preachers to meet with them, supposedly to help spread the Gospel in the countryside.[117] On 17 April, Capito, Zell, and Bucer replied to Gerber's appeal. They promised the Strasbourg city council that they would instruct the peasants with "what the word of God allows" and would urge them to "desist from such riotous assemblies."[118] On 18 April, the Reformers met the peasants, who greeted them enthusiastically.[119] The peasants invited the Reformers to debate publicly with two captured priests. However, the Reformers declined, for Capito told the peasants that the Word of God commands obedience and love even of enemies. Instead, the Reformers accused the peasant assembly of violent agitation in defiance of God's Word.[120]

In their address to the peasants, the preachers claimed to have endangered themselves to "help lighten the burdens upon the common man."[121] They denied that the Gospel authorized the peasants' demands, as the peasants desired "the temporal more than the eternal, which is also contrary to the Gospel. For to be Christian we must

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[114] Blickle, *Communal Reformation,* 14, 119.
[115] Heumann, *La Guerre des Paysans,* 30.
[116] Ibid., 28.
[117] Ibid., 30.
[118] Greschat, *Martin Bucer,* 66.
[119] Heumann, *La Guerre des Paysans,* 31.
[120] Ibid.
[121] "Strasbourg Preacher's Reply," in *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents,* 109.

disavow our [worldly] selves. How can we then at the same time seek our ends by rebellion?"[122] The reformers sarcastically pointed out that the Scriptures do not state "that the honor of God and the common weal are advanced by the commons killing an unjust overlord."[123] The peasants were cautioned against abusing the Gospel: "if you seek your own ends under the pretext of the Gospel, or if you should ever seek to advance your cause against [the will of] God, God will punish it and not allow it to triumph."[124] Just as Ziegler had, the Strasbourg clerics told the peasants that God and the Gospel did not support their rebellion. They asked peasants to disband and elect delegates to negotiate.[125] The peasants were stunned by this condemnation from the Reformers and protested vociferously.[126]

Despite this setback, the peasants continued to maintain a Christian element in the rebellion. With the exception of a few people from Strasbourg, the peasants remained loyal to Gerber.[127] The condemnation of the preachers did not sway the peasants from their belief that God was on their side. A proclamation by Gerber on 29 April asserted that the peasants assembled "to the praise and honor of God, to confirm his Word and to help the poor" who had been badly served by the clergy.[128] On 16 May, the band of Stephanfeld asserted that they were simply trying to implement the teaching of the Gospel, which they had learned from Strasbourg. They pleaded for help from Strasbourg against the army of the Duke Anthony of Lorraine, which had come to put down the

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[122] Ibid., 110.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Heumann, *La Guerre des Paysans,* 31.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid., 32.
[128] "Gerber's Proclamation of 29 April 1525," 244.

rebellion.[129] The rebellion continued, and the soldiers of Duke Anthony massacred the Altorf band at Saverne on 16-17 May. Among the dead were many parish priests.[130] In Ensisheim further up the Rhine, fourteen of seventy rebels executed by the Upper Austrian government were priests.[131] The presence of the priests suggests that they shared their parishioners' defiance of the Reformer's appeals, and emphasizes that the peasants continued to believe that their rebellion was religiously sanctioned.

The Alsatian rebels claimed to be evangelical and insisted on Gospel preaching in their parishes. Yet the peasants retained their independence and defied the preachers who offered an interpretation of the Gospel that denied the legitimacy of their acts. The peasants and the priests who accompanied them believed to the end of the revolt that they were acting in God's honour. They did not let their interpretation of the Reformation succumb to the interpretation of prominent preachers.

Conclusion

From Thomas Müntzer's accusation that the peasants were too concerned with their own interests and Clement Ziegler's repudiation of peasant violence to Oberman's assertion that the principles of Christian liberty were pushed aside for "a war of interests," it has been assumed that there were two phases to the peasant revolt.[132] In the first, the Reformers spread ideas of Christian equality and justice. In the second, peasants revolted out of self-interest. While Reformers generally deplored the temporal concerns of the peasants, the peasants still believed in the religious justification of their actions

[129] Heumann, *La Guerre des Paysans,* 135.
[130] Ibid., 190.
[131] Scott, "People's Religions," 190.
[132] "Johann Ruhl, Mansfeld Councilor, to Martin Luther, 21 and 26 May 1525," in *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents,* 291; Oberman "The Gospel of Social Unrest," 48.

until the end of the rebellion. They were not turning away from Christ; rather, they were turning away from the Reformers' concept of Christ and following a Christianity of their choice. The peasants' ability to make their own religion choices, from a variety of religious options, must be considered in studies of the religious influence of the German Peasants' War.

Chapter 2: Kett's Rebellion

On 27 August 1549, three thousand East Anglian peasants died in a short battle against a royal army in Dussindale, outside of Norwich. The peasants had gathered earlier in the summer on nearby Mousehold Heath, hoping that the social, economic and religious reforms promised by the government of the Duke of Somerset would lead to a reform of local government of East Anglia. Professing to share the evangelical disposition of Somerset's government, the peasants presented themselves as model evangelicals, and saw themselves as partners of the reformers.[133] However, negotiations with the government broke down and the apparently evangelical peasants "forsooke the good and mighty God" and marched to their doom in Dussindale.[134] The peasants chose to make their stand in Dussindale because of their faith in a folk prophecy predicting a battle with the nobles.

Ever since F.W. Russell wrote the first modern history of Kett's Rebellion in 1859, historians have been puzzled by the religious allegiances of the peasants on Mousehold Heath.[135] Some, including most recently Diarmaid MacCulloch, have argued

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[133] In this chapter the term 'evangelical' will be used to refer to people who supported the Gospel-based reform movement. The term 'protestant' was not used in England until the mid-1550s and so is anachronistic. See Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant* (Harmondsworth: Penguin,1999), 2-4.

[134] Alexander Neville, *Norfolke Furies and their foyle*, trans. Richard Woods (London, Augustine Matthews for Edmund Casson, 1623), I4v. Early English Books Online, http://eebo.chadwyck.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/search/full_rec?SOURCE=pgimages.cfg&ACTION=ByID&ID=V15206 (accessed 5 February 2005).

[135] Rev. Frederick William Russell, *Kett's Rebellion in Norfolk* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1859).

that the protest was pro-evangelical.[136] However, discussions of their religious beliefs have overlooked the faith that the peasants, or camp-men, had in the Dussindale prophecies. Sixteenth-century Christians, both peasants and nobles, believed that folk prophecies like the ones concerning Dussindale were divinely inspired and based vital strategic decisions on them. They cannot be dismissed in any consideration of peasant religious beliefs. Nor does the evidence indicate that the peasants were exclusively evangelical or traditionalist.[137]

The question of the peasants' religious allegiances is a crucial one, for while political and economic discontent drove their protest on Mousehold Heath, their religious practices were an integral part of their behaviour. It was the rhetoric of the commonwealth group in the government of Edward VI, who believed that economic and social reforms must accompany the introduction of an evangelical Christianity, that persuaded the peasants to gather in camps to pursue their grievances. The camp-men sought the cooperation of both religious reformers and traditionalists, and some of them engaged in both evangelical and traditionalist religious practices. The most important consequences derived from the fact that the camp-men placed their trust in and made significant decisions based on folk-prophecies. Their behaviour cannot be easily labeled traditionalist, evangelical, or un-Christian. They practised a form of religion that would have pleased neither the evangelical reformers nor traditionalist bishops. It is only by understanding the peasants' religion for what it was that the religious character of the Rebellion, and hence the Rebellion itself, can be understood.

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[136] Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 5th ed. (New York: Pearson/Longman: 2004), 86; Julian Cornwall, *Revolt of the Peasantry, 1549* (London; Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1977), 149.

[137] The term "traditionalist" will be used to describe those who preferred the traditional, pre-1530s style of worship. As this preference did not necessarily mean opposition to the Act of Supremacy, traditionalist is preferred to Catholic.

Kett's Rebellion was one of many disturbances throughout England in the summer of 1549.[138] Some of the disturbances in the west and north of England appear to have been traditionalist protests against the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer. However, other disturbances, of which Kett's Rebellion in Norfolk was the bloodiest and thus most well known, appear to have been inspired by the politically, economically and religiously reformist mood that came from Somerset's government itself. Throughout eastern and central England the peasants gathered in camps, aiming to work with Somerset to reform the problems in local and national government.[139] As Somerset's government tied the rhetoric of evangelicalism and economic reforms together, the camp-men of East Anglia emphasized their evangelical sympathies. An examination of the practices that demonstrate evangelical belief, as well as those which suggest traditional beliefs and the peasants' faith in prophecies, will indicate that it is too simplistic to label the peasants as evangelical, as both Julian Cornwall and Diarmaid MacCulloch do.[140]

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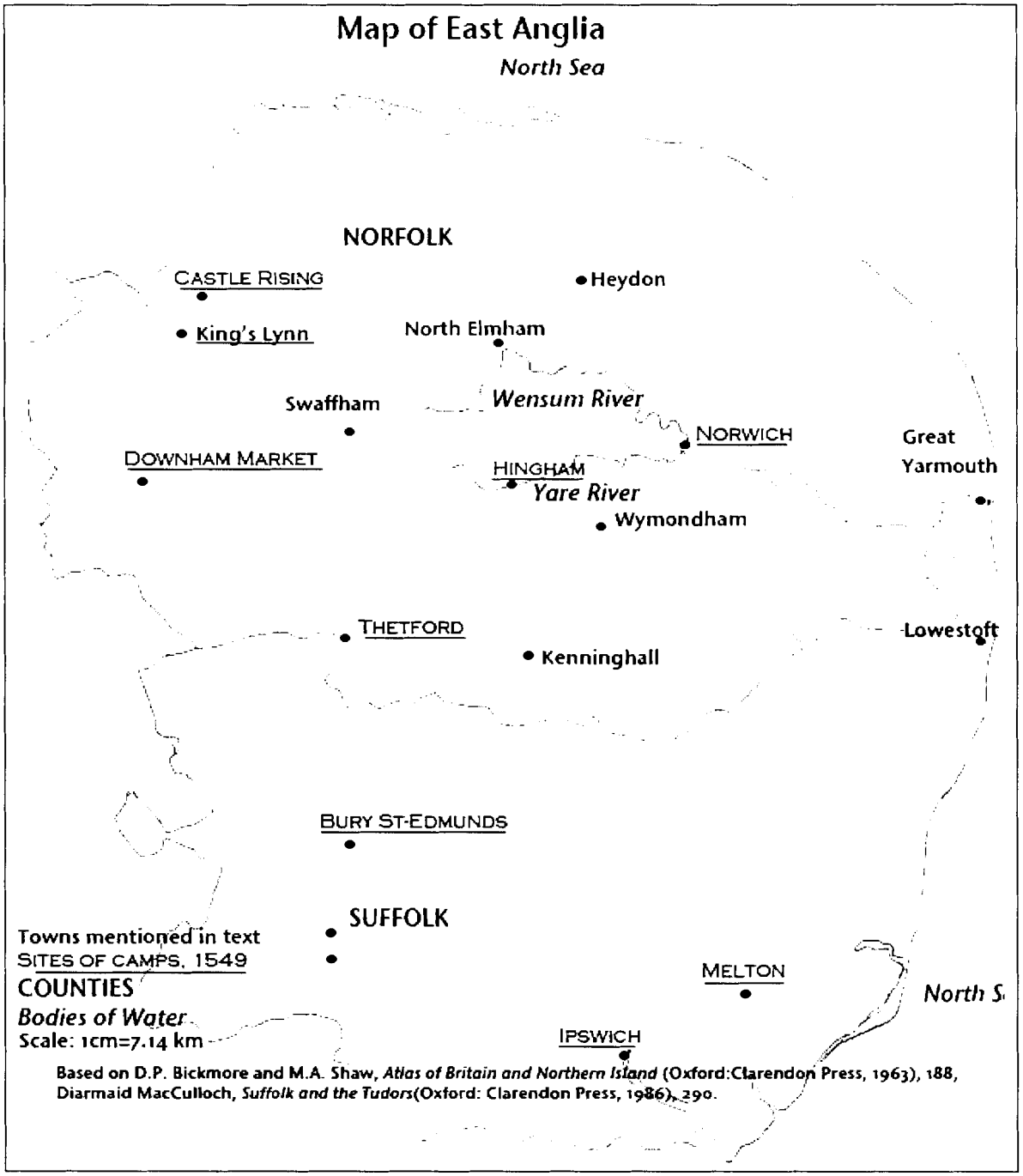
[138] Diarmaid MacCulloch, "Kett's Rebellion in Context," *Past and Present* 84 (1979): 36-59, 50; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and Religion in an English County 1500-1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 289.

[139] MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant*, 126.

[140] Cornwall, *Revolt of the Peasantry,* 149; Diarmaid MacCulloch, "A Reformation in the Balance: Power Struggles in the Diocese of Norwich, 1533-1553," in *Counties and Communities: Essays on East Anglian Communities*, 97-114, ed. Carole Rawcliffe, Roger Virgoe and Richard Wilson (Norwich: Centre for East Anglian Studies, University of East Anglia, 1996), 108; MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant,* 121.



Map 3: East Anglia

The protests had their origin in the sense of optimism created by the inauguration of the government of Edward VI, under the regency of the Duke of Somerset, in 1547.[141]

[141] MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant*, 126.

In particular, the commonwealth program of intellectuals and clerics associated with the government advocated establishing an evangelical form of worship in England, and concomitant social and economic reforms to restore Christian justice and fairness throughout the realm. The commonwealth thinkers such as John Hales and Hugh Latimer sympathized with the burdens of the commoners, and Protector Somerset himself had a reputation as a friend of the poor.[142] When a commission was established in 1548 to address the problem of the enclosure of the common lands, the peasants held great hopes for reform. However, the Commission did not have an immediate impact and by the summer of 1549 peasant throughout England were gathering in camps in an attempt to further the process.[143] The demands made by the camp-men were similar to those made in an anonymous manuscript addressed to Henry VIII and attributed to one of the commonwealth group, demonstrating the affinity of the protestors to the government reformers.[144]

In East Anglia, the commoners believed that they were aiding Somerset's government implement the reforms which had been blocked by the gentry and the lawyers who administered local government. Their demands, listed in the Twenty-Nine Articles, were aimed at restricting the gentry from encroaching on their farming, by preventing lords from using the common land, forbidding change in the rental status of lands, and restricting the keeping of doves and rabbits (as they destroyed crops) as well as cattle or sheep for profit to those who owned more than forty pounds a year in land. They demanded that clergy preach and teach, be appointed either by the lord or the

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[142] Stephen K. Land, *Kett's Rebellion: The Norfolk Rising of 1549* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977), 11; Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 76.

[143] MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant,* 126.

[144] Ibid., 123.

parishioners, and not become large landowners. Furthermore, the Justices of the Peace and other royal officials should respect the laws made on behalf of the poor.[145] As Bindoff observes, the demands leave a "strong impression of the desire to recapture a past world where everyone knew their place and function."[146] The East Anglian camp-men directed their anger against the local gentry while viewing the London government as their ally. In reality, the government stood behind their local gentry representatives and sought to disperse the camp-men, first by conciliation then by force.

The commotion in Norfolk started in the town of Wymondham on 6-8 July 1549, although it is possible that the rising had been planned and coordinated throughout East Anglia.[147] Wymondham held a festival celebrating the Translation of St. Thomas à Beckett on 7 July 1549, and this attracted large crowds. Out of this gathering grew a movement which started to tear down local enclosure fences. Robert Kett became the leader of the rebellion when he offered to lead the protestors in tearing down his own fences and those of his neighbour, John Flowerdew.[148] A lawyer, Flowerdew was locally despised for seizing the lead of Wymondham Abbey, despite the agreement made by Kett and the people of Wymondham with the government of Henry VIII to retain the Abbey intact.[149]

In 1549 Robert Kett was fifty-seven years old and a landowner who ranked not far below gentry status. He was known as a tanner, although Land suggests that he himself

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[145] "Kett's Demands being in Rebellion," in Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 36-39.

[146] Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 80; S.T. Bindoff, *Kett's Rebellion* (London: The Historical Association, 1968), 9, 12.

[147] Raphael Holinshed, *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, vol.3 (New York: AMS Press, 1965), 963; MacCulloch, "Kett's Rebellion in Context," 40.

[148] Land, *Kett's Rebellion: The Norfolk Rising of 1549*, 23.

[149] Ibid., 22-23.

was not a tanner but held the tanning rights in Wymondham.[150] The Kett family had owned land in Wymondham since the early thirteenth century.[151] Although Kett's interests as a landowner conflicted with those of the protestors, he agreed to lead them and it was likely he who had the idea of marching on Norwich.[152] The protestors faced little opposition from local gentry. The central figure of authority in Norfolk, the Duke of Norfolk, had been eliminated when Thomas Howard, Third Duke of Norfolk was imprisoned for treason in 1547, and in July 1549 it appears that many of the remaining gentry were in London at the time of the rebellion.[153] Those gentry who did try to disperse the rebels, either with threats or appeasement, were brushed aside; one, Sir Roger Wodehouse, was actually captured by the protestors.[154]

Norwich was Norfolk's county seat and England's second largest city. The protestors arrived on 9 July, established a camp on Mousehold Heath, overlooking Norwich on 12 July and set about governing East Anglia.[155] They established a governing council, which included Kett, senior town councillors from Norwich and representatives from Norfolk's subdivisions, called hundreds. Two men each from twenty-four of Norfolk's thirty-three hundreds, as well as one representative from Suffolk, signed the Twenty-Nine Articles which were sent to London.[156] The leaders of the camp at Norwich, and other camps throughout East Anglia, were tradesmen and yeomen, men "just outside

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[150] Bindoff, *Kett's Rebellion*, 13; Cornwall, *Revolt of the Peasantry,* 139; Land, *Kett's Rebellion: The Norfolk Rising of 1549,* 23.
[151] Land, *Kett's Rebellion: The Norfolk Rising of 1549,* 43.
[152] Ibid., 43.
[153] MacCulloch, "Kett's Rebellion in Context," 39, 40, 53.
[154] Neville, *Norfolke Furies,* C1r.
[155] Holinshed, *Chronicles,* 965; Nicholas Sotherton, *The Commoyson in Norfolk*, ed. Susan Yaxley (Stibbard, Norfolk: The Larks Press, 1987), 4-6; Neville, *Norfolke Furies*, C1r.
[156] Land, *Kett's Rebellion: The Norfolk Rising of 1549,* 55.

the orbit of the governing classes in town and countryside."[157] While the leaders were substantial men, the camp evidently included many poorer peasants, who were summoned from the surrounding regions by bells and beacons.[158] Many villages, such as Heydon and North Elmham, sent delegations whose expenses were recorded in their parish account books. The urban poor of Norwich joined them. Norwich's failure to resist the protestors is perhaps owing to the fact that 35 percent of their citizens were too poor to pay the smallest tax assessment.[159]

The protestors sent their Twenty-Nine Articles to Somerset, who started negotiations with them by agreeing with their demands and offering pardons for their rebellion. Meanwhile, the camp-men imprisoned local gentry, set up a court, and issued commissions in the King's name. This attempt at creating legitimacy was thwarted on 21 July, when a royal herald sent from the government in London ordered the peasants to disperse, and declared them traitors when they refused to do so.[160] The following day the protest turned into armed conflict when the camp-men stormed Norwich.[161] A royal army under the Marquess of Northampton recaptured the city on 30 July, but was forced to retreat on 1 August by a rebel counter-attack.[162] The rebels held Norwich until 24 August, when a more powerful royal army under the Earl of Warwick recaptured the city.[163] The rebellion ended on 27 August, when the rebels abandoned Mousehold Heath and marched

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[157] Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 70, 79; MacCulloch, "Kett's Rebellion in Context," 46.
[158] Russell, *Kett's Rebellion in Norfolk,* 37.
[159] Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 81.
[160] Holinshed, *Chronicles,* 969; Sotherton, *The Commoyson in Norfolk*, 14-15; Neville, *Norfolke Furies,* E1v-E1r.
[161] Holinshed, *Chronicles,* 970; Sotherton, *The Commoyson in Norfolk,* 15-19; Neville, *Norfolke Furies,* E3r-E4v.
[162] Holinshed, *Chronicles,* 972-975; Sotherton, *The Commoyson in Norfolk,* 22-28; Neville, *Norfolke Furies,* F3r-G3r.
[163] Holinshed, *Chronicles,* 977-981; Sotherton, *The Commoyson in Norfolk,* 32-39; Neville, *Norfolke Furies* H1v-I4r.

to Dussindale where they were defeated by Warwick's army.[164] Royal forces captured Kett, tried him in London for treason and hanged him on 7 December 1549.[165]

Kett's Rebellion became the subject of two sixteenth-century books: *The Commoyson in Norfolk, 1549*, printed around 1559, by Nicholas Sotherton, and *De furoribus Norfolciensium Ketto duce,* by Alexander Neville, printed in 1575, and translated by Richard Woods with the title *Norfolke Furies*. Nicholas Sotherton belonged to a wealthy Norwich family, and his brother Leonard would become Mayor of Norwich. His account, possibly based on first hand experience, is unsurprisingly unsympathetic to the peasants. MacCulloch argues that it was intended to defend the Norwich élites against accusations that they cooperated with the rebels.[166] Alexander Neville was a secretary of Matthew Parker, an evangelical clergyman and future Archbishop of Canterbury (1559-1575) who preached to the rebels, and Neville's book, written some twenty-five years later, was probably based in large part on Parker's recollections.[167] Another major narrative account is in Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*, published in 1577. As the *Chronicles* is the work of numerous collaborators who drew upon a variety of sources, the identity of the author of the account of Kett's Rebellion is unknown.[168] Other important sources include the letters to the rebels written by Somerset and discovered by Ethan Shagan, and the *Journals of Edward VI.*[169]

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[164] Holinshed, *Chronicles,* 982-983; Sotherton, *The Commoyson in Norfolk,* 42-43; Neville, *Norfolke Furies* K1v-K3v.

[165] Holinshed, *Chronicles,* 984; Neville, *Norfolke Furies,* K4r.

[166] Bindoff, *Kett's Rebellion,* 24; Land, *Kett's Rebellion: The Norfolk Rising of 1549,* 74; MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, 300.

[167] Bindoff, *Kett's Rebellion,* 24; MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, 300.

[168] Annabel Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), viii.

[169] Ethan Shagan, "Protector Somerset and the 1549 Rebellions: New Sources and New Perspectives," *The English Historical Review* 114 (1999): 34-63; Edward VI, *Chronicle and Political Papers*, ed. W.K. Jordan (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1966).

The events of this commotion were inextricably linked to the religious changes taking place in England in 1549. Whitsunday, 9 June 1549 saw the introduction of the first English Book of Common Prayer.[170] The Prayer Book continued a series of religious reformations which moved English religious practice further away from the traditional Catholic religion heavily dependent on ritual, ceremony and sacred objects, and towards a Protestant faith centered on Scripture, sermons and a belief that salvation was obtained through faith in God alone.[171] This change in the theology and form of worship was accompanied by a populist rhetoric of economic and social reforms adopted by Somerset's government.[172] It was likely this talk of reform that caused the peasants of Norfolk, and others throughout England, to gather in the summer of 1549, hoping that Somerset's government would cooperate with them in their attempt to reform local government.

The religious turmoil of the period can be traced back to the 1530s, when King Henry VIII broke from the Roman Church and made himself head of the English Church. Henry VIII's reforms included dissolving all religious houses, placing increased importance on sermons and the education of the laity, extinguishing all candles in the church except on the altar and rood loft and removing all images that had received offerings. He also ordered the purchase of English Bibles by all parishes.[173] On Henry's death in 1547, he was succeeded by his son, the boy-king Edward VI, who was

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[170] Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 129; MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant*, 82.

[171] MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant*, 82; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 464-467.

[172] MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant*, 50.

[173] Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England: Holding their Peace* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 33; Ronald Hutton, "The Local Impact of the Tudor Reformations," in *The English Reformation Revisited*, ed. Christopher Haigh (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 116.

surrounded by an evangelical Council and devoutly evangelical himself. Reforms introduced by his government in 1547 banned the rosary, parish processions, and removed almost all images and candles from churches.[174] The government emphasized the new scriptural importance in worship by ordering parishes to paint biblical passages on church walls and to buy copies of the English Bible and Erasmus of Rotterdam's *Paraphrases.*[175] In June 1549, all parishes in England were required to conduct services according to the Prayer Book, which dramatically altered the Mass. Henceforth it would in celebrated in English rather than Latin.[176]

Reactions to these changes varied among the English people. Some parishes responded to the government's orders swiftly, others more slowly. The population included enthusiastic evangelicals in London and some port towns in contact with Protestant Europe. Yet in other places parishes were still buying the ritual furnishings into the late 1540s, even though they were soon to be banned, indicating that many parishioners were not anticipating the changes that were to be introduced.[177] However, a clear idea of what ordinary people thought is difficult to obtain, for as Beat Kümin states, the government imposed change too fast for "any genuine grass-roots development" to be apparent.[178]

The religious practices of the peasants in Kett's Rebellion reflect a mix of beliefs. The rebellion itself started on the weekend of the Feast of the Translation of St. Thomas à Beckett, an important religious festival in Wymondham but one banned by the

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[174] Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath*, 18.
[175] Marsh, *Popular Religion,* 57.
[176] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 464.
[177] Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 79.
[178] Beat A. Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish, c.1400-1560* (Brookfield, VT: Scolar Press, 1996), 217.

evangelical government.[179] When Kett established his camp on Mousehold Heath, he included Robert Watson, a well-known Norwich evangelical, in his governing council, and requested that Thomas Coniers, a local clergyman, say morning and evening prayers in the camp, according to the new Prayer Book.[180] The rebel grievances included several demands for better pastoral care often associated with the evangelical movement. However, Kett also visited the conservative Bishop William Rugge of Norwich (1536-1550) and received support from local traditionalist gentry.[181] In fact, Somerset himself suspected that traditionalist clergy might be behind the rebellion.[182] Furthermore, in an act clearly regarded by the chroniclers as a rejection of Christianity, the rebels put their faith in prophecies when they decided to march off to battle in Dussindale.[183]

Historians' interpretations of these events have varied. Cornwall asserts the evangelicalism of the rebels, while other writers such as Stephen Land and S.T. Bindoff limit themselves to claiming that there was little Catholic influence, and remain hesitant to ascribe firm evangelical beliefs to the rebels.[184] MacCulloch sees the commotion as an evangelical movement, saying that there was "a good deal of approval of the evangelical program," that "there is no question of the evangelical tone of the Mousehold camp," and that the leaders of the Norfolk and Suffolk camps were evangelicals.[185] He also

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[179] Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath*, 130; Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England,* 74.

[180]Neville, *Norfolke Furies,* C4r; Sotherton, *The Commoyson in Norfolk,* 7; Holinshed, *Chronicles,* 966.

[181] MacCulloch, "A Reformation in the Balance," 108.

[182] Letter of Somerset to "the kinges ma[jes]ties subiects assembled in Norfolk" in Shagan, "Protector Somerset and the 1549 Rebellions," 56.

[183]Neville, *Norfolke Furies,* K1r-K1v; Sotherton, *The Commoyson in Norfolk*, 41; Holinshed, *Chronicles,* 981.

[184] Land, *Kett's Rebellion: The Norfolk Rising of 1549,* 30; MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, 168, 308; MacCulloch, "Kett's Rebellion in Context," 57; Bindoff, *Kett's Rebellion,* 11-12; Cornwall, *Revolt of the Peasantry*, 149.

[185] MacCulloch, "A Reformation in the Balance," 108; Flectcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 86-87; MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant,* 121.

acknowledges that there seems to have been no hostility to the traditionalist church.[186] Eamon Duffy, on the other hand, emphasizes traditionalist aspects of the revolt.[187]

Evidence exists of both evangelical and traditionalist sympathies among the rebels. The invitation to the prominent evangelical Robert Watson to serve on the rebel council, the Prayer Book services held by the rebels and the willingness to listen to preachers like Matthew Parker, suggest the rebels' adoption of officially sanctioned evangelicalism as an acceptable form of worship. The rebels realized that they would be more likely to succeed in gaining the government's sympathy if they adopted the government's reforming rhetoric. As several scholars point out, the reformist circle around Somerset linked religious, economic and social reform as part of the commonwealth movement. The government official John Hales, for example, believed that to appease God's anger it was necessary "to follow the teachings of the Gospel and care for the poor."[188] The rebels used this link in an attempt to gain the cooperation of the government and their demands were similar to the commonwealth texts.[189] The adoption of these ideas by the camp-men earned them more sympathy from Somerset, and, according to MacCulloch, "here were evangelicals arguing with each other in evangelical terms."[190]

The association of the rebels with evangelicals should be examined while keeping in mind the political advantages of maintaining an evangelical attitude in their camp. On 12 July, when Kett established his camp on Mousehold Heath, three prominent Norwich

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[186] MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, 345.

[187] Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath,* 130

[188] M. I. Bush, *The Government Policy of Protector Somerset* (London: Edward Arnold, 1975), 61.

[189] Shagan, "Protector Somerset and the 1549 Rebellions," 41-42; Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 1997), 79; Bush, *The Government Policy of Protector Somerset,* 40; MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant*, 120.

[190] MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant*, 121; Bush, *The Government Policy of Protector Somerset,* 87.

citizens, Mayor Thomas Cod, Alderman Thomas Aldridge and Robert Watson, sat on the peasants' governing council.[191] It remains unclear whether their participation was coerced or voluntary. Watson was a popular local lay preacher, who had received wide support for his attack on the deeply unpopular Bishop Rugge in 1539.[192] He was a *protégé* of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, and had received a prebendal stall in the Norwich cathedral a few weeks before the commotion started.[193] He would later become Cranmer's steward. Under Queen Mary he was imprisoned and interrogated but freed through the intervention of John Barret, a Norwich priest who also preached to the rebels.[194] While Watson was one of the protest's leaders during the initial weeks of the camp, the rebels imprisoned him along with Cod and Aldrich when they took Norwich by force on 22 July.[195] Once the rebels' initial policy of political conciliation failed, so too did their respect for Watson's religious authority.

Further meetings between evangelicals and the camp-men came with the preaching of Matthew Parker to the rebels on 13 July.[196] Parker was born in Norwich, where his brother would later become Mayor. In 1549, Parker was Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, a popular preacher and a moderate reformer who was a friend of the prominent reformist Bishop of Worchester, Hugh Latimer. His sermon, as related by Neville, focused on the commotion. His message was political rather than religious: he urged the rebels not to be gluttonous, to refrain from unnecessary violence,

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[191] Sotherton, *The Commoyson in Norfolk,* 7; Neville, *Norfolke Furies,* C2r.

[192] Elaine M. Sheppard, "The Reformation and the Citizens of Norwich," *Norfolk Archaeology* 38 (1981): 44-58, 49; Edward Irving Carlyle, "Robert Watson," in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Leslie Spencer and Sidney Lee, vol. XX (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1963), 940.

[193] MacCulloch, "A Reformation in the Balance," 108.

[194] Carlyle, "Robert Watson," 940.

[195] Neville, *Norfolke Furies*, F1v; Sotherton, *The Commoyson in Norfolk*, 19.

[196] Land, *Kett's Rebellion: The Norfolk Rising of 1549,* 37.

to trust the King and his messengers, and to desist from their revolt.[197] Biblical or other religious references are absent in Neville's recounting of Parker's sermon, likely based on Parker's own memory or notes. Parker did not thoroughly castigate his listeners for their disobedience, nor did he preach that God's will was that they obey their masters, no matter how evil. Accounts written after the rebellion tended to downplay any cooperation with the camp-men, but the absence of any condemnation of their program even in the sanitized version of Parker's recollections suggests that his actual message may have been in keeping with the conciliatory tone found in Somerset's letters to the protestors.[198] Parker and other evangelical preachers acted as a means of communication between the camp-men and the government.

The camp men listened "attentively and willingly" to Parker' sermon, but one heckler accused him of being a "hireling doctor" who was "waged by the gentleman."[199] At this, the crowd began to threaten the preacher, and he escaped only when Coniers had his accompanying choristers sing the *Te Deum*. The singing distracted the crowd long enough for Parker to escape, although he later realized that the party on the platform with him, possibly including Kett, backed him and would not have allowed him to be harmed.[200] It appears that the listeners interpreted Parker's sermon as being political in nature, and reacted accordingly; the hecklers' response was not directed at any religious content in Parker's sermon, either evangelical or traditional. The support of the people on the platform suggests different positions in the rebel camp. The leaders understood that they were engaged in a dialogue with the government, in which both religious and social

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[197] *Norfolke Furies,* C4r-C4v.
[198] Shagan, "Protector Somerset and the 1549 Rebellions," 53-63.
[199] Neville, *Norfolke Furies*, C4r.
[200] Ibid.

concerns were intertwined. This distinction might have been lost on their followers, who may have been more motivated by anger at the gentry than the possibility of cooperation with Somerset.

Although the political advantages of an evangelical attitude need to be taken into account, it is evident that the protestors were somewhat genuine in their pro-evangelical attitude. While the evidence is too uneven to suggest a complete and enthusiastic acceptance of the evangelical reforms, it is also clear that the camp-men were not protesting the elimination of traditionalist practices. Kett did after all name his son Loye after the evangelically minded Prior of Wymondham, and the men of North Elmham thought to bring two English psalm-books with them to Mousehold Heath.[201]

For all their evangelical sympathies, the rebels preserved traditional practices. The rising started in Wymondham at the feast celebrating the Translation of St. Thomas à Becket on 7 July.[202] In 1536, Henry VIII banned all religious festivals during the harvest season, 1 July to 29 September. He particularly focused on the cult of St. Thomas à Beckett because of its anti-royal associations.[203] Some East Anglians obeyed the ban. In one Suffolk parish the parishioners defied the priest and refused to celebrate the festival. However the parishioners at Wymondham insisted on celebrating the feast until 1549.[204] The insistence of the inhabitants of Wymondham on continuing to celebrate a cult that had been banned for thirteen years indicates that their sympathies were not wholly with the evangelical cause.

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[201] Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions,* 85-86.
[202] Holinshed, *Chronicles,* 963.
[203] Hutton, *Merry England,* 74.
[204] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 413.

Other evidence exists of traditional influence in the rebellion. In his letter to the Norfolk peasants, Somerset suspected that they were being manipulated by "naughtie papist priests that seeke to bringe in the olde abuses and bloodie laws."[205] Kett himself had personal ties to Wymondham Abbey, having disputed the seizure of the Abbey's lead by John Flowerdew.[206] Kett personally visited the traditionalist Bishop Rugge several times over the summer of 1549. Rugge also sent supplies to Mousehold Heath, providing support for the camp men. Moreover, the conservative politician Sir Richard Southwell gave government money to the rebels.[207] It is evident that the camp-men tried to secure political support from the traditionalists as well.

The men of Heydon, a small village about twenty kilometers northwest of Norwich, marched to Mousehold Heath carrying processional banners from their parish church, a traditional gesture that Somerset's regime had banned in 1547.[208] Duffy associates this gesture with the banner carried in the rebellion of traditionalists against evangelical reform in the north in 1536 and Hampshire in 1549.[209] MacCulloch denies that this indicates the parishioners' traditionalism, for "participants in the German Peasants' War of 1525 had similarly marched behind their parish banners, and no one has ever suggested that they had much sympathy for traditional religion."[210] Yet the nature of religious adherence in the sixteenth century did not preclude using traditionalist emblems in an effort to obtain evangelical preaching.

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[205] Shagan, "Protector Somerset and the 1549 Rebellions," 56.
[206] Bindoff, *Kett's Rebellion,* 10.
[207] Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 85; MacCulloch, "A Reformation in the Balance," 108.
[208] Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath*, 130.
[209] Ibid., 131.
[210] Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 85-86.

Folk practices, which can be firmly attributed neither to formal traditionalist nor to evangelical beliefs, also played a significant role in the commotion. In particular, a belief in prophecy influenced the rebels to make their last stand in Dussindale. As the second royal army under the Earl of Warwick approached Norwich, political negotiations finally broke down when a second royal herald visited Kett's camp on 24 August. Although Kett had wanted to meet with Warwick, his own followers prevented him from leaving the camp. On 27 August, driven out of Norwich and influenced by prophecies claiming that a battle would take place in Dussindale, the rebels burned their camp on Mousehold Heath and marched to Dussindale. According to Andy Wood, "Dussindale is a low, flat valley lying a couple of miles south of Mousehold Heath. Unlike Mousehold Heath, which was rugged and steep, Dussindale was perfect terrain for Warwick's cavalry."[211] It would have been obvious that the foot soldiers of the peasant army would be dangerously exposed to Warwick's cavalry.

Contemporary sources differ about why Kett's forces made this risky move. The *Journals of Edward VI* and a letter from the Duke of Somerset to the Imperial ambassador, as well as the journal of the Yorkshire priest Robert Parkyn, claim that the rebels abandoned Mousehold Heath because Warwick's army had blockaded their food supplies.[212] However, John Hornyold, an eyewitness who served in Warwick's army, "was astounded when he saw Kett withdraw to the 'open valley,'" and could not understand why the rebels had moved down into Dussindale.[213] As Barrett Beer points

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[211] Andy Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002), 70.

[212] Edward VI, *Chronicle and Political Papers*, 16; Russell, *Kett's Rebellion in Norfolk* , 214; A.G. Dickens, "Robert Parkyn's Narrative of the Reformation," *English Historical Review* 62 (1947): 71.

[213] Barrett L. Beer, *Riot and Rebellion: Popular Disorder in England during the Reign of Edward VI* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1982), 136.

out, Hornyold, as a member of Warwick's army, would have known if Kett's supplies had been cut off. The evidence for lack of supplies as a motive for the move comes from sources based in London, whereas eyewitnesses such as Hornyold and Sotherton do not mention any shortages in the rebel camp.[214] It seems that if the rebels lacked food and water, a better choice for them would have been to renew their attacks on Norwich itself, where they stood a better chance for success in street fighting than they did against cavalry in an open field. Given that eyewitnesses do not mention the problem of supplies and that the rebels would have realized that they would be dangerously exposed to cavalry in Dussindale, the prophecies still seem to be the most convincing explanation of the rebels' move.

The prophecies themselves explain why the rebels placed so much faith in them. Two forms of the prophecies exist, one reported by Sotherton, the other by Neville. According to Sotherton, the prophecies "spake of such assemblies and that in Dussens Dale should perish both greate and small in which them that after fell owt, but theyr construct was that there they should winned the battell of ther enemies and put them to flight."[215] According to Neville, the prophecy was that

> The country gnooffes Hob, Dick and Hick,
> With clubbes, and clouted shoon,
> Shall fill up Dussyndale:
> With slaughtered bodies soone.[216]

Although appearing ambiguous, the camp-men interpreted these prophecies as predicting a peasant victory over the nobles.

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[214] Another incident cited as a cause of the rebels' move was the evil omen of a snake that leapt onto the bosom of Kett's wife from a tree. This was understood to forebode doom. However, the omen does not explain the rebels' choice of such an unsuitable position as Dussindale. Neville, *Norfolke Furies*, K1r.

[215] Sotherton, *The Commoyson in Norfolk,* 41-42.

[216] Neville, *Norfolke Furies*, K1r.

The Dussindale prophecy was part of an older local tradition and not a creation of the summer of 1549. In the 1520s, a prophecy identified Mousehold Heath as a site of great events. In 1537, a woman named Elizabeth Wood was jailed in Norwich for saying, "And with clubbes and clouted shoone shall the deed be done, for we never had good world since this king reigned."[217] She was referring to the failure of a revolt by traditionalist clergy and sympathizers at Walshingham in 1537, who had hoped to reverse the dissolution of religious houses by King Henry VIII.[218] Another prophecy, circulating before 1540, suggested that a prince would land at Weybourne Hope and conquer England in a battle fought at Mousehold Heath.[219] Prophecies persisted after the failure of the 1549 uprising, for in 1552-1553 the Privy Council arrested at least five people for spreading prophecies.[220] It is not known whether these had any connection to the Dussindale prophecies.

The prophecies may have some possible connection to traditionalists opposed to the establishment of evangelicalism in England. In Sharon Jansen's study of prophecies in the 1530s, more than half the recorded incidents of prophesying involved traditionalist clergy.[221] Prophecy appealed to these clergy, who, suddenly deprived of power, reached for prophecy as a weapon of the marginalized. It is possible that the Dussindale prophecies descended from the traditionalist prophecies of the 1530s. As we have seen, one prophecy about "clubbes and clouted shoone" can be traced back to traditionalist sentiment in the 1530s.

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[217] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner, 1971), 478; Sharon Jansen, *Political Protest and Prophecy under Henry VIII* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1991), 44; Russell, *Kett's Rebellion in Norfolk,* 5.

[218] Russell, *Kett's Rebellion in Norfolk*, 4.

[219] Ibid., 6.

[220] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic,* 478.

[221] Jansen, *Political Protest.*

The figure of the prophet could be linked to folk practices common in the sixteenth century. The Dussindale prophecies may have aspects in common with phenomena such as soothsaying, divination and divinely inspired dreams as well as with the literary tradition of prophetic texts. Belief in "second sight", or the ability to have visions of the future, which often required interpretation, was recorded in the seventeenth century in Scotland, the Isle of Man, Wales and Holland.[222] In England, many people had dreams which were thought to be prophetic.[223] A visitation of the Norwich diocese in 1499 reported that one Marion Clerk claimed to be able to prophesy, visit heaven and "find hidden treasures." She could do this because of "powers granted her by God, Our Lady and the gracious fairies."[224] Despite MacCulloch's assertion that she "represents the outer edge of prophetic excitement sweeping much of Europe in these years," a belief in fairies and prophecies suggests that this woman was working from an older tradition of folk beliefs, rather than the late medieval apocalyptic tradition of prophecy.[225] It is possible that the Dussindale prophecies originated with a figure like Marion Clerk, who could have named God or the Virgin Mary as her source.[226] The peasants probably placed a great deal of trust in these prophecies because they believed that they had divine origins.

Both Protestants and Catholics recognized the value of prophecy and the possibility that individuals might be divinely inspired. While it was recognized that God

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[222] Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland ca 1695* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 1999), 180, 187.

[223] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic,* 152-53.

[224] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490-1700* (London: Penguin, 2004), 564.

[225] MacCulloch, *Reformation,* 565.

[226] See also Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 266. Thomas also records the case of a woman in Cornwall in 1648 who was supposedly taught to prophecy by fairies.

chooses to whom to reveal "hidden and future things," churches preferred their own clergy as intermediaries between man and God.[227] Sixteenth-century Protestant reformers acknowledged that prophecy might be the result of genuine supernatural intervention, though more likely originating with the devil than with God.[228] Therefore the Elizabethan government outlawed soothsaying as a diabolical influence in 1559, along with other folk practices such as "charm, sorcery, enchantments, invocation, circles, witchcraft."[229]

Kett's peasants likely believed that the Dussindale prophecies were divinely inspired, as all prophecies claimed to be. As Coote says, "the ultimate origin of political prophecies is God," who chooses a representative to convey his will.[230] The élites who wrote about Kett's rebellion, while accepting that the prophecies were supernatural in provenance, were convinced that they were the work of the devil rather than of the Christian God. Sotherton clearly places the rebels' belief in prophecy in opposition to Christianity, claiming that "instead of putting theyr trust in God they trustid uppon faynid prophecies which were fantastically devised."[231] For Sotherton, believing in these prophecies was an abandonment of God; at the same time, the mention of the feigned aspects of these prophecies suggests that Sotherton in general believed that prophecies could be true. Alexander Neville similarly explained:

> And surely as they forsooke the good and mighty God; so againe, being despised and rejected of him they gave themselves bondslaves to the Devil: who bewitching their minds with an old wives superstition brought to passe that being

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[227] C.Beaune, "Jean de Gand, prophète et bienheureux," in *Prophètes et Prophéties au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Presses de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure, 1998), 13.

[228] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic,* 151.

[229] Marsh, *Popular Religion,* 148.

[230] Lesley Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England* (Rochester, NY: York Medieval Press in association with Boydell Press, 2000), 41.

[231] Sotherton, *Commoyson in Norfolke*, 41.

> one intangled with the blind illusion of Soothsayers, they chose a certain valley, not far off, as appointed to this war by destiny.[232]

Both authors emphasized that to believe the prophecy was to reject the Christian God, being convinced that superstitions and soothsayers were incompatible with Christianity. The authorities agreed, for the indictment brought against Kett at his trial accused him of "not having God before his eyes," and of being "seduced by diabolical instigations."[233] The rebels would not have agreed with the description of their behaviour as anti-Christian; in fact, Neville records them as saying prayers before their last stand at Dussindale.[234] Both the peasants and their opponents believed the prophecies had a religious aspect. Whether they came from God or the Devil depended on which side one was on.

Other factors besides belief in divine inspiration may also help explain the faith that the rebels placed in the Dussindale prophecies. The mysterious language of prophecies entices and involves the audience, and the prophet or transmitter guides the audience towards their interpretation of events. As Coote points out, "the audience participates, even colludes in, this 'knowingness'."[235] E.P Thompson speculated that the poetic effect created by prophetic verses had a role in influencing people.[236]

It is likely that the prophecies appealed to the Mousehold Heath rebels as a way of justifying their actions. Prophecy had an important political function as a validating myth, lending legitimacy to a particular course of action. Prophecy was especially powerful

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[232] Neville, *Norfolke Furies*, K1v.
[233] Russell, *Kett's Rebellion in Norfolk*, 220.
[234] Neville, *Norfolke Furies*, K3r.
[235] Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs,* 36.
[236] E.P Thompson, "Anthropology and the Discipline of Historical Context," *Midland History* 3 (1972): 51.

because it was potentially open to everyone, not just the élites.[237] Early modern English men and women believed in prophecies because they had a desire to believe that their actions "had been foreseen by the sages of the past" and that they were merely acting out a chain of events which began long ago.[238] As Taithe and Thornton point out, the idea of progress towards the future did not exist in medieval and early modern thought. Instead, time was seen as circular, and revolution was usually an attempt to return to a previous golden age. It made sense, therefore, to look for signs of the future in the past.[239] Keith Thomas refers to this as using prophecies as "validating charters," which gave moral authority to the challenges made by the rebels to the current order.[240] Prophecies did not cause the rebellion, but the "existence of rebellious feeling ...caused the circulation of prophecies," as the rebels read relevant meanings into already available prophecies.[241] Coote indicates that the originators of prophecies intended them to have applicable meanings; prophecies were not really about what would happen, but what ought to happen.[242] These factors could have had a powerful effect in convincing people of the righteousness of their cause.

Clearly, there was a religious dimension to the peasants' belief in prophecies. Along with the conflicting evidence of their traditionalist and evangelical beliefs, it is evident that the peasants were neither strictly traditionalist nor evangelical. They created their own blend of religious practices. While disagreeing about the theological

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[237] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic,* 176.
[238] Ibid., 502.
[239] Bertrand Taithe and Tim Thornton, "The Language of History: Past and Future in Prophecy," in *Prophecy*, ed. Bertrand Taithe and Tim Thornton (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1997), 8-9.
[240] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic,* 503.
[241] Ibid., 505.
[242] Lesley Coote, "A Language of Power: Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England," in *Prophecy*, 9-22. It is not clear if Coote acknowledged Thomas' distinctions between 'ancient, misinterpreted' prophecies and fraudulent, created prophecies.

inclinations of the camp-men, both MacCulloch and Duffy agree that East Anglian religion revolved around the parish church. Parishioners were quite attached to their parish churches, investing substantially in their ornamentation.[243] MacCulloch suggests that "perhaps the doctrines which these buildings enshrined were secondary to the building themselves."[244] Considering this focus on the parish, Bindoff's point that the rebels were more concerned with "religion in the sense of the proper discharge by its ministers of pastoral duties" than in the theological dispute between evangelicals and traditionalists might explain a great deal about the seemingly contradictory behaviour of rebels.[245] The peasants would have cared more about religion as it existed in their church and in their community than in orders from London or Rome.

Understanding that the peasants had a strong attachment to local religious practices explains that the religious behaviour of the rebels reflects the position of peasants trying to accommodate themselves to a time of religious change. Trying to adapt as best they could to the government-imposed reformation, the camp-men adopted both the new Prayer Book services and listened to the sermons of government-approved preachers. They used the emphasis of evangelicalism on preaching and competent clergy to demand improvements in the administration of their parishes. The rebels also held on to those aspects of traditionalist religion of which they approved, such as the festivals frowned upon by the evangelicals. Most importantly, the peasants still believed in practices like prophecy. Like the German peasants, the East Anglian camp-men could

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[243] Eamon Duffy, "The Parish, Piety, and Patronage in Late Medieval East Anglia: the Evidence of Rood Screens," in *The Parish in English Life, 1400-1600,* ed. Katherine L. French, Gary G. Gibbs, Beat A. Kümin (New York: Manchester University Press, 1997): 133-162.

[244] MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, 345.

[245] Bindoff, *Kett's Rebellion,* 11.

demand improvements in pastoral care and even evangelical preaching without adhering to the evangelical reforms.

The rebels' syncretic practices can be understood in light of evidence showing that most people met the religious changes by conforming to government demands without being overly enthusiastic. Throughout the 1530s and 1540s, the majority of East Anglians still understood religion from the traditionalist viewpoint and supported their local religious institutions.[246] Evangelicalism seemed to be largely confined to the literate classes and to inhabitants of port towns who had contact with continental developments.[247] When the Edwardian reformation was introduced, the parishes in East Anglia responded fairly promptly to the ordered changes and even conservative areas eventually conformed, although many individuals, as well as the officials of the Norwich diocese, remained traditionalist.[248] Cooperation did not necessarily imply approval, for many English men and women acquiesced to the new doctrines either out of fear of possible penalties or out of obedience to the monarch, or for the sake of maintaining social harmony.[249] It is also likely that many people were indifferent and secular-minded, and can be considered to be neither strongly evangelical nor traditionalist.[250] For the most part, peasants in East Anglia seemed to have accepted and conformed to the new

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[246] Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich, 1370-1532* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), 139; Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 441, 479; Marsh, *Popular Religion,* 61.

[247] As asserted by Bishop Nix of Norwich; cited in Sheppard, "The Reformation and the Citizens of Norwich," 48; Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich,* 163; MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, 157, 163. Also the evidence from wills; Sheppard, "The Reformation and the Citizens of Norwich," 55; Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 195.

[248] Hutton, *Merry England*, 93; Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 481; MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant*, 96, 110; MacCulloch, *Suffolk and Tudors*, 169; Haigh, *English Reformations*, 182.

[249] Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 172, 183; Marsh, *Popular Religion,* 134.

[250] A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* 2nd ed. (London: BT Batsford, 1989), 240, 330.

religious order. This does not mean, however, that they rejected or disliked the traditional forms of worship.

The peasants who gathered on Mousehold Heath in the summer of 1549 were neither committed evangelists, stubborn traditionalists nor superstitious pagans. Their religion was clearly a blend of those practices which suited them. Like the German peasants who demanded the right to elect pastors to preach the importance of works, the English peasants worshiped according to an evangelical Prayer Book and yet believed that a folk prophecy was divinely inspired. It is essential not to generalize about the religious practices of all the camp-men; they likely did not share the same practices. Yet there is no evidence of religious dissention among the camp-men, no records of conflict between the men from North Elmham who brought their new psalm books and those of Heydon who brought their parish banner.

Chapter 3: Revolts in Fumel and the Dauphiné

Peasants rose in rebellion on several occasions in the midst of the chaos of the French Wars of Religion. Historians have noticed that these peasant rebellions do not fit into the pattern of inter-confessional violence of the French Wars of Religion, but the extent of the cooperation between Catholic and Protestant peasants has not been fully examined. Two particular peasant rebellions demonstrate this cooperation: the uprising in Fumel in 1561 and the revolt in the Dauphiné in 1578-80. The surprising degree of cooperation between the Catholic and Protestant peasants participating in these uprisings indicates that sixteenth-century France was not strictly divided along confessional lines.

Scholarship which addresses popular violence in sixteenth-century France falls into three main schools. The Marxist group, which started with Henri Hauser and is continued by Henry Heller and to a certain extent by Janine Garrisson-Estèbe, argues that the Protestant revolt was largely a movement by artisans and urban élites seeking economic and social promotion. Natalie Zemon Davis, who influenced Mack Holt and Philip Benedict among others, emphasizes the social and religious origins of the violence. Yves-Marie Bercé follows Roland Mousnier in studying peasant revolts as anti-fiscal movements and leaves religion largely out of the question. Although this chapter will borrow from all three schools none of them alone adequately explains the role of religion in these peasant revolts.

Heller accepts that the French Wars of Religion were caused by many factors, including religious conflict, but he argues that they were primarily class conflicts. His class approach is based on two main themes: first, that because the Catholic Church was an essential part of the *ancien régime* an attack on the Church was also an attack against this vertically structured order; and second, that the religious violence of Protestant craftsmen and small merchants against Catholic clergy and nobles was a class-based violence of subordinate groups directed against élites.[1] He asserts that the Protestant revolt grew out of popular resistance in the first half of the sixteenth century, as "a religious outburst but one sustained by strong currents of economic and social discontent."[2] Calvinism, in Heller's view, provided unity and a cohesive organization to the existing social and economic complaints of the rising urban middle classes.[3]

Having made a passing reference to "religious hostility" as a cause of the Wars of Religion, Heller argues that the rejection of Catholicism constituted a rejection of the dominant order, and ignores the role of religious belief as a motivating factor in conversion to Protestantism.[4] In his view, it was not until the 1578-80 revolts in the Vivarais and the Dauphiné that the peasants' revolt "unveiled itself for the first time as a revolt independent of both the Protestant and Catholic confessions and of the élites that

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[1] Henry Heller, *Iron and Blood: Civil Wars in Sixteenth-Century France* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1991), 12.

[2] Ibid., 13.

[3] Henry Heller, *The Conquest of Poverty: The Calvinist Revolt in Sixteenth-Century France* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 23; Heller, "Les Artisans au début de la Réforme Francaise: Hommage à Henri Hauser," trans. M.Allen and Jean Delumeau, in *Les Reformes: enracinements socio-culturel*, ed. Bernard Chevalier and Robert Sauzet (Paris: Éditions de la Maisnie, 1982), 139; Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 13; see also Janine Garrison-Estèbe, "Debate: The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France, A Comment," *Past and Present* 67 (1975): 127, who argues that Catholic violence was linked to economic difficulties.

[4] Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 97.

championed them."[5] Yet if one accepts Heller's contention that religion was used as vehicle for social and economic goals, why did all rebellious peasants not become Protestant?

In contrast, Davis, Holt and Benedict argue that the popular violence of the religious wars was indeed inspired by genuine religious antipathy.[6] Holt interprets religion in a social, rather than a theological sense: the commoners were not fighting over the form of the Mass or the correct way to achieve salvation, but about their purity as believers.[7] Davis emphasizes that there were many kinds of religious violence which were not class-related, but were for "the defense of true doctrine and the refutation of false doctrine," and aimed to cleanse the community of pollution, for both Catholics and Protestants feared the wrath of God if they permitted unbelievers to defile their community.[8] This violence took several forms. It was characteristic of both Catholics and Protestants to attack buildings, people and especially books. Generally however, Protestants tended to attack objects while Catholics attacked people.[9]

This school of thought emphasizes the intensity of the violence and hate that the two groups directed at each other. Benedict notes that in Rouen Catholic demonstrations to reaffirm faith and to perform acts of purification to appease God's anger often turned violent.[10] Catholics carried out ritual murders through burning and drowning,

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[5] Heller, *Iron and Blood*, 120.

[6] Mack Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-2.

[7] Holt, *The French Wars of Religion,* 2, from John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 170-1.

[8] N.Z. Davis, "The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France," *Past and Present* 59 (1973): 57-59.

[9] Ibid., 76.

[10] Philip Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 62, 67.

symbolizing purification, and by desecrating their victims' corpses. Protestants were more interested in torturing living victims than in defiling corpses, and sought to desecrate Catholic sacred objects.[11]

These scholars concentrate their studies on urban areas, but suggest that in the case of peasant violence, social and economic factors coincided with religious factors. Davis points to the Catholic peasants who attacked Protestants at Sens, and to the Protestants who attacked the Catholic Baron of Fumel, as incidents in which conflict was caused by economic oppression as much as by religious discord.[12] Holt asserts that the participation of Catholic and Protestant peasants in the revolt at Fumel is evidence that "religious tension had been overtaken by longstanding social and economic complaints."[13] Many scholars, including Holt and Benedict, point out that during the revolts of 1578-80 peasants of both confessions united against soldiers, tax collectors and seigneurs.[14] Holt denies, however, that these revolts are proof that economic factors were more important than religious factors in the French Wars of Religion as a whole.[15] Denis Crouzet takes an intermediary position between Heller and the Davis/Holt school, arguing that Calvinist violence was revolutionary, an attempt to create an order that was just for men and pleasing to God.[16]

None of these scholars adequately explain why Catholics and Protestants peasants, supposedly divided by intense hatred, cooperated during rebellions. If

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[11] Davis, "The Rites of Violence," 82-83.
[12] Ibid., 81; N.Z. Davis, "Debate: The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France: A Rejoinder" *Past and Present* 67 (1975): 132.
[13] Holt, *The French Wars of Religion,* 50.
[14] Benedict, *Rouen,* 240; Holt, *The French Wars of Religion,* 115.
[15] Holt, *The French Wars of Religion,* 115.
[16] Denis Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu: la violence au temps des troubles de religion vers 1525-1610* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1990), 517.

Calvinism offered an effective means for revolting against established authority, how do we explain the fact that rebellious Catholics remained Catholic? Holt's assertion that religion was a more important factor in the French Wars of Religion than economics calls attention to the religious dimensions of the peasant revolts. If much religious conflict was motivated by sincere and deep hatred between Catholics and Protestants, how were peasants of those two religions able to cooperate?

The most detailed studies of sixteenth-century peasant revolts are those by Yves-Marie Bercé on the revolt of the *Croquants* in the 1590s. He argues that peasant uprisings were an expression of collective solidarity in the face of external threats such as war or taxation.[17] The peasants would have distinguished religious affiliation from party allegiance. He does not find it surprising that the peasants of different confessions would cooperate, since this would not indicate a change in religious conviction, but "only a tolerance imposed by facts."[18] Several incidents of cooperation between peasants of different confessions occurred, in Fumel in 1561, in the Vivarais and the Dauphiné in 1578-80, in the Massif Central in 1591-96 and among the *Croquants* in Périgord, Quercy and Limousin in 1594-96.[19]

Regardless of whether peasant rebellions were caused by economic or by religious conflict, there still remains the question of why peasants of different confessions were able to unite in their rebellions while keeping their respective faiths. This chapter argues that the behaviour of peasants involved in the revolts at Fumel and in the Dauphiné shows a prevalence of cooperation with an accompanying indifference to religious distinction thus suggesting that the peasants' differing confessional allegiances

[17] Yves-Marie Bercé, *Histoire des Croquants* (Geneva: Droz, 1974), 142-5, 184.
[18] Bercé, *Histoire des Croquants*, 283.
[19] Janine Garrisson-Estèbe, *Les Protestants du Midi: 1559-98* (Toulouse: Privat, 1980), 167.

did not deeply divide them. More emphasis should be placed on the gray areas between strict doctrinal Catholicism and Calvinism which most commoners seemed to inhabit. While Thierry Wanegffelen demonstrates that many élites did not adhere to rigourous Calvinism or Catholicism, but rather chose their own path in between, a study of peasants' attitudes has yet to be written.[20] Far from the rigid divisions between Catholics and Protestants that are thought to distinguish sixteenth-century France, the revolts at Fumel and in the Dauphiné indicate common ground between peasants of both confessions.

Fumel

In November 1561, the inhabitants of the town of Fumel and their neighbours from the surrounding farming communities murdered François, Baron of Fumel. The first of two main sources on the revolt is Blaise de Monluc, the Catholic nobleman charged with restoring order to the turbulent region. He left accounts of the events in his own memoirs, entitled *Commentaries*, and in the *Sentence* handed down by the tribunal he headed. The second source is the *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, a history of the Protestant movement in France from 1520 to 1561. It is attributed to Théodore de Bèze, the leading French Protestant theologian of the later sixteenth century, although his authorship is unconfirmed. Most likely he oversaw its compilation from accounts dispatched to Geneva from French congregations.[21] Confusion over the identity of the assailants dates back to

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[20] Thierry Wanegffelen, *Ni Rome ni Genève: Des fidèles entre deux chaires en France au XVI siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1997).

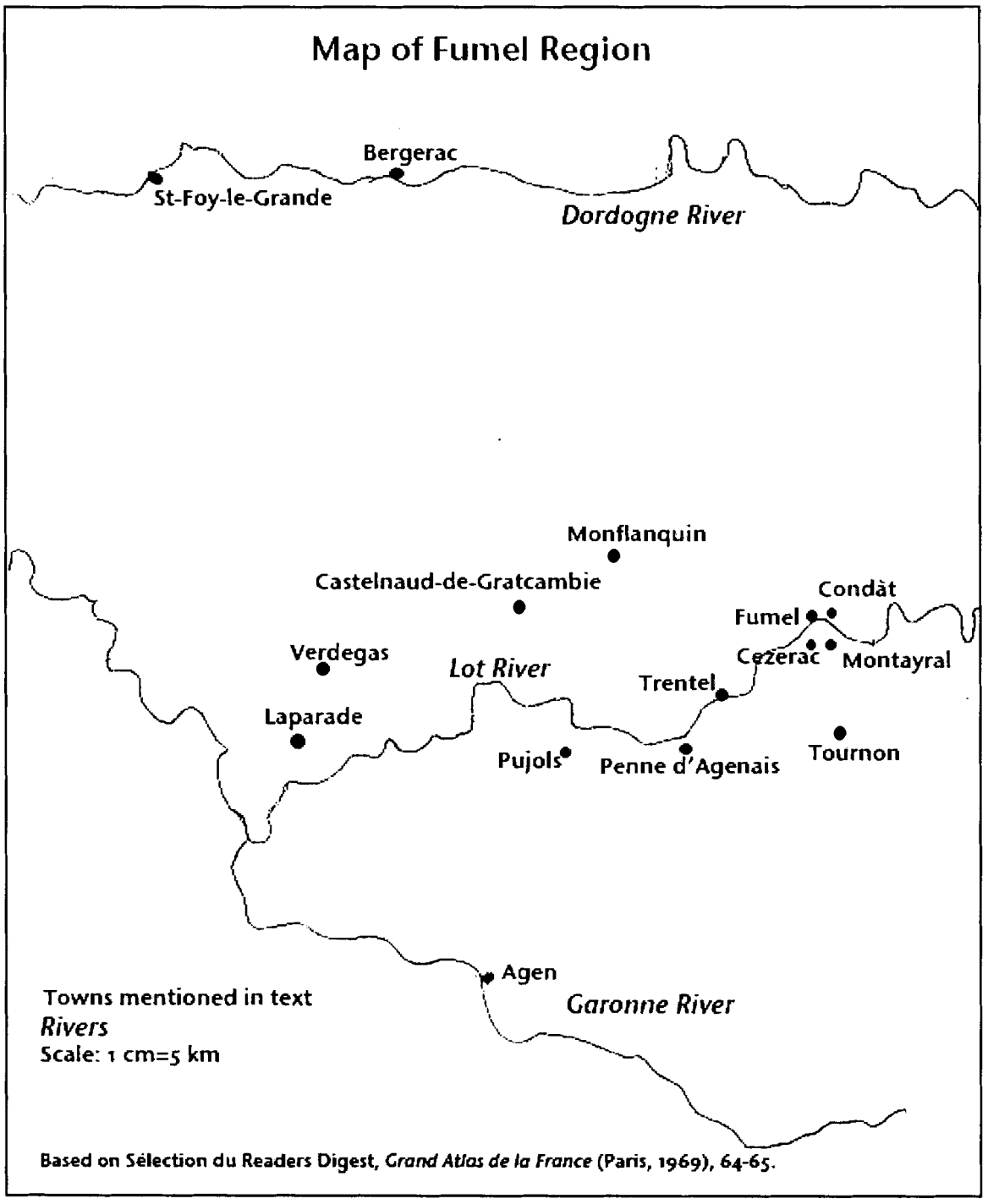
[21] Rodolphe Russ, "Notice bibliographique, historique et littéraire sur l'Histoire Ecclésiastique," in Théodore de Bèze, *Histoire Ecclésiastique des Églises Reformées au Royaume de France* (1884, reprint: Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1974), xxxii-iii, lxx.

disagreements between these two sources. Blaise de Monluc identified the murderers as Huguenots; however, the *Histoire Ecclésiastique* claims that Catholics were also involved, an assertion supported by an examination of the circumstances of the revolt.

Modern scholars view the revolt as being mainly a Protestant affair, with some participation by Catholics. Heller describes the uprising as the beginning of "a class war," caused by Baron Fumel's persecution of the Protestants.[22] Davis, drawing on the *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, suggests that the uprising was both religious and economic in nature, and that the attackers were mostly Protestants.[23] Garrisson-Estèbe argues that the revolt included both Catholics and Protestants thereby downplaying any religious dissension. She further suggests that Monluc distorted the incident to spread fear of bloodthirsty Protestants killing Catholic nobles, an interpretation shared by Holt.[24] Crouzet vigorously disputes this interpretation and argues that the revolt at Fumel was part of a wave of Protestant iconoclastic violence sweeping the region. The murder was the result of the combination of Calvinist violence and grievances against an oppressive lord.[25] The incident offered the possibility of killing the Baron, who was responsible both for oppressing men and maintaining an ungodly order.[26] He downplays the participation of a few Catholics, ascribing their participation to a desire for pillage. If confessional differences were an important factor, as asserted by Davis and Crouzet, then why would Catholic peasants join Protestant peasants, especially in view of the intolerance and hatred described in the "Rites of Violence"? If, as Holt contends, economic complaints took precedence over religious ones, what does this indicate about the nature of religious

[22] Heller, *The Conquest of Poverty*, 110.
[23] Davis, "The Rites of Violence," 81.
[24] Garrisson-Estèbe, *Protestants du Midi*, 166-67; Holt, *The French Wars of Religion*, 50.
[25] Crouzet, *Guerriers de Dieu*, 517.
[26] Ibid.

affiliation among commoners? The revolt at Fumel was not a revolt of Protestants against Catholics, but of peasants against their seigneur.



Map 4: The Fumel Region.

The fact that religious differences between the peasants were not significant enough to prevent cooperation suggests that rural France, or at least the Fumel region, was not irreversibly divided along confessional lines.

The sources themselves account for some of the confusion. As Monluc was a Catholic nobleman fearful of both Protestants and peasants, his writings portray the rebels as seditious Protestants who were using the new Gospel-based faith to rid themselves of lords and taxes. The writer of the *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, hoping to gain legitimacy for the Protestant cause in France, downplays Protestant violence and justifies the revolt by portraying the Baron of Fumel as a tyrant. By implicating Catholics as well as Protestants, the *Histoire Ecclésiastique* distances the murder and anti-noble revolt at Fumel from the actions of other Protestants throughout France. Those attacks were directed at the institutions of Catholicism rather than at the members of the upper classes. The murder of Fumel is in fact described as having occurred "not for his religion but for his tyrannies."[27] A careful reading of the available texts and a study of the context will reveal that the murder was not characteristic of religious violence, and that Catholics at the very least cooperated in the murder.

The *Histoire Ecclésiastique* claims that the Baron was a tyrant who acquired dictatorial habits from his travels to the Ottoman Empire. He had been oppressing his subjects for fifteen to twenty years, which would place the start of his tyranny in the 1540s, before the spread of Protestantism in rural France. During this period the Baron seized the property of some subjects and killed others.[28] Two especially cruel acts made him particularly hated. On one occasion, a subject defended his rights by taking the

[27] Théodore de Bèze, *Histoire Ecclésiastique des Églises Réformées au Royaume de France* (1884, Reprint: Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1974), 887.
[28] Ibid., 885.

Baron to court over an unknown complaint. When it seemed as though the Baron would lose the case, he found a way to have his subject convicted of several misdemeanors, and punished him by ordering the confiscation of his goods and sentencing him to serve in the galley ships, leaving his son in poverty. In a second incident the Baron had a man tied to the tail of his horse and dragged across the river Lot four or five times.[29] It is not known if the man survived. The sons of these two victims of the Baron's cruelty were particularly active among the Baron's murderers, although it is not known whether they were Catholics or Protestants.

According to the *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, the violence of November 1561 started when the Baron, returning home from hunting, came across some Protestants praying in a chapel. The Baron hit the deacon on the head with his pistol. The remaining Protestants chased the Baron back to his castle, crying out: "Stop murderer, tyrant, villain."[30] A crowd from the surrounding areas, including Catholics, then assembled at the castle.[31] A similar story, but without Catholic participation, is found in the tribunal's *Sentence*, which specifies that on 23 November 1561, several Protestants, armed with swords and arqubuses, confronted the Baron outside the parish church. Later that day, the same Protestants followed the Baron home from the hunt, yelling out insults and threats.[32] According to both versions, there was a confrontation between the Catholic Baron and a party of the local Protestants. What is unclear is whether the encounter was spontaneous, or deliberately provoked by the Protestants. The tribunal's account of a planned attack would place it within the Calvinist uprising occurring in the Agenais in 1561. The

[29] Bèze, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 885-6.
[30] Ibid., 885
[31] Ibid.
[32] " 'Sentence' des commissaires royaux contre les meurtriers de François de Fumel," ed. Gustave Labât, *Archives Historique du Départment de la Gironde* 8 (1866) : 207-221.

Calvinist attempt to make it appear spontaneous is intended both to obtain sympathy for the Calvinists and to distance their leadership from the anti-establishment murder, and the threat of peasant revolt that it implied.

The night following the confrontation, the *Sentence* stated that the Protestants met in the house of Balthezar Vaquié, a local merchant, and realized that having threatened the Baron, it was now time to kill or be killed.[33] They summoned help by ringing the tocsin bell of Fumel's parish church, whose alarms were repeated by the churches of the neighbouring towns of Condàt, Montayral, Perricar and Cezerac. People from the Protestant congregations in twenty-seven nearby communities arrived in Fumel. Including the Catholics that the *Histoire Ecclésiastique* claims were present, a total of fifteen hundred to two thousand people besieged the castle.[34] Meanwhile, the rebels also pillaged the seigneur's larder and stable and burnt all the papers found at the Baron's receiver's house.[35] The deliberate destruction of the records detailing the peasants' obligations to the lord suggest that the attacks were directed at the Baron's financial oppression and were not religiously motivated.[36]

The next day, 24 November, three men succeeded in shooting the Baron when he appeared on his balcony.[37] The Baron sent servants to get a doctor, a priest, and a notary, but the rebels detained the messengers. The rebels also secured all the gates and river crossings to the town, preventing any help from reaching the wounded seigneur. At about

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[33] Ibid., 212.

[34] Bèze, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 885.

[35] "Sentence," 213.

[36] Crouzet interprets this action as demonstrating the desire to recreate the world, hinting at a peasant eschatological desire for a new Godly order. As the burning of written documents detailing their obligations and subservient status was a common occurrence during many peasant revolts, it seems unnecessary to argue that this was an act intended to create a new temporal order. Crouzet, *Guerriers de Dieu,* 519.

[37] "Sentence," 213; Bèze, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 886.

one or two o'clock in the afternoon, the rebels stormed the castle and confronted the Baron who lay in his bed. They beat him with a whip before cutting his throat.[38] The rebels then pillaged the castle and burnt the papers that were inside. Leaving, they sang a psalm of David, and took the Baron's wife and children captive, holding them in the house of Balthezar Vaquié.[39]

The Baron's body stayed in the castle for two days before the seneschal of the Agenais arrived to remove it, and return the Baron's wife and children to the castle.[40] During the following two months, the townsfolk of Fumel prevented access to or correspondence with the widow of the Baron. It appears that to cover their tracks, the town's inhabitants obtained an official commission from the seneschal or his lieutenant to conduct their own investigation into the murder.[41]

In late March 1562, four months after the killing, Monluc's tribunal arrived in Fumel and tried 210 people for the murder. Although many of those charged had already fled, according to Monluc's *Commentaries* the authorities hanged thirty or forty people.[42] Communal punishments were issued against the town of Fumel, including the reduction of all multi-storey buildings down to the first storey, the destruction of the bells, gates, gatehouses and walls. The townspeople were no longer allowed to elect communal officers. The town was obliged to build a sepulcher for the Baron in the town church, and the judges ordered all the inhabitants to attend an annual high mass for the Baron's soul.

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[38] "Sentence," 213; Bèze, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 886.

[39] "Sentence," 214.

[40] "Sentence," 215; Bèze, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 886-887.

[41] "Sentence," 215.

[42] "Sentence," 216, 218-19; Blaise de Monluc, "The Commentaries of Messieur Blaize de Monluc, mareschal of France" trans. Charles Cotton (London: Andrew Clark for Henry Brome, 1674), 217. Early English Books Online, http://eebo.chadwyck.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/search/full_rec?SOURCE=pgimages.cfg&ACTION=ByID&ID=V105656 (accessed June 19 2005).

Additionally, severe fines were placed upon the community, excepting certain people who appealed for exemption, presumably on the grounds that they did not participate in the murder or were absent at the time. The town's priests were also exempted from the collective fines.[43]

Although Monluc repeatedly blames Huguenots for this "religious exploit," the *Histoire Ecclésiastique* also claims that in Monflanquin, a town about twenty kilometers to the northwest, the provost general tried several Catholics for the murder of the Baron.[44] Given the nature of the communal punishments, it appears that Monluc's tribunal also considered the Catholic townsfolk to be guilty of the murder. While 1560-1562 was a period of intense confessional conflict in the Agenais, an examination of the religious violence indicates that the events at Fumel did not share characteristics with these incidents of confessional conflict.

The attack on Fumel occurred during a general Protestant uprising in the Agenais. Organized Protestant groups were active in the Agenais in the late 1550s.[45] By 1560, the Calvinists were evicting Catholic priests from their churches and openly holding their own political assemblies.[46] From then on, they attacked Catholic communities in waves. If they were strong enough, the Protestants would chase the Catholics from a town, as at Monflanquin in 1560, where they banished Catholics and took over the church.[47] In Sainte-Foy-la-Grande, Catholicism was abolished after youths attacked priests and

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[43] "Sentence," 217-18.

[44] Bèze , *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 896.

[45] Heller, *Conquest of Poverty*, 110.

[46] Antoine Durenges, "Le Protestanisme en Agenais," *Revue des Questions Historiques* 3 (1929): 331-372; 335.

[47] Durenges, "Le Protestanisme en Agenais," (1929), 346.

churches, killing at least three priests.[48] Where the Protestants could not drive out the Catholics, they attacked the churches and tried to intimidate or kill the priests.

Typical examples of Protestant tactics manifested themselves in the parish of Castelnau-de-Gratecambie and the village of Verdegas. In Castelnau-de-Gratecambie Protestants attacked the church and threatened to kill the priest in 1561. At the Easter service, several members of both confessions were hurt in a fight. Afterwards, the priest was attacked in his house, but was freed by the intervention of several loyal parishioners. The next night, eight to ten Catholics were tied up in their houses, and the priest's home was destroyed. At the village of Verdegas, the Protestants targeted the church. In December 1560, the Protestant minister from the village of Laparade arrived in Verdegas with forty or fifty armed followers to preach in the church. However, the parishioners did not let him in, and instead he preached and performed a baptism in the town. In January, he returned with three hundred followers, preached in the church and officiated at a marriage. On Ash Wednesday, a group of Protestants disrupted the Mass, insulted the priest and ridiculed the Host. The same Protestants returned to strip the church of its ornaments and burn other churches in the surrounding area. The parishioners then refused to pay tithes and threatened to kill the rector if he tried to collect them.[49] Other priests wrote letters to their bishops, complaining of threats and of their diminishing tithe collection, which had decreased to the point that they did not have enough to eat.[50]

The revolt at Fumel does not appear to fit in with the type of religious attacks on Catholic targets in the Agenais. It was directed not against the priest but against the feudal lord. The Baron's castle, stable, and larder were targeted, not the local church.

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[48] Ibid., 333.
[49] Ibid., 342.
[50] Ibid., 337-338.

Catholics must have cooperated, for it was the church tocsin bell which was used to summon the peasants. That the Catholic church still existed and had not been taken over by the Protestants is shown by the fact that the Baron had gone to church the morning of the siege, and that he sent for the priest as he lay dying. The Protestants appeared to have their own chapel at Condàt, which is where the Baron encountered them.[51] It is also evident that in many of the other incidents of religious violence in the Agenais, the violence originated with and was coordinated by leaders from outside the town. In the case of Fumel, Balthezar Vaquié, a resident, organized the attack from within the town. The attack on the Baron of Fumel, therefore, was not a part of the Protestant campaign against Catholic institutions. As a result, there was no obstacle to the cooperation of Catholic and Protestant peasants. While Protestants were certainly involved in the attack on the seigneur, it seems likely that they coexisted with local Catholics.

Possibly, many of the participants were Protestants, as those charged included nine cobblers, two butchers, one cloth dyer, six tailors, one weaver, four carpenters, and three people listed as having been priests.[52] These were all occupations which included significant numbers of Protestants.[53] This does not prove that these people were Protestant, but the link is suggestive. The three former priests likely abandoned Catholicism to lead Protestant congregations. However, it must be kept in mind that although these occupations provided many of the Protestants, the majority of the people employed in these occupations throughout France did not become Protestant.[54] In fact,

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[51] Crouzet, *Guerriers de Dieu*, 518.
[52] "Sentence," 207-210.
[53] Garrisson, *Protestants du Midi,* 33; Heller, *Conquest of Poverty*, 45, 234; Marc Venard, "La Grande Cassure," in *Histoire de la France religieuse* vol.2, ed. Jacques Le Goff, and R. Remond (Paris: Seuil, 1988): 245; Benedict, *Rouen,* 80.
[54] Heller, *Conquest of Poverty*, 234.

the most radical Catholics came from these same trades and professions.[55] Crouzet also points out that many of the indicted individuals came from areas known to have been pro-Protestant; thirty-one were from Penne de Agenais, and seventy-four from Tournon.[56]

There appears to be a marked lack of agricultural workers among the condemned rebels. It is possible that many of the 132 people charged without listed occupations were agricultural workers. R.A. Mentzer, in his discussion of heresy trials in Languedoc, argues that this is because courts tended to list the occupations of professionals or important trades, but not the lower classes. He suggests that the unknown occupations "were artisans and to a lesser extent agricultural workers."[57] Studies repeatedly make it clear that agricultural workers, who represented 80-90 percent of the French population, remained Catholic.[58] It is possible that at least some of the accused at Fumel with no listed occupation were Protestant peasants, although probably most were Catholic peasants.

While it seems evident that Protestants were at the forefront of the revolt, there is no reason to suppose that there was a confessional element to the murder. Although Protestants were especially threatened by the Baron, Catholic subjects would also have experienced his cruelties. The absence of any attack on religious targets and other Catholics makes it clear that there was no religious motivation. Far from being an example of a violent confessional division between Catholics and Protestants, the events

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[55] Benedict, *Rouen,* 90.

[56] Crouzet, *Guerriers du Dieu*, 517.

[57] Raymond A. Mentzer Jr, "Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc, 1500-1560," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 74 (1984): 154.

[58] Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Paysans de Languedoc*, vol.1 (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1966), 352 ; Mentzer, "Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc, 1500-1560," 8; Benedict, *Rouen,* 90; Heller, *Hommage,* 141; Heller, *Conquest of Poverty*, 96; Venard, "La Grande Cassure," 245; Garrisson, *Protestants du Midi*, 54.

at Fumel demonstrates that the members of both confessions were willing to ally and cooperate.

Dauphiné

By the mid-1570s, the combination of the disruptions caused by the French Wars of Religion and the taxes demanded to pay for the wars had pushed many peasants to the brink of revolt, especially in the southeastern regions of France which had seen constant fighting. In both the Vivarais and Dauphiné regions, the peasants of both confessions united to demand reduced taxes and to defend themselves from the depredations of soldiers. Why, after the violence suffered by the Huguenots as a result of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in Paris in 1572 and the ensuing massacres in the provinces, were the peasants of different confessions were able to cooperate? And why had religious tensions decreased to the point where peasants of one confession could make alliances with the military forces of the other?

It appears that most peasants and labourers were hostile to Protestantism, although in some areas of southern France there were significant Protestant peasant populations.[59] However, a core of urban converts, intellectuals, notaries, judges, doctors, and artisans spread Calvinism to a few rural parishes near urban areas.[60] Other peasants may have been converted by their lords, as shown by reports that Charles DuPuy Montbrun, a

[59] Le Roy Ladurie, *Paysans de Languedoc*, 135, 142, 334.
[60] Ibid., 34.

powerful Protestant noble, had converted his people to Protestantism by force, after banning the Mass on his lands.[61]

While this discussion will focus on the events in the Rhône valley in 1578-80, peasant revolts also occurred in the Vivarais. There, peasants did not renounce Catholicism yet demonstrated surprisingly little allegiance to the Catholic political cause. The Vivarais revolts featured cooperation between Catholic and Protestant peasants, apparently amicable agreements between local Catholic and Protestant commanders, and Catholic troops enlisting in the Huguenot armies.[62] Other Catholics, facing new taxes from the Catholic lords, threatened to join the Huguenots.[63] That Catholics destroyed Catholic churches while serving in Protestant armies indicates that peasants had few attachments to fellow Catholics in distant areas.[64] They identified themselves not with confessional Catholicism but with religious practices as they had evolved in their local parishes. Content with these practices, they had no reason to convert to another confession.[65]

Peasant revolt in the nearby Dauphiné region also featured Catholic and Protestant cooperation. In the Dauphiné, Protestantism peaked in popularity during the 1560s but decreased after the massacre of 1572. Although municipal officials prevented violence in most of the Dauphiné during the massacres, Catholics killed some Protestants

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[61] Jean-Denis Long, *La Réforme et les guerres de religion en Dauphiné* (1856; reprint, Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), 27.

[62] J.H. Salmon, *Society in Crisis: France in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: St-Martin's Press, 1975), 209; J.H. Salmon, "Peasant Revolt in the Vivarais, 1575-80," *French Historical Studies* 2 (1979): 8, 11.

[63] Ibid., 10, 17.

[64] Ibid., 8.

[65] Salmon, "Peasant Revolt in the Vivarais, 1575-80," 12. For a discussion of local religion, see Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

in Romans and in Montélimar.[66] The effect of the massacre was to frighten people away from Protestantism as well as to divide moderate and extremist Catholics.[67] In Romans for example, the number of Protestant heads of household declined by one-third, and the Catholic party was able to evict the Protestants from the local town council.[68] As Protestant popularity declined, tensions decreased. Throughout the 1570s, relations between Catholics and Protestants improved, and Montbrun instituted a policy of free trade with Catholics. Catholic nobles, at least, were allowed to live peacefully in Protestant territory.[69]

In the Dauphiné, the amity between Catholics and Protestants can be seen in the royalist town of St-Antoine, which counted Protestants among its mostly Catholic population. The *Memoires* of the town's notary, Eustache Piémond, describes both the peasants' uprising of 1578-80 and the events in St-Antoine during the period. Staunchly royalist, the townspeople of St-Antoine participated actively in the fighting during 1574, guarding the Isère against Huguenot river traffic and sending men to serve in castle garrisons. Piémond believed that the war was not about religious antipathy, reporting instead that the nobles were fighting amongst themselves for advancement and profit. The wars created misery among the commoners, and Piémond complained that taxes were excessive and that the soldiers oppressed the poor people.[70] He does not demonstrate any animosity towards neighbouring Huguenots in his assessment of the Wars of Religion.

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[66] Long, *La Réforme et les guerres de religion en Dauphiné,* 101.
[67] Ibid.,104, 111.
[68] Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival at Romans*, trans. Mary Feeney (New York: George Braziller, 1979), 25-26.
[69] Long, *La Réforme et les guerres de religion en Dauphiné,* 118.
[70] Eustache Piémond, *Mémoires*, ed. J. Brun-Durand (1885; reprint, Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1973), 33.

Piémond's comment on the Peace of Monsieur of May 1576 sheds light on the coexistence of Catholic and Protestant townspeople. The peace edict, forced upon Henry III and Catherine de Medici following three years of warfare, allowed Protestant preaching throughout France, with the agreement of local landowners.[71] When this edict was issued, the Protestants in St-Antoine started preaching in the house of one of the consuls. However, as neither the seigneur nor the majority of the inhabitants of the town were Protestant, they were obliged to hold their meetings outside the town.[72] Nonetheless, the townspeople of both confessions cooperated to support the Catholic/Royalist cause. The Protestants included at least one of the consuls, whose responsibilities included organizing military support for the Catholic forces. Clearly, individual religious practice was different from political allegiance, and the Protestant and Catholic townspeople worked with each other. Furthermore, the resident Protestants were willing to oppose the Huguenot army.

An incident in St-Antoine on 15 June 1577 is typical of the relations between Catholic townspeople and soldiers throughout the Dauphiné. Communities frustrated and impoverished by constant warfare in 1576 and 1577 turned on the military companies that were killing peasants, imposing tributes, and quartering themselves on householders. In St-Antoine, when a company of Catholic soldiers demanded lodgings but did not have authority from the royal Lieutenant-General Bertrand de Simiane Gordes, the townspeople chased them away and barred the gates against them. [73] When Gordes did decide to lodge troops in St-Antoine, the people and soldiers clashed. The royalist,

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[71] "Paix de Monsieur. Édict de Paris, dit de Beaulieu," *L' édict de Nantes et ses antécédents (1562-1598)*, Bernard Barbiche, http://elec.enc.sorbonne.fr/editsdepacification/edit7.php (accessed 1 June 2005).
[72] Piémond, *Mémoires*, 45.
[73] Ibid., 51.

Catholic townspeople decided to pay 600 livres to be rid of the royalist, Catholic soldiers.[74] The townspeople felt little affinity for their enlisted Catholic fellows.

Organized peasant protest began with the formation of peasant unions in the fall of 1578. According to Piémond, the peasants, provoked by a heavy tax of fifteen écus per household, organized to protest the imposition that they believed would create more warfare and misery.[75] Judge Antoine Guérin, who wrote an account of the revolt, emphasized confessional quarrels as a cause of the protests. He claimed that the revolt began with a party of Protestants in the village of Marsas. Protestant villagers started the disturbances, seeking vengeance against the Catholics in Romans for killing their parents in 1572.[76] In January 1579, these villagers met with the neighbouring peasants and resolved to form a league of the Third Estate against the soldiers.[77] Meanwhile, the inhabitants of Pont, both Catholic and Protestant, banded together on 9 January, 1579 to evict a Captain Bouvier who was ravaging the countryside and interfering with commerce.[78] While the Catholic official Guérin tried to blame the revolt on the Protestants, in reality the revolt included members of both confessions.

Le Roy Ladurie points out that different local threats caused the peasant movement to divide into two. In the northern area towards Valence and the Valloire, dissatisfaction with the Catholic leadership drove both the urban and the rural Catholics

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[74] Ibid., 53.

[75] Piémond, *Mémoires,* 63, Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival*, 83.

[76] Anonymous., "La Guerre des Paysans en Dauphiné," ed. J. Romans, *Bulletine de la Sociéte Départmentale d'Archéologie et de Statistique de la Drôme* (1877), 30.

[77] Le Roy Ladurie points out that the chroniclers of events in the Dauphiné frequently used the term 'league' to describe a people's union. These peasant leagues had "a much less confessional nature than their contemporaries in the Paris region," and had no connection to the Paris leagues. Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival,* 81. Romans, "La Guerre des Paysans en Dauphiné," 31.

[78] Piémond, *Mémoires,* 58; Liewain Scott Van Doren, "Revolt and Reaction at Romans, 1579-80," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 5 (1974): 83.

to seek an agreement with the Huguenots. In the south, oppression from Huguenot troops under the Protestant General Francois de Lesdiguiéres gave the peasant movement an anti-Huguenot quality.[79] In both cases, peasants turned against their co-religionist nobles.

The northern league, which was based at Romans, saw the Catholic peasants ally with the Protestants against the Catholic élites.[80] On 9 February 1579, the commoners of Romans and peasants from the surrounding villages elected a Catholic named Jean Serre, known as Paumier, as their leader and started to arm themselves.[81] Backed by three hundred armed men, Paumier established control over Romans' town council.[82] According to Guérin, this revolt was instigated by the Huguenots who made a secret alliance with the Protestant villagers near Romans, hoping to stir up resistance against the Catholic élite. [83] Le Roy Ladurie, however, argues that the Catholics had too great a majority in the leagues for Protestants to have much influence.[84] Despite Guérin's claims about Protestant plots, Le Roy Ladurie counted only one known Protestant among the leaders of the leaguers.[85] It is clear that the league did not belong to one confession or another, and Paumier attracted both Catholic and Protestant followers from around Romans and from as far away as the Valloire. Guérin claimed he had fourteen thousand arquebusiers, a possibly exaggerated number.[86]

Throughout the winter, spring, and summer of 1579, townsmen chased away companies of soldiers, while violence between peasants and the rural élites left several

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[79] Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival*, 84-85.
[80] Ibid., 84.
[81] Romans, "La Guerre des Paysans en Dauphiné," 32-33; Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival*, 101.
[82] Romans, "La Guerre des Paysans en Dauphiné," 34.
[83] Ibid., 31.
[84] Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival*, 35.
[85] Ibid., 25.
[86] Romans, "La Guerre des Paysans en Dauphiné," 34.

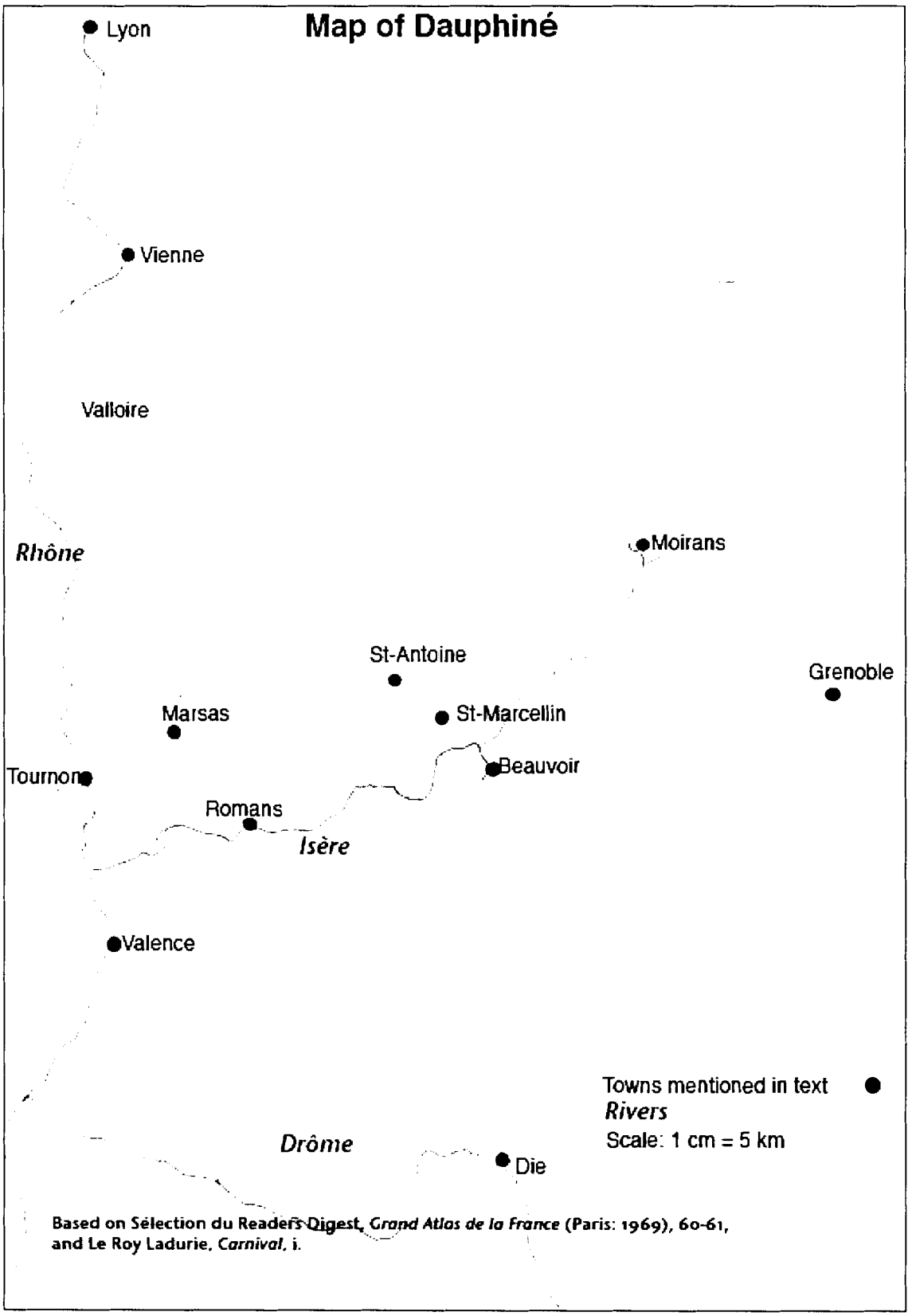
peasants dead, as well as a military captain, a seigneur and several royal officials.[87] Daniel Hickey argues that these attacks were directed against the bourgeois élites whose control of Dauphiné's legal system deprived the peasants of the chance to obtain reform of the financial system.[88] As the violence increased, however, many more moderate leaders distanced themselves from the enterprise.[89] The revolt was turning into a radical rebellion against the ruling élites, and allegiance was clearly based on social and economic, not religious motives.

As the peasants became more disaffected, Huguenot military leaders continued to try to gain their allegiance. Guérin claimed that Paumier and the Huguenots met twice to establish an alliance. Part of the plan, alleged Guérin, was to make the Huguenot captain LaPrade, ensconced in his castle at Chateaudouble, chief of a joint alliance and bring him to Romans. Labourers and peasants met with the officers and soldiers of LaPrade in a large assembly to discuss the alliance. Salmon thinks that the peasants in question were

[87] Ibid., 42.

[88] D. Hickey, "The Socio-Economic Context of the French Wars of Religion: A Case Study: Valentinois-Diois." (PhD. Thesis: McGill University, 1973), 131.

[89] Piémond, *Mémoires,* 75.



Map 5: The Dauphiné

Protestant.[90] Some peasants refused to agree to the alliance because of LaPrade's attacks against them.[91] In retaliation, LaPrade massacred over one hundred peasants. Thereupon, Paumier and the leaguers besieged LaPrade in Chateaudouble despite the negotiations that had taken place between the peasant leader and the Protestants. The poorly organized leaguer effort quickly started to fall apart, but the royal Lieutenant-Governor Laurent de Maugiron arrived to take charge, eventually bringing the siege to a successful conclusion.[92] Evidently, Catholic peasants were willing to cooperate with either Huguenots or Catholic forces if it might end their oppression.

Early in 1580, the local nobility began to suppress the commoners. In February 1580, a counter-coup led by the town's notables crushed the league in Romans.[93] A force of armed nobles arrived to help the élite faction in Romans and launched attacks on the peasants in the nearby countryside. Some peasants managed to escape by hiding in the woods.[94] With their leadership crushed in Romans, the surviving peasants increasingly depended on Lesdiguiéres' Huguenot forces to help them against their own Catholic élites. Le Roy Ladurie holds that an agreement existed between the leaguers and the Huguenots that the leaguers would ally with the Huguenots if they were permitted to keep the Mass.[95] That the Protestants agreed to such an arrangement clearly demonstrates that they were not fighting against Catholic religious practices.

This alliance meant that peasant leaguers lost their independent position outside of the Protestant and Catholic armies. The leaguers and Protestants joined forces at the

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[90] Salmon, *Society in Crisis*, 210.
[91] Romans, "La Guerre des Paysans en Dauphiné," 37.
[92] Ibid., 38-40.
[93] Romans, "La Guerre des Paysans en Dauphiné," 162-168.
[94] Piémond, *Mémoires*, 89-90.
[95] Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival*, 260.

village of Moirans.[96] They were brutally defeated by the royal army, and the surviving leaguers and Huguenots escaped to the woods together.[97] Some peasants left the Huguenots when a royal pardon was issued on 26 April 1580, and the remainder abandoned all pretence of protecting the common people and embarked on a campaign of banditry, capturing priests and nobles.[98]

Throughout these events, the cooperation of Catholic and Protestant peasants was evident, as is the absence of any conflict between the two groups. Catholics and Protestants were able to make common cause in the formation of the leagues and in the daily life in a town like St-Antoine. In fact, Protestants at St-Antoine helped royalist forces in the fight against the Huguenots, and Catholic leaguers allied with the Huguenots fighting against the royal army. Similarly, the leaguers targeted both Protestants like LaPrade and Catholics like the élites at Romans. By the late 1570s, confessional allegiance among the peasants in the Dauphiné meant little. What did exist were alliances of convenience among different political factions. The absence of confessional tension is indicated by the Huguenot willingness to let the leaguers keep the Mass, an odd arrangement if the Huguenots saw Catholics as a form of social pollution. Similarly, the leaguers cannot have felt their Catholic faith to be in danger if they were willing to ally with the Huguenots against fellow Catholics.

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[96] Piémond, *Mémoires*, 100.
[97] Ibid., 105.
[98] Ibid., 105,108.

Conclusion

In both the Fumel and the Dauphiné revolts, Protestant and Catholic peasants united and worked together. Catholic peasants revolted against Catholic lords and élites in Fumel and the Dauphiné, and Protestants against Protestant leaders in the Dauphiné. In both cases, economic complaints and physical oppression, not religious conflict, drove the revolts. Ordinary Catholics and Protestants did not reject one another or try to eradicate the religious practices of the other confession. However, arguing that confessional differences did not prevent cooperation between Catholic and Protestant peasants does not deny the important role that religion played. One reason for this tolerance might be an area of fluidity between the rival orthodoxies of Calvinism and Catholicism. As Wanegffelen believes, most people existed between the two polarities, and among Protestants there were many misunderstandings between the Geneva-trained pastors and the ordinary people, many of whom were not willing to accept the theological implications of Calvinism.[99] Surely this fluidity would allow for commoners of different confessions to focus on their shared similarities instead of their differences.

[99] Wanegffelen, *Ni Rome ni Genève*, xvi, 262.

Conclusion

Studies of sixteenth-century peasant revolts have either reduced religion to the role of masking economic motives or argued that peasants were affiliated with a particular confessional movement. Peasants' agency in their own choices is often not considered as they are assumed to have followed or been influenced by religious leaders. However, in the revolts studied here, peasants clearly made their own religious choices. German peasants rejected the messages of both radical and moderate reformers and adhered to a program of their own choosing, believing that their cause was sanctioned by God. English peasants mixed traditionalist, evangelical and folk practices, and saw no inherent contradiction in doing so. French peasants, Catholic and Protestant, overcame confessional divisions to cooperate. Throughout, peasants' religious behaviour indicates a rejection of an exclusive confessional identity which their religious leaders, and modern historians, would have claimed for them.

Confessional attitudes are more apparent in the seventeenth century. In both England and the German lands, peasant violence was based on confessional lines. After the events of 1525, peasant revolts in Germany changed in character. While at least sixty-six peasant revolts occurred between 1525 and 1789, these were more regional and local than the German Peasants' War and revolved around the peasants' refusal to perform additional labour services or to pay new taxes.[1] These rebellions no longer looked to

[1]Günter Voegler, "Religion, Confession and Peasant Resistance in the German Territories in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," in *Religion and Rural Revolt: Papers Presented to the Fourth Interdisciplinary*

religion as a legitimizing force.[2] Günther Voegler argues that this was due partly to the increasing use of legal means to resolve disputes, as Scripture could not be cited as legal evidence. Religious justifications also faded because "with the growth of dogmatic rigidity in these [Protestant] theologies and the emergence of new orthodoxies, the space for a revolutionary interpretation of the Gospel becomes limited."[3] In fact, according to Voegler, some post-1525 peasant revolts were confrontations between peasants demanding the right to practise forms of Protestantism and their Catholic rulers.[4]

In England, confessional divisions also seem to have increased by the seventeenth century, at least in East Anglia and Essex. Direct comparison with Kett's Rebellion is difficult because there were few, if any, English agrarian revolts after the sixteenth century.[5] However, some episodes from the Civil War of 1642-46 offer evidence of peasant religious behaviour. While Andy Wood points out that religion was only one of many factors that determined Civil War allegiance, anti-Catholicism seemed widespread among peasants in regions as far apart as Warwickshire, Essex and East Anglia.[6] John Walter particularly emphasizes anti-Catholic fears in Protestant East Anglia leading up to the Civil War, resulting in widespread attacks on Catholics in the summer of 1642. Fears of Catholicism were based on a "cultural inheritance of anti-popery," belief in a Catholic

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Workshop on Peasant Studies, University of British Columbia, 1982, ed. Janos M. Bak and Gerhard Benecke (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 179-180; Tom Scott, "Peasant Revolts in Early Modern Germany," *Historical Journal* 28 (1985): 457.

[2] Scott, "Peasant Revolts in Early Modern Germany," 457; Voegler, "Religion, Confession and Peasant Resistance," 183.

[3] Voegler, "Religion, Confession and Peasant Resistance," 183.

[4] Ibid., 182.

[5] Perez Zagorin, *Rebels and Rulers, 1550-1660*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 2: 138.

[6] Andy Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 146-147; John Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 15.

plot against the church and state, and mistrust generated by the concentration of Catholics in gentry households.[7]

These anti-Catholic fears created numerous popular panics, as people thought Catholics were attempting to burn East Anglian towns, and ultimately resulted in a wave of attacks on Catholic households upon the outbreak of civil war in August 1642.[8] While many of the sacked residences belonged to Catholic nobles, Catholic commoners were also targeted.[9] As well as assaulting Catholics, Puritan crowds targeted Anglican clergymen who supported the more ceremonial religion of Archbishop Laud. The ministers were attacked for their support of a religion more reminiscent of Catholicism than the Calvinist-influenced crowds would have liked.[10] In this corner of England, not too far from Norwich, firmer confessional identities and allegiances replaced the more diverse practices of 1549.

Inter-confessional cooperation can still be found in the largest French seventeenth-century uprising, the Périgord risings of 1637-41.[11] The rebellion was sparked by a series of taxes which were imposed in early 1637 to support the Army of Bayonne, which was campaigning against the Spanish armies in the Pyrenees. The peasants resented that these taxes, which added to their already considerable burden, were being imposed by the army's commander, the Duke of La Valette, and the provincial governor, the Duke of Épernon, without Louis XIII's authorization.[12] Some of these taxes were intended to go directly to tax collectors, infuriating the peasantry who lynched or

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[7] Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution,* 207-208.
[8] Ibid., 205.
[9] Ibid., 234.
[10] Ibid., 166-8, 186.
[11] Zagorin, *Rebels and Rulers, 1550-1660,*1: 214.
[12] Yves-Marie Bercé, *History of Peasant Revolts,* trans. Amanda Whitmore (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 109-110.

drove away the agents sent to collect the taxes.[13] Peasant bands, summoned by church tocsins, quickly formed themselves into an army in early May 1637, led by a noble named Antoine de Ribeyreix.[14] They occupied the town of Bergerac, until they dispersed at the approach of a royal army equipped with artillery in the first week of June.[15]

The rebellion, like those of the sixteenth century, had an inherent religious dimension. De Ribeyrieux accepted command of the army only after he had spent several days in prayer. He finally joined the peasants, saying "that the Virgin had made known to him in a revelation the justice of their cause, and that he embraced it with all his heart."[16] The peasants chose white and blue as the colours of their banners, which Yves-Marie Bercé points out were the colours of the Marian cult.[17] Despite these indications of Catholicism, the rebels clearly expected that the Protestants would cooperate. The second in command of their army, Léon de Laval, Baron of Madaillon, was a Protestant, and the peasants made several appeals to the townspeople of Bergerac to join them.[18] Although the inhabitants of Bergerac refused, as did all the townspeople to whom the peasants appealed, the town's archdeacon served with the peasants' leadership, as did two Catholic priests.[19] The willingness of Catholic peasants to serve under the command of Protestants, and the expectation of the Catholic De Ribeyrieux that Protestant townspeople would support the rebellion, is evidence that the cooperation of Catholics and Protestants was still taken for granted in the middle of the seventeenth century.

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[13] Bercé, *History of Peasant Revolts,* 111.
[14] Ibid., 112-115.
[15] Ibid., 131-132.
[16] Ibid., 116.
[17] Ibid., 126.
[18] Ibid., 116, 125.
[19] Ibid., 126, 128.

In England and Germany, however, the more diverse and tolerant attitudes of sixteenth-century peasants may owe their origins to the weaknesses of early attempts at confessionalization, as indicated by R. Po-Chia Hsia.[20] In order to understand fully why the peasants made the choices that they did, more detailed studies of the peasants' local religions will have to be made. By examining the actual religious practices of the peasants in the regions studied, we will understand how they conceived of their own religion and its relationship to broader confessional identities.

[20] R. Po-Chia Hsia, "The Structure of Belief: Confessionalism and Society," in *Germany: A New Social and Economic History*, ed. Bob Scribner, vol. 1 (London: Arnold, 1996), 361, 368.

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