

HANS KRAFFT

*The Seizure of the Cathedral of Erfurt
by the Protestants*

1632

The Protestant dyer Hans Krafft describes here the Protestants' occupation of the Cathedral of Erfurt on September 17, 1632, the first anniversary of the Battle of Breitenfeld.¹ For the author, this was more than just another episode in his chronicle of events. Just as the victory of the Swedish army under King Gustav Adolph at Breitenfeld had represented the greatest victory of the Protestant side to date, the seizure of the cathedral represented for Krafft the greatest victory of Protestantism in his hometown. He proudly indicates his personal involvement in the action, which was characterized not only by the violence of the seizure but also by the pomp and ceremony of celebrating the achievement, which he describes not by using an ego-centered "I" but with the characteristically communal rhetoric of "we."

In the year 1632 on the 17th of September, an anniversary festival of celebration was ordered for His Royal Majesty Gustav Adolph, because with God's help he won the battle near Leipzig [Battle of Breitenfeld] on the 17th of September 1631. So we celebrated in the morning in our parish church, and at nine o'clock the first main sermon was delivered in our beloved Church of St. Mary [the Erfurt Cathedral] by my brother-in-law, Master Valentin Wallenberger.² With two organs [and]

¹ The date given here and in the document is in the modern Gregorian calendar. The old-style Julian calendar, which was still used by Protestants at the time, dated the Battle of Breitenfeld (and its anniversary) ten days earlier.

² Valentin Wallenberger (1582–1639) was preacher at the Barfüsser Church in Erfurt from 1621 to 1639. He was one of the most vociferous Lutheran preachers in Erfurt during the Thirty Years War.

From Hans Krafft, *Chronik aus dem Dreißigjährigen Krieg* (*Chronicle from the Thirty Years War*), ed. Hans Medick, Norbert Winnige, and Andreas Bähr (electronic publication: Thüringer Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Jena, 2008), 66r. Available as a digital facsimile at www.mdsz.thulb.uni-jena.de/krafft/quelle.php.

instruments like lutes, harps, drums, fifes, and violins, we played glorious, splendid, [and] exceedingly beautiful music. But it did not please the papists, and they didn't want to open the church towers. [We] had to break open three doors so that one could get to the bells. Three of them, the big bell along with the Spirit and the Wolf, were rung.³ And they did not want to open the church, but . . . it didn't help them, they had to, [and] it was a bitter pill [for them]. In the evening, a salute was fired with big cannons that stand around the city, three times, and from the Cyriaksburg,⁴ and with muskets, which were fired during the day.

³Krafft is referring to the names of individual bells.

⁴The main citadel fortification in Erfurt. Originally constructed in the late fifteenth century, it was expanded and improved by the Swedes during the Thirty Years War.

12

MAURUS FRIESENEGGER

Desacralization and Its Limits

1632

In these passages from his diary, the abbot of the Bavarian monastery of Heiligenberg (at Andechs, near Munich), Maurus Friesenegger (1590–1655), relates some of the consequences of the occupation and plundering of his monastery by Swedish troops in the summer of 1632. Friesenegger's version of events is not an eyewitness report of the occupation, because before the Swedes arrived, the abbot had fled and taken the precious relics and other items from his monastery's treasury to a nearby town. His description is instead based on the testimonies of other members of his monastery. What seems most remarkable about this report is that although the sacred space had been desecrated through its use as a stable for the occupying soldiers' horses, Friesenegger emphasizes the limited violence done to the religious objects in his monastery's church.

From Maurus Friesenegger, *Tagebuch aus dem 30jährigen Krieg: Nach einer Handschrift im Kloster Andechs (Diary from the Thirty Years War: From a Manuscript in the Andechs Cloister)*, ed. Willibald Mathäuser (Munich: Allitera Verlag, 2007), 17–18.

What had befallen Heiligenberg in the period of three weeks, and beyond, during the presence of the enemy . . . was found out afterward, after the retreat of the Swedes, and the return of some domestic servants and clergy. The church was full of stink and horse manure, on the altar were the remains of the horse feed, the offering boxes were all broken, and the grave of the [monastery's] founder was opened. The altars and the altarpieces on the same were all undamaged, except for the effigy of Saint Rasso, which was found damaged and covered in feces outside the church. The liturgical garments and vestments that were stolen were of no great value, because all the better ones had been taken out of the way [before the Swedish occupation].

What was miraculous, however, was what befell the Mother of God painting, which formerly stood on the high altar, but at the time had been moved to the lower choir altar in place of the miracle-working image, which had been taken to safety. Apparently with no amount of force could this painting be moved from its spot or thrown down from where it stood, which the blasphemers attempted with all their strength. Being awestruck by this and imagining that behind the painting a treasure could be hidden, they brought this news to the colonel's attention. When he was told what had already been done, he forbade laying another hand on the image, with the express comment that it was not the will of their king [Gustav Adolph] that they would make holy war against symbols. . . .

It was just as miraculous that the cloister buildings never caught fire. The enemy often and at several spots tried to set them on fire, to prevent any further pilgrimages and to destroy everything, as the Protestant heretics at Augsburg, Ulm, and Nuremberg had demanded. Even the godless ones were amazed after these efforts at destruction had failed, and afterward they told of the matter in many places, and also in Herrsching people asked what kind of place this was, that would not catch fire.¹

¹Herrsching is a town approximately 1¼ miles (2 km) north of the Heiligenberg monastery.

MAURUS FRIESENEGGER

Hungry Peasants, Starving Soldiers

1633–1634

This excerpt from the diary of Maurus Friesenegger, abbot of Heiligenberg (see Document 12), describes with rare intensity the extreme famine in and around his monastery in the winter of 1633–1634. The imperial army was stationed across southern Germany, and a regiment of imperial troops had moved into winter quarters near Heiligenberg. At the same time, to escape from these very troops, a large part of the peasant population from the surrounding countryside had fled with their grain supplies and livestock to the apparent safety of the walled monastery. The grounds of the monastery itself became the stage for a bitter struggle over food. The desperately hungry soldiers and civilians literally fought over the last cow, the last pig, and the last of the grain supply. In this conflict, the legal and sacrosanct protection of the monastery's walls could not withstand the scourges of war.

After we had once more waited impatiently for the 23rd of December [1633] to arrive, when the Spaniards were expected to move on, we

From Maurus Friesenegger, *Tagebuch aus dem 30jährigen Krieg: Nach einer Handschrift im Kloster Andechs (Diary from the Thirty Years War: From a Manuscript in the Andechs Cloister)*, ed. Willibald Mathäser (Munich: Allitera Verlag, 2007), 49–59, 60–72. The excerpts from the year 1633 here quoted with slight changes were first translated by Gerhard Benecke, ed., *Germany in the Thirty Years War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 66–67. The excerpts from the year 1634 were translated by John Mangum.

received orders that they would stay longer, since no winter quarters had been made ready for them. Heavens! Soldiers and peasants were now to be seen half-naked and pale with misery, emaciated with hunger, and walking about with bare feet in the great cold. What would happen in the long term? The soldiers were eating dogs, cats, and any stolen meat. For days on end the peasants had not even a crust of bread. Many searched our monastery garden for greens, winter lettuce, roots, and herbs, which they then ate raw or stewed. The army sent to Munich for provisions, and in the monastery we slaughtered the cattle and baked bread for as many people as possible. Bakers from as far afield as Dies-¹ as well as others also supplied us with bread. But what help was that against so many? There were 1,500 soldiers in the village, and inside the monastery the people from several other places, too. Since the suppliers of provisions were often robbed with violence of their money on the way and of their goods on their return journey, they soon gave up. So hunger increased to the utmost among the soldiers, and even the officers began to feel it, as hard cash no longer bought anything.

On 28 December those who were starving broke into the Church of Our Dear Lady in the village and climbed under the roof, removing the seed corn stored there for next spring. Thus disappeared the last hope of the peasants, besides the other things which they found.

On 30 December the troops of the foreign and Italian regiments mustered, and it proved to be quite a spectacle. There were half-filled companies of blackened and jaundiced faces, starved bodies, half-clothed or bedecked in rags and stolen women's clothing. It was the face of hunger and famine. Next to them the officers appeared well fed and elegantly dressed. Many soldiers were ill, and many also died of starvation and cold, to the extent that their regimental priest had to hear the confession of thirty of them who were fatally ill in one day alone. And all this made us all fear death—which is the end of all evils, fears, and hopes—rather hope for it. . . .

[January 1634]

Our misery during these days was truly indescribable. More than a thousand people found themselves in the monastery; all of the rooms were completely filled, one person's body very close to the other. It was winter, and there was no oven, no bed, and often, for three or four days, no crumb of bread; nevertheless, the soldiers, who were just as

¹Diessen is approximately 12 miles (19 km) west of Andechs, site of the monastery.

hungry, always begged us for bread. From their village the Erlingers² heard nothing but alarms, pounding, and hammering as their houses were torn down to provide firewood [for the military]. . . .

After this, first the remaining officers and then the rank and file began a new action and [said] . . . they would not rest until all of the victuals that the peasants had deposited in the monastery had been carried off, for what belonged to the peasants also belonged to the soldiers they said, and their hunger was the most extreme. They had already waited for several days for supplies from Munich and received none. And on top of this, during the most recent night, two died, who, before dying of starvation, had bitten into their arms and gnawed on their fingers. And the prior [abbot's deputy] gave them twelve sacks of the peasants' and the monastery's grain that they at once took to the mill in Diessen, and the next day, 1,600 loaves of bread—so strong was the military—were baked.

No sooner had this action come to an end than another tumult broke out. A mass of hungry soldiers showed up at our steward's house and forced all of the doors of the stalls open in order to take whatever they wanted. And what they especially wanted were the pigs, but they ran away from the soldiers into the open. We quickly called on the officers quartered with us at the monastery for assistance, who rushed to the steward's house with the colonel to set themselves against these native robbers. If, in these times, we had been able to laugh, then this certainly would have been a funny scene to see, with the rank and file chasing the pigs across the field, and the officers chasing the rank and file across the field, all of the scoundrels with their rags flying in the air and the officers with flying hair. In the end, two of these criminals, of whom there had been ninety, were captured (our commanders were not only too tough on our peasants but also on their own men), bound to a pillory driven into the ground in the courtyard of the steward's house, and sentenced to be shot to death, and we had to plead for their pardon, perhaps to place them under obligation to us. . . .

. . . When the peasants also finally saw that it really looked like everything would be taken from them and they would be left to starve to death, they slaughtered the few cattle they had left and sought to silence their own hunger rather than that of the soldiers. It looked as though what [imperial] general Altringer had once said would come true, that the only cow to be found in Bavaria after this war would be embroidered with silver.

²The inhabitants of the nearby village of Erling, who had fled to the monastery.

38

MICHAEL LEBHARDT

Report on Cannibalism in Agawang

WITH

KASPAR ZEILLER

Response to Lehardt

1635

Most mentions of cannibalism in the Thirty Years War can be traced back to hearsay rather than eyewitness observation. Usually, contemporaries referred to cannibalism metaphorically to describe the extreme hunger and misery prevalent during some periods of the war. In some confessional texts, religious opponents were accused of cannibalism in an attempt to discredit them based on this barbaric behavior.

The community of Agawang, near Augsburg in southern Germany (see Map 2, pages 10–11), gained the sad notoriety of producing one of the few firsthand reports of people resorting to cannibalism in order to alleviate their hunger. The report was from Father Michael Lehardt, a priest from the neighboring parish of Kutzenhausen, to his superior, Dr. Kaspar Zeiller, the general provost¹ in Augsburg. We have no record of how the shocked priest responded to his superior's request to show compassion for the flesh eaters.

¹ As general provost, Zeiller was immediately below the bishop in the church hierarchy. It was not unusual that someone in his position was a doctor of theology.

*“Zwey merkwürdige Aktenstücke über die zur Zeit des Schwedenkriegs im Winter des Jahrs 1634/35 zu Agawang geherrschte grässliche Hungersnoth” (“Two Noteworthy Documents from the Time of the Swedish War in the Winter of 1634–1635, Regarding the Terrible Hunger in Agawang”), ed. Franz von Baader, *Jahres-Bericht des Historischen Kreis-Vereins im Regierungsbezirke von Schwaben und Neuburg (Annual Report of the District Historical Association for the Administrative Region of Swabia and Neuburg)* 35, 1869/70 (Augsburg: Hartmannsche Buchdruckerei, 1872), 71–72.*

Before Christmas, in a house in Agawang, which belonged to Leonard Weber, four people starved to death, and then five more, one after another. When I learned that they were still lying unburied after such a long time, because nobody was doing anything for anybody anymore, and indeed nobody would do what he was told or asked to do, and Christian charity among people was extinguished, especially in places like Agawang, where there was no priest anymore and things were really going miserably, I went to Agawang last January. I offered the Mass there, and after I finished the church service I gave orders to the sub-bailiff, the schoolmaster, and the chief magistrate in the name of Your Honor and Grace as diocesan provost, that they should immediately, while I was present, dig a grave, collect the bodies, and lay them to rest to prevent further sacrilege. They were agreeable, and they started the grave. They said that there were only the four people in the aforementioned house to be buried, because the others were in a house in the parish where the widow Else Miller and Christina Regler lived, and they had been eaten up. I was quite horrified to hear this, and with the schoolmaster I hurried to the house to make inquiries about the matter. I was about to go in the door when two women came out carrying a basin full of human entrails. I asked them, aghast, what they were doing. They only answered me that things were miserable. To which I immediately replied, it is of course the greatest of all miseries that such godless people are so impudent and insolent that they allowed themselves to eat these dead bodies, which had died so long ago. They said, “It was the great unbearable famine that did it.”

Because I saw that they still to a certain extent could walk, and that they perhaps could have gained their subsistence by bringing hay to the city [of Augsburg], as others had done, I beat them vigorously with a stick and earnestly commanded them to carry to the churchyard the four remaining bodies, together with even the smallest pieces of bone in a little sack. After this task I had them come to the bailiff's house, and I inquired how many people they ate and whether they had all eaten them. They said unanimously that they had eaten in one sitting two women, named Barbara Mayer and Maria Weldeshofer, who died fourteen days before, along with two men. One of them was Gregor Thüringer, on the fifth day after his death. The other was Jacob Kreiner, who lay five whole weeks unburied in his house. They had eaten them on two occasions. I asked about how it tasted and how it was. They answered, “It didn't taste bad, and the best of it was the brain, the heart, and the kidneys.” While admitting this they bitterly cried and raised their hands and promised never to do such a thing again for the rest of their lives. With these

aforementioned people there were two others in the neighborhood, the widows Appolonia and Anna Thüringer, who joined them and were also involved. One of them, namely Appolonia, did not shy away from devouring her own husband, Gregor Thüringer.

I could not fail to tell Your Reverence and Grace about this.

Actum Kutzenhausen, February 3rd 1635

Your Reverence's and Grace's

Most subordinately and obediently [signed],

Michael Lebhardt, Plebanus [Pastor]

Dr. Kaspar Zeiller, *Response to Father Lebhardt,*
February 1635

What you reported on Feb. 3, regarding the parish of Agawang and the ghastly deeds that recently happened there, I read with the greatest astonishment. Because God has inflicted such a horrible famine for our manifold sins, we must submit this case to His inscrutable judgment. I would only remind you that you should be compassionate toward the same poor people suffering from this extreme famine and that you should spare them any beatings.