



**Sigrun Haude.** *In the Shadows of "Savage Wolves": Anabaptist Muenster and the German Reformation during the 1530s.* Leiden: Brill, 2000. 192 pp. \$70.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-391-04100-4.



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There can be no doubt that following the claims of nineteenth-century historiography is no longer the way to evaluate the incidents of the Anabaptist kingdom of Muenster (1534-35). In her study, Sigrun Haude not only rejects traditional questions about the kingdom and their answers, she also factors out the residue of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century reactions to the movement in order to concentrate on issues of concern to contemporaries and provide new insights about their reactions. Her main interest concerns the political reactions of the early modern rulers who had to deal with new developments in Muenster. She emphasizes that these responses were far from "undifferentiated," or a "wild political, or religious, response" (p. 1). Instead, she shows in her study that a wide range of reactions, based on local interests as well as on imperial pressures, occurred in response to the events at Muenster. Haude compares the responses of the Catholic city of Cologne with those in the Protestant metropolis Strasbourg. She provides additional comparison to developments in the Lower Rhineland, where Rhenish princes tried to deal with the "heretic threat" coming from Muenster.

But her first chapter is devoted to an analysis of research done so far on the developments in Muenster. Haude assesses historical turning points in research on the Anabaptists, like the "polygenesis thesis" of the

1970s, which led to a completely new understanding of Anabaptist roots and origins. Although numerous approaches to the communication, military history, constitutional structures and quantitative aspects of the movement have already been made, Haude adds a new dimension by concentrating not only on the reactions to the kingdom of Muenster, but also on what these reactions reveal about German society during the 1530s. Only in times of crisis, Haude suggests, can one come close to examining the fears, hopes and functioning of society's religious and political institutions. Her second crucial claim is that historians must distinguish between the way people acted and thought after the religious uprising in Muenster.

In her second chapter, which deals with Muenster and the public fear in response to events there, she shows in a convincing way that propaganda and information dominated the discourse about the incidents in Muenster. Propaganda consisted of strong language and hostile portrayals of the Anabaptists. Many stereotypes were used, like the apprehension of God's punishment, which did not differentiate between the potential of the Anabaptist movements and the actual actions that were taken in Muenster. In this propaganda, Anabaptists in Muenster were regarded as heretics and were closely linked to the Peasants's War and popular uprisings led by Thomas

Muentzer; consequently, Anabaptists appeared as “demagogues and rabble rousers” (p. 23). Political leaders of all confessions had a strong interest in preventing these kinds of developments in their own territories. Therefore, their rhetoric reflected their fear as much as it led to the summoning of their troops against the Munsterite Anabaptists.

But Haude insists on greater precision when it comes to assessing the political reaction to events at Muenster. Although the fear of anarchy was as widespread and shared as the idea that the Muenster Anabaptists should be regarded as criminals and outsiders, the responses by political leaders in Cologne, the Rheinland and Strasbourg were hardly homogeneous. Only political leaders in areas not involved in the incidents at Muenster seemed to rely on the political structures they had already developed. Even if they were far from indifferent to the developments in Westphalia, they still followed their traditional routines in dealing with heretics in their territories. But if those leaders were involved in the response to Muenster, either by sending troops or donating money, as Cologne did, the anxieties of propaganda were taken much more seriously.

In Cologne, the response to the Anabaptist kingdom of Muenster led to the final step back from a previously lenient policy towards heretics. Before this point, they were generally accepted as long as they did not preach their faiths openly or cause public disturbances. Furthermore, citizens “of some renown” (p. 42), like Gerhard Westerburg or Wilhelm of Isenburg, were treated with forbearance, despite the fact that they were regarded as Lutherans. But after the uprising in Muenster, pressure was exerted on Cologne by Charles V, who feared that he could lose Cologne to Protestantism as well. Consequently, people opting for Lutheran or more vaguely Protestant ideas in the metropolis were treated more harshly by local authorities. Haude notes that these local leaders were quite aware of the political danger they were in, and accepted the Emperor’s policy to avoid further troubles. Therefore, the discovery of an Anabaptist congregation within the city walls “startled the councilors into unusual prolixity” (p. 47). While the policy in Cologne turned from tolerating heretics within the civic walls to examining them more closely, the political reaction in the Lower Rhineland was a bit more severe, as Haude notes in her fourth chapter. Due to the “powerful stir” (p. 70), social and religious reform programs were launched to ensure that people from the countryside would not turn to sects like the Anabaptists. Religious teaching had to be supervised, for instance, and no

foreigners were allowed to settle in the area without certified papers. Haude points out that the reforms forced Hermann of Wied and John of Cleves to the same negotiating table for the first time ever. This example shows that confessional boundaries were crossed to prevent the Anabaptist threat from spreading into the Rheinland.

After dealing with the anxieties in the Rheinland, Haude moves on to the political reactions in another community, that of Protestant Strasbourg. No immediate reaction to the incidents in Muenster took place there. Steps were taken against heretics only in 1538, when Jan van Batenburg came to the city, caused trouble and reminded the local authorities of the danger from some Anabaptist groups. Nonetheless, while the city’s ministers demanded harsher consequences for the heretics, the magistrate preferred to rely on traditional liberties and urban concord. In their minds, there seemed to be no need to turn Strasbourg into a pious town, although they did regard religion as essential. Demands for reforms in order to ensure confessional homogeneity were issued by the ministers in large numbers. But despite their efforts, the approach to dissenting groups followed by the Strasbourg leadership was quite different from the minister’s demands.

The author notes that an emphasis on dialogue, a growing awareness of the differences among the sectarians and making of a distinction between “devious leaders and ignorant followers” characterized their approach. The lost sheep had to be gathered (p. 105). Due to their emphasis on traditional approaches, the Strasbourg magistrates did not draw connections between Anabaptists and popular sedition as much as the local authorities in Cologne and the Rheinland did. Being accustomed to diverse circles of heretics thus led Strasbourg to a more differentiated attitude toward religious dissent after the uprising in Muenster. But both cities were connected by the fact their magistrates insisted on maintaining their own jurisdiction, repelling the efforts of the bishops, and holding on to their civic sovereignty—all this, despite the anxiety that the incidents in Muenster or their aftermath exerted on them. Common political interests even marked a bridge across confessional differences and divisive developments, like the shattering front of the imperial cities at the Diet of Speyer in 1529.

All in all, Haude discovers “conflict and concord” in the relationships between various political and religious parties (p. 147). But although a common political front between Catholics and Protestants against Muenster was shown in order to bring down the uprising, Catholic par-

ties never let the chance pass to argue that only Protestants had to be found guilty of encouraging the development of the sects. Haude's study not only gives an insight into the political dimensions of the reactions towards the developments in Münster 1534-35, it also challenges commonly accepted ideas, like the confession-alization paradigm. Alliances between Protestant and Catholic troops to crush the kingdom and political interests that linked different confessions suggest that—especially in threatening situations like an uprising—confessional beliefs had to take a back seat. Other alliances gained top priority, even when acting neutrally towards confessional difference was the result. Fault lines lay elsewhere as well: magistrates against episcopal courts, cities against princes, the emperor against imperial cities. These lines of fracture were only to some extent determined by the struggles of Protestants against Catholics. This aspect of Haude's claims in particular should be taken seriously and considered in further research. Finally, Haude puts the Anabaptist movement back into the limelight, encouraging the idea that the activities of these groups do not have to be regarded as

minor episodes of the sixteenth century. Their number might not suggest this conclusion, but the political response they caused and the fact that they developed from the “very centers of the Evangelical reformers' movement” (p. 150) suggests something completely different.

Although the genuine political and, therefore, non-religious reaction towards the developments in Münster are sometimes not quite clearly differentiated from the religious response, this well-written and researched study provides new and inspiring insights into the responses to the Anabaptist kingdom. For Haude's conclusions, as well as due to the crucial comparison she provides of a Protestant and a Catholic city with the countryside, this study should be highly valued.

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