Mother, Matron, Matriarch: Sanctity and Social Change in the Cult of St. Anne, 1450-1750
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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History in the Graduate School of Duke University

2009
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

As a saint with no biblical or historical basis for her legend, St. Anne could change radically over time with cultural and doctrinal shifts even as her status as Mary’s mother remained at the core of her legend and provided an appearance of consistency. “Mother, Matron, Matriarch: Sanctity and Social Change in the Cult of St. Anne, 1450-1750” takes issue with the general view that the cult of St. Anne in Northern Europe flourished in the late Middle Ages, only to wither away in the Reformation, and advances a new understanding of it. It does so by taking a longer view, beginning around 1450 and extending to 1750 in order to show how St. Anne’s cult and the Holy Kinship elucidated long-term shifts in religious and cultural mores regarding the relationships between domesticity and sanctity, what constituted properly pious lay behavior, and attitudes towards women (in particular older women). Materials used include *vita*, devotional texts, confraternal records, sermons, treatises, and works of art across the time period under investigation. After a period of decline during the mid-sixteenth century (as evidenced by lower pilgrimage statistics, confraternity records, and a lack of text production), St. Anne enjoyed a revival in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Catholicism in a “purified” form, reconfigured to suit new religious and social norms which emphasized patriarchal authority within the household and obedience to the Catholic Church among the laity. In this context, St. Anne became a humble, pious widow whose own purity serves as proof of Mary’s Immaculate Conception, and whose meek devotion to her holy daughter and grandson exemplified properly obedient reverence for the laity.
Dedication

To my parents, Gary and Marcia Welsh, my sister, Kristie Welsh,

and my grandparents,

Dwight and Irene Mayne

and

Robert and Kay Welsh
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Introduction

“Help me, St. Anne, I wish to become a monk!”¹ With these words, young law student Martin Luther changed the course of his life and embarked upon a path that would drastically alter the religious landscape of Western Europe. Nowadays, St. Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary, is most widely remembered for being the saint upon whom Luther cried out to in panic during a thunderstorm in 1505 on his way back to Erfurt, and for her subsequent role as a target of Protestant ire. At the time Luther called on her, however, her cult had risen from a position of relatively little importance in the earlier Middle Ages to become one of the most prominent in the Holy Roman Empire, even though there was no biblical or historical basis for Anne’s legend. This meant that interpretations of St. Anne could change radically over time with cultural and doctrinal shifts even as her status as Mary’s mother remained at the core of her legend and provided an appearance of consistency. During the early sixteenth-century heyday of her cult, miracle stories, vitae, broadsheets, and liturgical texts devoted to St. Anne, her three marriages, and her extended family were printed; St. Anne confraternities sprang up rapidly across Northern Europe; pilgrims traveled to sites such as Annaberg and Düren to view relics and celebrate St. Anne’s Day; and innumerable private and public works of

art depicted the Holy Kinship or *Anna Selbdritt*. St. Anne was ascribed wide-ranging powers in her role as mother and grandmother to her devotees, a role which promised protection to those who, like Luther, called upon her for aid in distress.

As Friedel Roolfs wryly notes, St. Anne was “absolutely the saint” for Northern Europe between the mid-fifteenth and the mid-sixteenth century, until the currents of religious and social change removed her from Protestantism and precipitated a series of significant shifts in how she was viewed and venerated within the Catholic church. It is this easily-traceable rise and fall that has defined the cult of St. Anne in much of historical thought: A saint without historical basis; an ever-expanding kingroup organized around her apocryphal three marriages; a former follower who later laments that he had been more devoted to her than to Christ, making her into an idol; the entire panoply of late medieval religious behavior, from piety to relic theft to confraternal excess; and a meteoric trajectory out of and back into obscurity within the span of less than a century. In these narratives, St. Anne serves as a brilliant example of the last blossoming of an archaic style of spirituality that was swept away in the first decades of the Reformation. The cult of St. Anne vindicates Huizinga’s excoriation of the late medieval faithful for “following the sloppy course of a religious practice half gone to seed,” because only a culture “thoroughly permeated with religiosity and that takes faith for granted knows

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2The Holy Kinship is the name given to the various depictions of St. Anne’s extended family, and will be discussed in Chapter 3. The *Anna Selbdritt* is an artistic representation of St. Anne, the Virgin Mary, and the Christ Child together. While there is no real term for this grouping in English, it translates roughly as “Anne in a group of three,” with Anne as the main figure. The many representations of St. Anne around Luther, for example, included at least three representations of St. Anne in St. Mary’s cathedral in Erfurt: one painting of St. Anne and St. Joachim at the Golden Gate as part of a set of Marian paintings, one *Anna Selbdritt* within the cathedral, and another *Anna Selbdritt* in a low niche on the wall between the two doors of the main entrance to the church.


4Luther, *WA* vol. 36, p. 388; vol. 41, pp. 653, 697.
These excesses and degenerations. Even Angelika Dörfler-Dierken and Ton Brandenbarg, whose works focus on the ways Northern European humanists promoted the cult of St. Anne in order to inspire the laity, locate St. Anne’s cult firmly in the Middle Ages.

I. Argument

This thesis takes issue with the general view of the cult of St. Anne in Northern Europe and advances a new understanding of it. It does so by taking a longer view, beginning around 1450 and extending to 1750 in order to show how St. Anne’s cult and the Holy Kinship elucidated long-term shifts in religious and cultural mores regarding the relationships between domesticity and sanctity, what constituted properly pious lay behavior, and attitudes towards women (in particular older women). Perceived in this way, St. Anne’s cult provides an example of how important it is to move beyond old clichés that rigidly separate “elite” and “popular” religion in medieval and early modern Europe. My research suggests that St. Anne and her extended family rose to prominence in the late Middle Ages because their diverse roles appealed to a broad range of social strata and because the familial structure itself was presented as expandable and inclusive. This familial structure was intimately connected to new ideas about the sacrality of proper marital and family life and individual lay devotion to God, ideas which were in part realized by the Protestant Reformation.

When viewed in this way, a paradox emerges: Though St. Anne and her family anticipated lay attitudes that became more widespread in the sixteenth century, her cult was criticized and ultimately rejected by Protestants. For instance, Reformation-era tracts on marriage ignored the model provided by St. Anne, while reformers vigorously

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attacked the Holy Kinship. St. Anne’s name was repeatedly invoked by reformers in conjunction with what they saw as incorrect and excessive devotional practices. Nevertheless, the actual disappearance of St. Anne from Protestantism took decades.

This conflict and the inconsistent attitude towards St. Anne in the early Reformation is typified by Martin Luther, who spent most of his adult life debating with himself about St. Anne’s existence.

The final topic of this study is an investigation of the severe post-Tridentine reconfiguration of St. Anne, an area which has not yet been investigated by scholars of early modern Christianity. Initially on the defensive against Protestant attack, the post-Tridentine Catholic Church also came to see the cult of St. Anne as excessive, and the Holy Kinship as emblematic of the kind of rampant, unregulated popular religious practices that had lead to the Reformation. After a definite period of decline during the mid-sixteenth century (as evidenced by lower pilgrimage statistics, confraternity records, and a lack of text production), St. Anne enjoyed a revival in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Catholicism in a “purified” form, reconfigured to suit new religious and social norms which emphasized patriarchal authority within the household and obedience to the Catholic Church among the laity. In this context, St. Anne became a humble, pious widow whose own purity serves as proof of Mary’s Immaculate Conception, and whose

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6 The easy answer, of course, is that St. Anne is not found in Scripture, and Protestantism did away with the cult of the saints anyway. However, as will be shown in Chapter Four, this simplistic view fails to recognize the complexities of the debate, and the specific place of St. Anne and the Holy Kinship within it.

7 The primary focus in this dissertation is on Lutheran Protestantism, because St. Anne and the Holy Kinship seem to have been a subject of more debate for a longer period of time among Lutherans than other Protestant groups. The iconoclasm present in the Reformed tradition to some extent subsumed debate about specific saints within more general criticism of the entire cult of saints as idolatry. In addition, the strongest veneration of St. Anne was geographically located outside of Reformed territories. A more detailed examination of St. Anne in this tradition represents a potentially interesting comparative project for future development.

8 See Chapter Four.
meek devotion to her holy daughter and grandson exemplified properly obedient reverence for the laity.

The overall goal is to illuminate the rich symbolic network of religious culture in late medieval and early modern Northern Europe through the use of St. Anne. I hope that this study will provide an opening for further work using this wider historical point of view to examine continuities, breaks, and shifts within religion and society using a perspective which extends across both the medieval and early modern period.

II. Historiography

The events of the Reformation and Catholic Reformation have shaped the parameters of the historiography of St. Anne and the Holy Kinship, especially in relationship to what is now known as popular religion or popular belief. Development of the cult of St. Anne took place within and across various social strata. The interactions among these levels illustrate the complex religiosity of the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries. For several centuries, however, this complexity was obscured by a confessionally-dominated historiography which had no room for it, and which viewed aspects of St. Anne’s cult, particularly the Holy Kinship, in terms of ignorant behavior on the part of the uneducated late medieval laity. Her decline or reconfiguration represented a long-overdue pruning by the official forces of Protestantism or Catholicism as they restored Christianity by freeing it from popular accretions. In addition to perpetuating the debates of the Reformation era, most scholarship on St Anne from the nineteenth century to the present is characteristically narrow in scope. That is, it is primarily textually- and archivally-based, and focuses on the period between 1450 and 1530. In the course of my analysis, I shall demonstrate that by incorporating evidence of popular devotion,
particularly attached to religious images and objects, and continuing my focus to the mid-eighteenth century, a new narrative of St. Anne’s cult emerges.

The fundamental outline of the Protestant approach to St. Anne’s cult is clearly visible in the first scholarly work dealing with the cult of St. Anne, a doctoral dissertation written in 1703 by Georg Heinrich Goetze, a Lutheran minister who lived in Annaberg.\(^9\) Perhaps it was his personal background, and his position within a town which had been named for St. Anne and where the main church still displayed the beautiful marble altar devoted to this saint, that led Goetze to focus on her cult. His primary goal in writing is to debunk the cult of St. Anne as a “novelty” which arose shortly before the time of Martin Luther around a saint who wasn’t even present in Scripture. For Goetze, the late medieval invention of a saint demonstrates that the foundation of Catholic belief lies in superstition rather than Scripture. *De Cultu Annae* uses the cult of St. Anne as a device to attack Catholicism and praise Martin Luther for leading people out of the darkness of the Middle Ages. It is very obviously (and unsurprisingly) biased, but remains a valuable primary source for the early modern Protestant viewpoint, as well as containing significant excerpts from medieval and early modern texts about St. Anne.\(^10\) More importantly for historiographical analysis, because his work was the earliest, subsequent studies had to engage with Goetz’s arguments about when devotion to St. Anne arose, who was venerating her, and why.

\(^9\) George H. Goetze, *De Cultu Annae, Aviae Christi. In Misniam Invecto. Dissertatio Historico-Theologica Qua Plurimum Reverendo Ministerio Ecclesiae Annaeontanae et Circumjectae Diocesae*, (Leipzig: Joh. Christoph Branbenburgeri, 1702). Goetze also represents the start of the trend for St. Anne to be examined in the context of dissertation work.

\(^10\) Angelika Dörfler-Dierken lists Goetze’s work in her bibliography among the secondary literature, rather than as a primary source. Her placement of the book is an interesting choice, possibly based on its status as a dissertation rather than a religious tract, or possibly because 1702 falls outside of the scope of her examination, and a text from that period is thus not going to be analyzed as evidence for contemporary beliefs. Angelika Dörfler-Dierken, *Die Verehrung der heiligen Anna in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), p. 351.
Few histories of St. Anne were published during the nineteenth century, and those that were continued to be strongly divided along confessional lines.\(^{11}\) Both Catholic and Protestant writers had to grapple with the question of “popular” belief in the cult of St. Anne; specifically, how to explain the sudden growth of St. Anne’s cult among the late medieval laity and define what St. Anne’s devotee’s expected from her. Protestants emphasized the popular aspect of St. Anne’s cult in order to deny its validity and tie it to wider criticism of Catholicism. Ernst Schaumkell called it part of a period of “a dense atmosphere of superstitious ideas” and “Christian paganism of the coarsest kind.”\(^{12}\) Pope Pius IX’s declaration in 1854 that the Immaculate Conception of Mary was dogma obviously impacted the veneration of St. Anne in conjunction with her daughter. Catholic church historian Franz Falk’s 1878 article “The Veneration of St. Anne in the Fifteenth Century,” was the origin of the oft-repeated thesis that the late medieval growth of St. Anne’s cult was due to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.\(^{13}\) By tying the cult of St. Anne to a theological point about the Virgin Mary, Falk gave it a basis disconnected from the popular belief that historians on both sides of the confessional divide had been criticizing.

Confessional difficulties treating popular belief within the cult of St. Anne are most evident in the work of Beda Kleinschmidt, a German Franciscan who published a

\(^{11}\) For a complete list of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature on the cult of St. Anne, see Angelika Dörfler-Dierken’s summary, Dörfler-Dierken, *Verehrung*, pp. 26-23.

\(^{12}\) “dichten Atmosphäre von Abergläubischen Vorstellungen,” “christliche Heidentum krassester Art,” Ernst Schaumkell, *Der Kultus der heiligen Anna am Ausgange des Mittelalters: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des religiösen Lebens am Vorabend der Reformation*, (Freiburg i.Br.: J.C.B. Mohr, 1893), p 70, p 51. Schaumkell is also the origin of the claim that St. Anne was historically the patron saint of miners. See Dörfler-Dierken, *Verehrung*, p. 30.

comprehensive study of St. Anne in 1930.\textsuperscript{14} This was the first of a planned series dealing with folklore (\textit{Volkskunde}), and Kleinschmidt emphatically declares his desire to bring together “scientific hagiography” (\textit{wissenschaftliche Hagiographie}), art history, and folklore in this study of St. Anne. His research goals are ambitious, and his discussion of what is necessary to study a saint properly anticipates later historiographical developments. In the introduction, he declares that it is becoming more and more evident

\textit{
… that countless connections exist between hagiography, iconography, and folklore, which cannot be overlooked when the veneration accorded a saint at the time and by posterity is to be evaluated correctly. Next to the written word, the painted and carved image and folk custom report to us about the appreciation of a saint, and give us valuable clues concerning the dimension and strength of this veneration. If the language of art is not listened to, and if one doesn’t pursue the folk customs, then a picture results which is not infrequently incorrect, and which is always incomplete.\textsuperscript{15}
}

Kleinschmidt focuses on the “correct” evaluation of St. Anne’s cult in order to contrast his arguments with those of Protestant historians. Where Goetze had emphasized Martin Luther’s statement that the veneration of St. Anne was something unheard of in previous decades, Kleinschmidt sought to show that the roots of her cult dated back to the earliest history of Christianity using both textual and pictorial examples. The book is densely packed with photographs of works of art, buildings, and objects dedicated to St. Anne, and explores every aspect of St. Anne’s cult, from confraternities to bells with


\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Mehr und mehr bricht sich das Erkenntnis Bahn, daß zwischen Hagiographie, Ikonographie und Volkskunde zahlreiche Zusammenhänge bestehen, die nicht übersehen werden dürfen, wenn die einem Heiligen von der Mit- und Nachwelt gezollte Verehrung richtig gewertet werden soll. Neben dem geschriebenen Worte berichten uns auch das gemalte und gemeißelte Bild und der Volksbrauch über die Wertschätzung eines Heiligen und geben uns wertvolle Aufschlüsse über den Umfang und die Stärke dieser Verehrung. Wird diese Sprache der Kunst nicht belauscht, und geht man dem Volksbräuchen nicht nach, dann ergibt sich nicht selten ein verzeichnetes, sicher immer ein unvollständiges Bild.}” Kleinschmidt, \textit{Heilige Anna}, p xxi.
dedicatory inscriptions. It continues to be an amazing resource, particularly for buildings, works of art, or documents which have been destroyed since 1930.\textsuperscript{16}

Kleinschmidt’s analysis of St. Anne’s cult, particularly his discussion of its late medieval heyday in Northern Europe, became the standard for subsequent historical discussions of St. Anne. Even the recent \textit{Medieval Germany: An Encyclopedia}, published in 2001, uses Kleinschmidt as the primary source in the entry on St. Anne and the \textit{Anna Selbdritt}, ignoring the existence of several important works on the cult of St. Anne dating from the early 1990s.\textsuperscript{17}

There are, however, several problems with accepting Kleinschmidt as a comprehensive guide to the veneration of St. Anne. First, his determination to counter Protestant arguments by showing the depth and breadth of devotion to the saint leads him to generalize widely from minimal evidence, particularly when discussing the first several centuries of Christianity. He also assigns St. Anne the role of patron saint to an astonishingly wide-ranging list of professions and activities, without giving any historical context for them. They are presented as a set, eternal facet of devotion to St. Anne. This includes, for example, taking Schaumkell’s claim that St. Anne was the patron saint of miners at face value. Second, Kleinschmidt’s personal devotion to the Virgin Mary influenced his theories regarding the rise of the cult of St. Anne in the late fifteenth century. Kleinschmidt promoted and extrapolated from Falk's seminal claim that devotion to St. Anne resulted from fifteenth-century belief in the Immaculate Conception, arguing that devotion to St Anne was a way of honoring Mary through her mother.

\textsuperscript{16}This is not true only for Germany; since Kleinschmidt aims to be comprehensive in his treatment of St. Anne, he includes significant information about sites in the rest of Europe and the Middle East.

Kleinschmidt’s arguments about the Immaculate Conception became a defining element of theories regarding the rise of St. Anne’s cult, accepted without question by subsequent scholars until they were disproved by Angelika Dörfler-Dierken’s research in the early 1990s.\(^\text{18}\)

The third and most significant problem with Kleinschmidt’s analysis lies in his approach to what he refers to as “folklore,” one of the key areas he argues must be looked at in order to ascertain the full dimensions of a saint’s cult. In Kleinschmidt, the difference between “Volkskunde” as it was studied in the 1930s and the present-day study of “popular belief” is clearly visible. The beliefs and practices of the laity are very useful for proving that St. Anne’s cult had a long history and a wide geographic distribution, and for showing the deep piety of medieval Christianity, but Kleinschmidt is unwilling to look at them as part of a wider contemporary religious and social context. Throughout the book, the unspoken thesis assumes that a set of recoverable historical facts regarding St. Anne and her family exist, and any perceived deviation from those facts represent the unfortunate delusions of people who were caught up in the ignorance of the Middle Ages. He differentiates between “popular” devotion to St. Anne, which was tainted by ideas such as the Holy Kinship, and “learned” devotion, which venerated St. Anne because of belief in the Immaculate Conception.

Kleinschmidt’s personal faith also affects his discussion of popular beliefs. As a Catholic who was devoted to St. Anne and the Virgin Mary (particularly the latter), he encounters particularly serious difficulties when he looks at the Holy Kinship. His beliefs do not allow him to recognize that this earlier conception of St. Anne’s larger family could have been accepted as valid and truthful; instead, he avoids the issue by

\(^{18}\text{Kleinschmidt, } Heilige Anna, p. 65.\)
claiming that only the uneducated, simple layfolk held such misconceptions; misconceptions in no way represented the larger truth about St. Anne at any point in time. This leads to some particularly complicated verbal tap-dancing when dealing with figures such as Johannes Trithemius, the learned fifteenth-century abbot of Sponheim, or Rudolf Agricola, the German humanist. Both these men were clearly educated, devout Catholics who venerated St. Anne and assiduously promoted her cult, yet they still held to beliefs Kleinschmidt sees as false. His discussion of the Holy Kinship takes place under the heading of “Popular Expansions of the Legend,” (Volkstümliche Weiterbildung der Legende) and after discussing how widespread belief in the Holy Kinship was, even among the well-educated, he concludes his chapter with the words, “Let it additionally be mentioned, that a St. Anne legend from this time period has also been preserved in Ethiopian literature, which goes far beyond Western narratives in its fantasy.”¹⁹ For Kleinschmidt, the embarrassment of centuries of incorrect belief within his own faith could be mitigated somewhat by claiming that other, less civilized cultures, held to more ridiculous notions.²⁰

After Kleinschmidt’s book, no more research on St. Anne took place until the mid-1980s. By this point, popular belief and gender studies had become recognized fields of historical analysis. Both of these fields had a significant impact on interpretations of St. Anne and the Holy Kinship. Beginning with Werner Esser’s study

¹⁹”Erwähnt sei noch, daß uns aus dieser Zeit auch in der äthiopischen Literatur eine Annenlegende erhalten ist, die über die abendländischen Erzählungen an Phantastik weit hinausgeht.” Kleinschmidt, Heilige Anna, p. 262. For the story of St. Colette, see Chapter Three.
²⁰Kleinschmidt is obviously unaware of some of the medieval French legends later analyzed by Francesca Sautman, which recount variations on the conception of and raising of St. Anne which owe much to Celtic myth and little or nothing to Christianity. Francesca Sautman, “Saint Anne in Folk Tradition,” in: Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, eds., Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990), pp. 70-73. See Chapter One for further discussion of these legends.
of the iconography of the Holy Kinship, historians have written about the cult of St. Anne from a socio-cultural perspective rather than a confessionally-defined one.\(^{21}\) As Robert Scribner noted in his essay for the landmark *Handbook of European History, 1450-1600*, popular belief “has been perhaps the most significant growth area in historical studies of late-medieval and early modern Europe over the past decade.”\(^{22}\)

One of the most important effects of the acceptance of popular belief as a recognized model for understanding the cult of St. Anne has been to free historians from the binary structure presented in earlier studies. The ability to look at her cult without positioning it as either merely the outgrowth of popular devotion or an element of theological debates about her daughter expanded the potential for fresh interpretations of St. Anne’s cult in the later Middle Ages, because the types of belief which had been dismissed or used as a means of criticizing the cult in earlier works had suddenly become relevant to more general historiographical trends looking at medieval and pre-Reformation religious and social structures. This led to a spate of studies of St. Anne in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Werner Esser, mentioned above, was the first to connect the iconography of the Holy Kinship to fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century urban family composition, and to trace the historical, theological, and hagiographical development of St. Anne’s extended family. Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn edited a collection of essays discussing St. Anne across medieval Europe.\(^{23}\) The overall portrait of St. Anne that emerges from this collection is of a “portmanteau” saint, packed


with meanings that the reader or viewer unpacks to arrive at the specific meaning and function within a given context. Ton Brandenbarg’s work in the Netherlands and Rhineland argues that St. Anne became so popular because the late fifteenth-century upper middle-class saw the Holy Kinship as a reflection of their own lives, and as a model for proper bourgeois marriage.\textsuperscript{24}

The most comprehensive of these recent scholarly examinations of St. Anne’s cult is the dissertation written by Angelika Dörfler-Dierken, \textit{The Veneration of St. Anne in the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period}.\textsuperscript{25} Her main foci are the humanist promotion of St. Anne and the development of St. Anne confraternities. Dörfler-Dierken structures her use of textual and archival material according to those two goals, working with \textit{vitae}, confraternal records, treatises, and humanist writings printed prior to 1530 while excluding liturgical texts, hymns, and art.\textsuperscript{26} This use of humanist sources by Brandenbarg and Dörfler-Dierken is a new development in St. Anne historiography that breaks from the earlier model of popular belief as the driving force behind the cult’s growth. Dörfler-Dierken’s connects the rise of St. Anne’s cult to the rise of the humanist movement in Northern Europe and argues that that one of the primary expressions of St. Anne’s cult was the establishment of upper-class urban confraternities dedicated to the saint. Tying the growth of St. Anne’s cult to learned culture challenged previous interpretations that viewed it as part of late medieval popular devotion, whether those

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{24}Ton Brandenbarg, \textit{Heilig Familieleven: Verspreiding en waardering van de Historie van Sint-Anna in de stedelijke cultuur in de Nederlanden en het Rijnland aan het begin van de moderne tijd (15de/16de eeuw)}, (Nijmegen: Sun, 1990).

\textsuperscript{25}Dörfler-Dierken, \textit{Verehrung}.

\textsuperscript{26}In conjunction with her dissertation on St. Anne, Dörfler-Dierken assembled a guide to St. Anne confraternities, listed alphabetically by city, with foundation dates and archival information. Angelika Dörfler-Dierken, \textit{Vorreformatorische Bruderschaften der hl. Anna}, (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1992). Despite the title, she does include listings for confraternities which were founded after the pre-Reformation period.
\end{footnotesize}
interpretations had classified popular devotion as ignorant superstition or as uneducated but devout piety.

Dörfler-Dierken argues that humanists promoted St. Anne’s example as a saintly template of married life suitable for emulation by the laity. St. Anne, engaged in the world yet living a life of such virtue that she is worthy to bear and raise the Virgin Mary, becomes the model for a fulfilled lay life. While Dörfler-Dierken sees elements of early modern ideas about raising the religious status of marriage and family life within humanist promotion of the St. Anne, her timeframe precludes any analysis of how these elements interact with the Reformation.

In addition to analyzing humanist texts, one of Dörfler-Dierken’s major purposes is disproving several historiographical myths about the cult of St. Anne, most notably in an entire chapter dedicated to the Immaculate Conception issue. She devotes a great deal of time to detailed refutations of earlier scholars, particularly Kleinschmidt, who saw Anne entirely in light of the Immaculate Conception debate, as well as those who saw St. Anne’s cult as an example of the “flaws” within late medieval Christianity.

Dörfler-Dierken’s meticulous collection of source materials, and her tracing of the development of strands of St. Anne’s legend in Northern Europe, make her study invaluable for scholars looking at connections between the humanists and religion as well as the cult of St. Anne. Any subsequent work on St. Anne, including my own, is deeply indebted to her. However, by choosing an extremely limited timeframe for her examination, she views St. Anne primarily as a late medieval saint. Her narrow range of sources also omits a great deal of evidence about the complex aspects of the movement, including records dealing with pilgrimage practices, liturgical texts, songs, and, most
importantly, works of art.

The most recent publication on the cult of St. Anne, Virginia Nixon’s *Mary’s
Mother: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Europe*, moves even further away from previous
scholarly conceptions about St. Anne and popular religion. Nixon argues that St. Anne’s
cult did not spring from popular religious devotion at all, but was entirely imposed from
above. For Nixon, St. Anne’s “clerical and humanist promoters saw her cult as a means
for controlling lay, especially female, piety, and … they built on—and encouraged—
anxiety about salvation to do so.” Nixon refuses to grant any agency to the laity,
instead seeing the growing textual production and increase in confraternities devoted to
St. Anne as an attempt at control on the part of the elite. This “imposition from above”
point of view is expressed through such chapter titles as “Anne’s Promoters: Why Did
They Do It?” She views all members of the clergy and religious orders as a monolithic
group, with the same goals. While in some ways her thesis is the opposite of pre-1980s
theories that saw St. Anne’s cult as the result of popular belief run rampant, it is just as
restrictive in its insistence on a strict division between popular and elite, and its refusal to
allow for lay initiative or active engagement with belief or practice. Where Dörfler-
Dierken and Brandenbarg see the establishment of a model for promoting married life,
for example, Nixon claims that marriage was being presented in a negative way by
celibate clerics, who viewed it as incompatible with holiness.

The surge of interest in St. Anne from the mid-eighties through the early nineties
occurred in the wider context of the development of gender as a category of historical

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27 Virginia Nixon, *Mary’s Mother: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Europe*, (University Park, PA: The
analysis. St. Anne’s sanctity has always been grounded in her highly gendered role as mother and grandmother, a role that originated in physical motherhood but went beyond that to involve the special emphasis laid on the responsibility of mothers for the moral and religious education of their daughters. Investigation of what that gendered role meant within a historical context did not take place until Esser’s work on the structure and iconography of the Holy Kinship. Viewing St. Anne’s cult from a perspective that seeks to understand how it functioned as an expression of both religious and gender-related ideals has expanded the scope of historical analysis past the definition of St. Anne as a maternal saint. Ton Brandenbarg unconvincingly tries to tie the cult of St. Anne to pre-Christian mother goddess cults within Europe. Angelika Dörfler-Dierken, Kathleen Ashley, and Pamela Sheingorn emphasize that St. Anne modeled qualities of piety that could be emulated by both woman and men, and was thus not exclusively a “women’s saint.” Dörfler-Dierken’s work on humanist veneration and promotion of St. Anne shows how she could function as a model for individual devotion and learned piety for male writers and a mixed-gender audience.

Gender analysis also led to a more concentrated focus on St. Anne as a model of idealized female behavior for laywomen, in particular mothers, widows, and older women. Esser and subsequent historians have contextualized St. Anne’s role as a visible, powerful, matriarch living a pious life in the world, asking what that image meant for the experience of late medieval women and how the shift from medieval to early modern affected women’s roles and status. Nixon argues that the cult of St. Anne was presented to women by male writers as a template for ideal behavior. All of the historians who have dealt with the cult of St. Anne from the early 1990s onwards have stressed the declining

30Brandenbarg, Familieleven, pp. 17-20.
status of women and the expansion of patriarchal household patterns within the Reformation as contributory factors in the decline of St. Anne’s cult.

Both earlier and current historiography of St. Anne in the Northern Europe has been strongly marked by her cult’s chronology. The assumption that St. Anne’s cult bloomed and then faded completely between around 1480 and 1550 makes for a dramatic narrative, in which the Reformation brings an end to a previously adored late medieval saint. Studies of St. Anne since the late 1980s have all focused on this narrow span of time (as is often evident in the subtitles, which define St. Anne in terms of the late Middle Ages). Angelika Dörfler-Dierken only examines sources printed before 1530; the contributors to Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn’s essay collection focus on the high and late Middle Ages and do not look past the late 1520s; Virginia Nixon insists that the pre-Reformation years are the “final state” of St. Anne’s cult, which is then swept neatly out of the way by the 1520s. Ton Brandenbarg views 1500 as the turning point between growth and decline for St. Anne’s cult, and barely touches on dates after that date. Defining the parameters of a study within those dates means that the primary historical issue becomes the question of why St. Anne’s cult experienced such dramatic growth in the late Middle Ages, and what role she played prior to the Reformation. Classifying St. Anne as a medieval saint forestalls the possibility of expanding the investigation into later decades and subsequent centuries.

32 Ton Brandenbarg, Heilig Familielieven: Verspreiding en waardering van de Historie van Sint-Anna in de stedelijke cultuur in de Nederlanden en het Rijnland aan het begin van de moderne tijd (15de/16de eeuw), (Nijmegen: Sun, 1990).
While every historical study must have an ending point, the idea that the Middle Ages “closed” when the Reformation started creates a set of boundaries that prevent asking questions which reach across them. Even though the historiographical perception of the divide between the Middle Ages and the Reformation has shifted since 1945 from a sharply-defined change to “a gradual, fluctuating, highly contextualized blending of “late medieval” with “early modern,” the majority of historians work within rather than across long-established chronological boundaries. Medieval historians present the radical socio-cultural transformations of the sixteenth century as an epilogue to their work on earlier centuries, while historians of the Reformation use the Middle Ages as a prologue to show the problems and tensions which Reformers faced. A brief sample of recent works dealing with issues of religion and gender illustrate this point. Katherine Jansen’s excellent study of the cult of Mary Magdalene stops with 1517, “the close of the Middle Ages… the textbook date marking the advent of the Reformation.” In *Wonderful Blood*, Caroline Walker Bynum defines the blood-related piety she studies as a phenomenon of the “long fifteenth century,” ending with Reformation attacks on this style of piety. Anne Winston-Allen’s investigation of convent life and the Observant movement closes with the start of Reformation-inspired movements to shut down convents altogether. As Merry Wiesner-Hanks notes, the break between medieval and early modern looms large for historians, and there have been “few analyses which cut

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across the divide, and talk about, for example, “Lancastrian/York/Tudor England,” or “Germany in the short fifteenth and long sixteenth century.” For modern historians, the differences between those time periods seem obvious; however, it is important to remember that the people living through them experienced them as continuous and contiguous centuries, not neatly periodized blocks.

III. Research Design

In my study, I selected the time period from 1450 to 1750 in order to extend the boundaries of historical inquiry by placing St. Anne within a broader religious and social context. This allows for a deeper investigation into how the cult of St. Anne and the Holy Kinship interacted with Reformation and Catholic Reformation thought than past historians have engaged in. Tracing trends from the Middle Ages through to the Baroque will shed new light on the process of religious and social change occurring over the course of these three crucial centuries. The longer time period highlights the continuities as well as the changes and erases the artificial boundaries encountered in previous work on St. Anne’s cult. I focus on changes in popular belief and the official Roman Church’s presentation of St. Anne, the ways looking at St. Anne can elucidate shifts in gender roles, and how St. Anne and the Holy Kinship demonstrate changes in the structure and role of the family over these three centuries.

I emphasize German- and Dutch-speaking Northern Europe, the areas where St. Anne’s cult experienced an explosive rise in popularity in the second half of the fifteenth century, and where the results of the Reformation and Catholic Reformation’s effects on the cult in subsequent centuries are most apparent. In addition to cultural and linguistic continuity with Germany, the Low Countries were at times part of the Holy Roman Empire and thus shared the same political sphere as their German-speaking neighbors. The Rhineland-Netherlands area is frequently studied as a single unit, linked by language, trade along the Rhine, and religious infrastructure, in religious historical works, including those about the cult of St. Anne.\(^38\) St. Anne was present in other parts of Europe, particularly France and England, but the beliefs and practices surrounding her differ so significantly they would constitute an entirely separate research project. The Netherlands and the Rhineland, the two areas which produced the largest number of late medieval texts and a significant percentage of the late medieval artwork presenting St. Anne and the Holy Kinship, will form an important component of the analysis; however, this study also includes other regions within the Holy Roman Empire, in particular Thuringia, Bavaria, and Saxony. The areas under investigation were all productive sites of St. Anne veneration that maintained similar devotional practices and beliefs as well as a common iconography. This broader geographical focus is particularly important given the chronological parameters of the study, as it allows me to include both areas which became Protestant and areas which remained Catholic.

This study focuses on clerical and popular expressions of the cult of St. Anne from the mid-fifteenth through the mid-eighteenth century. By looking at the same type of material across the periods under discussion in order to examine the cult over the long
term; for example, late-fifteenth century and seventeenth-century *vitae* represent the same genre, but speak from vastly different historical positions. Devotional texts, including prayers and songs, show how St. Anne was addressed over the centuries, and which other saints were referred to in conjunction with her. Confraternities and shrines demonstrate continuities and changes in the veneration of St. Anne over the centuries of their existence. A second goal is to examine the criticisms of St. Anne and the Holy Kinship within the Protestant and Catholic Reforms as part of analyzing the contours of St. Anne’s cult during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Finally, works of art played a vital role in propagating the cult of St. Anne. As Kleinschmidt recognized, the role of images and works of art as manifestations of a saint’s cult must be analyzed in order to fully understand the socio-cultural spaces filled by that saint. While people heard and read *Vitae*, shared miracle stories, and listened to sermons on saints’ days, it was through visual culture that the most substantial encounters between the faithful and their saints took place.\(^3^9\) Saints surrounded the medieval and early modern faithful, physical images reflecting and defining the faithful’s mental picture of their appearance and attributes. Shifts in the iconography of St. Anne and the Holy Kinship had strong connections to wider socio-cultural shifts, and the differences between the images of St. Anne displayed to the faithful in the late Middle Ages the eighteenth century are significant for understanding her changing role in Northern European Christianity.

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IV. Sources

In order to construct as complete a picture of St. Anne’s cult as possible, I have drawn from a wide range of sources across the three centuries under study. Materials used include printed vitae and miracle collections, confraternal records, liturgical texts, sermons, Protestant and Catholic treatises, broadsheets, devotional texts, and visual examples from the many representations of Anna Selbdritt and various configurations of the Holy Kinship. The source material for this study comes from the holdings of a variety of libraries and archives within Germany and the United States. The majority of the confraternal records originated from cities in the Rhineland, specifically Cologne, Koblenz, and Aachen. Works of art originally came from throughout the research area; while some are still located in churches, the majority are held by German and American museums. The origins of the post-Tridentine Catholic documents illuminate the geography of the Catholic Reformation; the majority were printed in Bavaria or Cologne.

V. Analytical Concepts

For this study, I use three analytical concepts in order to unpack the meaning of St. Anne for late medieval and early modern Northern Europe. The first, and most overarching, is the relationship and interaction between clerical and popular belief. I use the term “clerical” rather than “elite” or “learned” because is more indicative of the socio-cultural divisions relevant to the cult of St. Anne. Because the term “elite” implies a class-based distinction between the two groups, it carries overtones of earlier scholars’ relegation of St. Anne’s cult to the ignorant medieval masses. Setting up an opposition between “elite” and “popular” when discussing the veneration of St. Anne is also inaccurate; the depiction of Anne and her first husband Joachim as well-off, well-
established members of their community who gave two thirds of their income as alms fit well with middle- and upper-class urban conceptions of piety, and it was often the elite among the laity who were ardently devoted to St. Anne. Tax lists for the city of Kitzingen in 1522, for example, show that two thirds of the top third of the richest inhabitants were members of the city’s St. Anne confraternity.\textsuperscript{40} The St. Anne confraternity in Worms, founded in 1496, boasted among its members Emperor Maximilian I, the Empress, the archbishops of Mainz, Cologne, and Trier, Frederick the Wise of Saxony, Albert of Saxony, Georg of Bavaria, the bishops of Worms, Speyer, Eichstätt, and Freiburg, as well as many other nobles.\textsuperscript{41} By the same token, using the concept of “learned” as the opposite of “popular” religion implies that members of the latter group are less religiously competent or that their point of view has less validity. I use the term “popular” rather than “lay” as the counterpart to “clerical” because it allows for more interaction between the two groups; clerics were not suddenly transported out of the realm of popular belief when they were ordained.

One of the key endeavors for any study of St. Anne has been defining what is meant by the term “popular belief.” This has been particularly problematic for German historians, who have had to grapple with the weight of Nazi-era abuse of theories about popular culture and belief.\textsuperscript{42} As a result, Günther Lottes argued in 1984, the study of popular religion in German historiography was significantly slower to develop in

\textsuperscript{40}Dörrler-Dierken, \textit{Bruderschaften}, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{41}Dörrler-Dierken, \textit{Bruderschaften}, p. 175. The author notes that this confraternity must have had “eine enorme kultpropagandistische Wirkung” due to the enormous prestige of its members.
Germany than in England, France, or America. From the origins of the field in the late 1970s and 1980s when the relationship between popular and elite culture was constructed in simply binary terms, historians have come to recognize the complexities and shadings involved in the interactions across and between classes. Robert Scribner’s definition of popular religion as a process of exchange between the different components of society, in which negotiation played a key role in defining the end results for any given time and area, has been crucial for historical methodology. Religious beliefs and practices could manifest themselves on the “popular” level, only to be assimilated into the recognized, official practices or doctrines of the church, while official pronouncements and doctrines were constantly being interpreted and modified to fit the needs and structures of lay society.

Hermann Hörger points out that though “piety imbues society as a whole with meaning, it is embedded in a distinctly stratified social structure where each stratum experiences and forms that piety differently. …The more complex and differentiated the structure of a society, the more subtle and difficult it is to grasp its religious life as practised by its individual groups.”

The cult of St. Anne, with the gradual development and expansion of the Holy Kinship and the relationship between printed texts extolling the saint as a worthy model and devotional practices which might focus more on worldly or salvific benefits, is an excellent example of the complexities of this process. I argue

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that it is impossible to “solve” for popular religion when dealing with the cult of St. Anne; instead, it is vital to examine the entire complicated network of intersections and relationships between groups of devotees, groups of saints related to St. Anne, and pre- and post-Reformation religion. The relationship among these groups was mutable, not fixed, and was marked by interactions “occurring between the culturally activated text [or image] and the culturally activated reader, an interaction structured by the material, social, ideological, and institutional relationships in which both text and readers are inescapably inscribed.”

The second analytical concept used in this study is gender. In the three decades since Joan Kelly-Gadol’s famous question of whether women had a Renaissance or not, the burgeoning scholarship on women and gender has become a vital aspect of medieval and early modern historiography. As Merry Wiesner-Hanks notes in the most recent edition of *Reformation and Early Modern Europe: A Guide to Research*, if “1983 through 1992 saw an expansion, the 1990s and 2000s have seen an explosion” in the amount and scope of research on women, gender, and the family. Discussions of what it means to study women and gender have formed a constituent part of the field throughout its history. My goal with this study is to contribute to this ongoing conversation through an analysis of St. Anne. In this study, I use the term gender, following Joan Scott’s definition of gender as “a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived

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differences between the sexes, and … a primary way of signifying relationships of power.” The breadth of gender as an analytical category allows room for a discussion of how men as well as women related to St. Anne’s cult, and how both male and female roles were presented in depictions of the Holy Kinship. The customary placement in works of art of St. Anne’s three husbands and the husbands of her daughters outside of a physical space containing St. Anne, her daughters, and her grandchildren, foregrounds the role of the women as mothers and as women connected to one another by a blood relationship on the maternal side.

The longer period under study within this work also connects it to an ongoing debate within the field of gender history regarding historical periodization. Kelly-Gadol’s conclusion that women may have had a Renaissance, but that it did not overlap with that experienced by men, demonstrated that traditional divisions of history might not be equally valid for both genders. Two approaches to the question of periodization in women’s history have been productively explored by historians. The first is an investigation of traditional chronological divisions with a focus on women. During the 1980s, a group of historians focused on the effect of the Reformation and its social upheavals on the status of women. Much as Kelly-Gadol had framed her study within a time period traditionally hailed as a period of progress and culture, scholars looking at women in the Reformation examined whether the increased emphasis on marriage and the family was as beneficial to women as previous historians had claimed. Studies of women and work from the Middle Ages through the Reformation revealed that women’s

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place in the workforce was significantly eroded by new ideas about gender roles.\textsuperscript{51} Lyndal Roper defined the entire Reformation in terms of its impact on gender, arguing that Protestant ideas were co-opted by urban guilds that conceived of social order as inherently household-focused and patriarchally-based.\textsuperscript{52}

The second approach is to question whether traditional chronological divisions are equally applicable to both genders. As discussed above, the Reformation usually serves as a convenient caesura, an ending or starting point for historical investigations. This approach is predicated on the assumption that European society was transformed by the upheavals and reactions which began in the early sixteenth century. When looking at women’s history, however, this idea of a radical break between time periods draws attention away from analyzing similarities between the Middle Ages and the early modern period. Judith Bennett emphasizes that historians of women and gender need to investigate continuities across historical periods, rather than focusing on whether women’s status improved or declined from one period to another.\textsuperscript{53} One approach is a focus on different stages of women’s lives across a longer span of time.\textsuperscript{54} Heide Wunder, describing the lives of women and men from the late Middle Ages through to the eighteenth century, argues for a gradual shift in social mores and gender roles.\textsuperscript{55} She locates the larger change much earlier, during the High Middle Ages.


My approach in this study is a combination of both positions, breaking traditional chronological boundaries in order to study changes and continuities in female gender roles over the long term. Very few historians have investigated the potential connections between changes in the perception and cults of female saints from the late medieval period up through the Catholic Reformation and changes in the religious and social position of ordinary women. Donna Ellington’s examination of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century sermons about the Virgin Mary is the only study I am familiar with which uses this model.\textsuperscript{56}

Taken across the entire time span under discussion, gender analysis uses the performance and presentation of gender within the cult of St. Anne as a lens to view the ways in which the religious and socio-cultural upheavals of the sixteenth century sharpened gender differences and (re-) defined women’s function and place within both Protestant and Catholic society. St. Anne was a model of ideal female behavior set before women and men through text and art. The “female trinity [of] Mary, Anne, and [Anne’s mother] Emerentia … provided examples of normal human women, even older ones, acting in divinely approved ways.”\textsuperscript{57}

In both the medieval and early modern period, applying gender analysis to the cult of St. Anne helps to explore its multiple meanings within society, in particular identities related to St. Anne’s position as mother, grandmother, and widow. In a 2001 article, Lyndal Roper argues for the continuing necessity of examining the change in gender relations brought about by the Reformation’s greater foci on marriage and the

\textsuperscript{56} Donna Spivey Ellington, \textit{From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe}, (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

\textsuperscript{57} Wiesner, \textit{Women and Gender}, p. 219.
household as the only appropriate venue for female activity.\textsuperscript{58} She points to the notable decline in the status of older women, postulating a connection between this decline and the early modern witch hunts. As Protestants did away with St. Anne as a model of matriarchal intercession, and Catholics began “seeing the intercession of an older woman as no longer an appropriate avenue to God,” women in Northern Europe lost a powerful role model, and men lost an example of a strong, active female saint.\textsuperscript{59} My study explores the ways in which St. Anne was changed in order to fit with altered beliefs regarding appropriate gender-specific behavior for women, particularly widows. It will also examine the model provided by the altered St. Anne.

Finally, I work with symbolic cultural expressions of the cult of St. Anne in late medieval and early modern Northern Europe. These both grew out of and helped to shape religious beliefs and practices through a process of mutual interaction between ecclesiastical and community needs and desires. For example, the Holy Kinship existed as a concept for several centuries before the evolution of a social space for its model of sanctified familial life. The spread of printed texts promoting St. Anne could inspire a newly-founded confraternity to select her as their patron saint, or a patron to commission of an altar dedicated to her. The public actions of a confraternity, or the presence of an altar, would then become part of the symbolic expression of the cult of St. Anne, and contribute to further devotion.

As Peter Burke has noted, historians have been slow to incorporate images as source material into their research.\textsuperscript{60} Recognizing that “the testimonies about the past

\textsuperscript{58} Lyndal Roper, “Gender and the Reformation,” \textit{Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte}, Vol. 92 (2001), 290-302. In Catholic territories, of course, the convent continued to be another appropriate arena for women.

\textsuperscript{59}Wiesner, \textit{Women and Gender}, p. 237.

\textsuperscript{60}Burke, \textit{Eyewitnessing}, passim.
offered by images are of real value, supplementing as well as supporting the evidence of written documents,” he argues for an in-depth analysis of visual materials as a key component of historical work.\textsuperscript{61} This includes recognizing that visual sources are neither strictly reliable mirrors nor unreliable fictions, but rather must be placed within their wider socio-cultural context in order to parse their meaning. One of my goals is to use Burke’s model for incorporation works of art as historical sources into my interpretation of the cult of St. Anne. Susan Karant-Nunn, in her study of the ritual practices in the Reformation, describes the late medieval mind as “irrepressibly allegorical,” expressing itself through “layer upon layer of symbolism that informed the churches themselves and every object in them,” but makes clear that it is “impossible for us to know how much of this symbolism remained the product and possession of erudite minds, and how much may have sunk down over the centuries to the sensibilities of the ordinary laity.”\textsuperscript{62}

Analyzing symbolism through this pyramidal structure, which assumes that symbolic meanings develop at the level of “high culture” and are then presented to the populace or trickle down through the social structure until they reach those with less erudite minds, is an oversimplification of the complex process of cultural exchange and the oft-blurry boundaries between elite and popular culture. However, the idea of complex, interactive layers of symbolism within art holds true, for the early modern period as much as for the Middle Ages. Investigating the changes in meaning and presentation within visual depictions of St. Anne and her family across several centuries is crucial for my analysis of the polysemic nature of St. Anne.

\textsuperscript{61}Burke, \textit{Eyewitnessing}, p. 184.
VI. Chapter Structure

While historians agree that the cult of St. Anne became suddenly, explosively popular from the late fifteenth century through the Reformation, they disagree about why this happened and what it meant, and do not ask what happened afterwards. My first three chapters offer a new explanation for this sudden popularity by focusing on facets of St. Anne’s cult and her place in late medieval society and religion. I examine her legend and her position as Mary’s mother, the expansion of her cult through pilgrimage sites and confraternities, and the role of the Holy Kinship as part of the cult of St. Anne, analyzing these different aspects of St. Anne’s cult in conjunction with each other to form a wider picture of how it functioned within the rich religious and symbolic culture of late medieval society. I argue that St. Anne’s role as wife, mother and grandmother—not only to her own family, but to her devotees—and the function of the Holy Kinship as a model of an idealized, sanctified domestic life made her an ideal model to be popularized and venerated across a wide range of social groups, while her status as a “fashionable saint” (Modeheilige) meant that her popularity had economic as well as devotional aspects. In the fourth chapter, I discuss the effects of the Reformation on St. Anne. My focus is on the complex and ongoing process of re-evaluation and debate which occurred around her, and demonstrates that she neither vanished nor faded quietly away. The fifth chapter details the Catholic side of this shift, examining why the medieval construction of St. Anne was no longer acceptable, and how this was dealt with. Finally, in the sixth chapter, I examine the cult of St. Anne in Baroque Catholicism, comparing the functions of this version of St. Anne within religion and society with the pre-Reformation version
in order to construct a model of how the “new” St. Anne demonstrated gender and social roles.

Chapter One presents the development of St. Anne’s legend from the early centuries of Christianity through the mid-fifteenth century and documents her rise in late medieval Germany, where she was situated firmly in a contemporary environment that gave her a well-defined socio-economic role and a gender-based familial roles. In this chapter, I focus on the latter, specifically St. Anne’s status as the mother of the Virgin Mary. Using texts, relics, and works of art to illustrate the complex network of belief and symbolism around St. Anne, I argue that her physical connection with the Virgin Mary (which was not reproducible) and her moral example as wife and mother (which was) combined to make her a focus of veneration and a model for the devout laity.

Where the first chapter focuses on St. Anne in terms of gender analysis, Chapter Two moves to the interaction of popular and clerical interest in St. Anne and her place in the sacred and secular economies of late medieval Europe through an examination of confraternities and pilgrimage sites. The development of St. Anne confraternities (Annenbruderschaften) was one of the most notable features of late medieval devotion to St. Anne within Germany; Angelika Dörfler-Dierken has counted 231 pre-Tridentine St. Anne confraternities across central Europe.63 They were strongly tied to middle- and upper-class urban culture, as well as the nobility. The most famous pilgrimage site, Düren, first rose to prominence in the early sixteenth century. After a theft of a relic from the cathedral in Mainz brought a large piece of St. Anne’s skull to Düren in 1502, the populace of the city fought to keep it, and Düren became known as the premier St. Anne pilgrimage and shrine destination for the early sixteenth century. While Düren

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63Dörfler-Dierken, Bruderschaften.
achieved its status through a classic case of sacred theft, the city of Annaberg was the target of a concentrated effort by the Duke of Saxony to establish a major pilgrimage site dedicated to St. Anne. I use the range of origin stories in these cases to elucidate the many possible ways the cult of St. Anne could coalesce around a particular organization or site of devotion.

Chapter Three moves beyond St. Anne to look at the Holy Kinship. The importance of this wider network to St. Anne’s popularity has often been underestimated by historians, partly because it did in fact vanish with the Reformation. However, the composition, function, and depiction of the Holy Kinship were intimately related to perceptions of the nature and function of family, and provide another reason why St. Anne in particular fulfilled such an important role in structures of piety. I argue that the Holy Kinship, because it was constructed around a series of marital bonds, sanctified marriage and domestic life for late medieval Northern Europe in a way which resonated strongly with the faithful. The extended family structure also mirrored the large, extended families of the urban patriciate and noble families, which made the Holy Kinship a very comprehensible model for those groups. Miracle stories emphasized that devotion to St. Anne led to a symbolic incorporation into her wider “family,” who would then act as relatives should in terms of support in this life and the next. Works of art depicted an ideal, harmonious family for the viewer to admire and emulate. The entire host of saintly grandchildren, including Jesus Christ, all owed their existence to properly-functioning marriages, and it was the behavior of St. Anne, her daughters, and sons-in-law that created the domestic environments within which saintliness could flourish.
One of the reasons why previous historians have seen the Reformation as marking the sudden, sharp end of her cult is because Anne’s very popularity made her a target; many early Protestant treatises zeroed in on her as an example of the widespread false worship and overblown actions poisoning the veneration of the saints. Chapter Four focuses on the Protestant treatment of St. Anne by exploring the process of criticism and re-evaluation in more depth, concentrating on the connections between St. Anne’s relationship to the model of domestic sanctity introduced in Chapter Three and developing Protestant views on marriage. Protestant theologians argued that their conception of marriage restored humanity to its natural state after centuries of the Church’s unnatural focus on celibacy. What they presented as an entirely new paradigm for the laity had, however, been a key component of the cult of St. Anne for at least a generation. I argue that the model of married sanctity offered by the Holy Kinship failed to transfer to Protestantism for several reasons. First, the Reformation brought a striking shift in the perception of St. Anne’s cult. Rather than praising St. Anne’s suitability as a model for pious laity, reformers attacked the inappropriate religious behavior of that same laity when they were venerating saints. Second, wider social shifts in gender roles which emphasized a household under the control of a male head removed St. Anne as a suitable model for an ideal household. Finally, St. Anne’s absence from Scripture rendered her problematic to developing Protestantism, even before Lutheranism in general had done away with the cult of the saints. While Luther’s criticism was particularly pointed, he was not the only person engaged in lambasting the cult of St. Anne. At the same time, Luther and other Reformers elevated marriage and the family, using Scripture as a basis for their arguments. By the time Georg Goetze was writing his
dissertation, the cult of St. Anne had come to serve as a byword for the depths of popular superstition to be found in the religion of the late Middle Ages.

Just as the cult of St. Anne was downplayed as mere popular superstition, the socio-religious role of St. Anne within post-Tridentine and Baroque Catholicism, has been overlooked by historians. There are several reasons behind this lack of awareness. First, the geographical scope of the cult is necessarily smaller, since fewer areas were Catholic (following the turn to Lutheranism of territories such as Saxony, that had previously been major centers of devotion to St. Anne). Second, there was a notable decline in the cult of St. Anne during the sixteenth century, even in Catholic areas, connected to Reformation attacks and Catholic attempts to deal with the issue of the Holy Kinship. This decline is similar to the one discussed by Philip Soergel in his study of the Marian pilgrimage town of Altötting.64 The pilgrimage at Düren even stopped altogether, before its revival under the Jesuits in the mid-seventeenth century. My research also indicates that St. Anne’s cult in the seventeenth and eighteenth century may have been more rurally-focused, which might make written records more difficult to track down.

However, this does not mean that St. Anne disappeared. Rhineland St. Anne confraternities showed ongoing activity, in some cases through to their dissolution in the early nineteenth century. Devotional texts and prayers to St. Anne continued to be printed. Annaberg continue to be a site of Catholic pilgrimage, in spite of Saxony’s Protestantism. The monastery in Gotteszell in Bavaria first became a site of pilgrimage after a miracle involving an Anna Selbdritt statue in 1629, and continued to be an active site of devotion through the early twentieth century. Düren revived as a center of

devotion to St. Anne; in fact, the primary texts which describe the original relic theft and establishment of the pilgrimage date from the mid-seventeenth century. In my final chapters, I argue that the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century St. Anne functions as a model of pious widowhood and devotion to the Virgin Mary, presented to the laity by an ecclesiastical establishment that was focused on correct, uniform belief. Her earlier matriarchal role gave way to newer, patriarchally-focused ideas of family, with just as little space for the Holy Kinship as Protestantism had shown a century earlier.\(^{65}\) At the same time, St. Anne disappeared from images of the Holy Family in favor of St. Joseph, who took on a much more prominent role as an active parent of Jesus. While some of her traditional attributes as a mother were maintained—even strengthened—others vanished. Rather than providing a model for an active female and male lay piety, St. Anne was portrayed in a much more strongly gendered fashion aimed specifically at creating a model for Catholic women to follow and Catholic men to expect. Anne is presented either with Joachim as part of a harmonious married couple, or in the company of her daughter. The Anne-Mary connection is very strongly emphasized; Mary’s virtues make St. Anne worthy of veneration. It is only at this point in time that Kleinschmidt’s statement about St. Anne’s popularity becomes true; the post-Tridentine cult of St. Anne orients itself much more strongly around the Virgin Mary.

\(^{65}\)While it is hard to imagine that Goetze and Kleinschmidt would have found much to agree on in their respective religious beliefs, they both would have deplored the Holy Kinship as an expression of ignorant medieval superstition. Of course, Goetze would have added “Catholic” to that list of pejoratives, while Kleinschmidt would have blamed everything on the laity inventing things and contaminating the faith.
Chapter One:
Currents of Devotion

Between 1510 and 1520, the late medieval artist known as the Meister von Osnabrück carved a unique series of wood sculptures (Illustrations 1-2). The larger-than-life-sized pieces were meant to hang from the ceilings of churches and be viewed from either side. The unique iconography of these pieces stems from their combination of two different saints into a single three-dimensional figure. On the one side, they depict the Madonna and Child; on the other, the sculptures portray the grouping of St. Anne, the Virgin Mary, and Jesus known as the Anna Selbdritt. The Virgin Mary and her mother blend seamlessly into one another to form a single piece that emphasizes their physical connection as mother and daughter, and their shared role as holy mothers.

While St. Anne’s status as Mary’s mother remains a historical constant, the Meister von Osnabrück’s attention to that set of connections provides a window into socio-cultural perceptions of St. Anne and her role in Northern Europe during the first quarter of the sixteenth century. In any time period, sainthood is a social construction; saints are never saints on their own behalf, but “for other people,” and their sanctity “must be expressed in systems of associated conduct or behaviour within a given
network of social relations.” Pierre Delooz’s statement holds particularly true for a saint who was completely constructed without any real historical basis, as St. Anne was. Over the centuries, St. Anne has been a multivalent figure, useful for many groups and purposes: her place in the socio-cultural structure during the time and place under consideration here are not identical to other times and places. In medieval France, particularly in Brittany and Normandy, she took on special associations with water, primarily sea travel and holy wells. In one set of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century French manuscripts, St. Anne’s story is interwoven with Celtic folk motifs, a combination found nowhere else in Europe. In Italy, St. Anne became the patron saint of Florentine republicanism after the successful revolt against Walter IV of Brienne on St. Anne’s Day in 1343, an association which turned her into a saint with strong political connotations. The medieval English St. Anne interceded for women in childbirth, and appeared in miracle plays as a pious, well-to-do matron, complete with prayer book and

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2Francesca Sautman analyzes this Franco-celtic story, from the thirteenth and fourteenth century, in which Anne’s grandmother, Abraham’s daughter, becomes pregnant from the scent of a miraculous flower. The son she bears grows up to become a saintly man who grows apples with miraculous curative powers. Upon spilling some of the apple’s juice on his thigh, he becomes pregnant and eventually “gives birth” to Anne. Horrified at such an unnatural occurrence, he sends a servant to dispose of the girl in the woods. Informed by a dove of the girl’s wondrous destiny, the servant hides her in an empty eagle’s nest, where she grows up, nourished by a deer, until the king and his seneschal, Joachim, find her. Joachim falls in love with her and marries her, and the story then follows the Protoevangelium. The idea that St. Anne’s physical being came from unusual circumstances was not unique to this geographic area. Friedrich Ohly makes note of an Ethiopian legend in which Anne, foreordained from the beginning of time by God, existed within Adam in the form of a pure white pearl, and was passed down through his descendants in this form. Aside from the folk motifs traceable in these stories, they demonstrate a clear interest in Anne’s lineage, and the extended lineage of Christ. The tension between such miraculous elements and the importance of Anne’s position as the “natural” mother and grandmother of the Holy Kinship would be an interesting subject of analysis, although outside the scope of this work. Francesca Sautman, “Saint Anne in Folk Tradition,” in Interpreting Cultural Symbols, pp. 70-73; Friedrich Ohly, Schriften zur mittelalterlichen Bedeutungsforschung, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), p. 276.

tithe payment.

St. Anne’s miraculous pregnancy, following many years of barrenness, ensured that she would be called upon by women who wanted to have a child, or by women who were pregnant. Due to her legendary three marriages (which will be discussed in Chapter Three), she was called upon by young women seeking a husband.\(^4\) St. Anne could serve as an example of exemplary female behavior, trusting in God through her long years of barrenness, and working with her husband to give an appropriate percentage of their wealth to the poor and another percentage to the Temple. German and Dutch humanists saw her as a model for individual piety, and sought to promote her as a model for the ordinary laity to emulate. Angelika Dörfler-Dierken calls her a “space for the projection and explication of religious needs,” a classification which draws attention to the inherently polysemic nature and socio-cultural malleability of St. Anne.\(^5\)

In this chapter, I focus on the religious and social constructions of St. Anne’s role as a mother and grandmother in late fifteenth-century Germany. I suggest that these constructions, expressed in three-dimensional form by the Meister von Osnabrück, consisted of both a physical and a moral dimension; the former made St. Anne an object of veneration as the physical source of Christ’s humanity and therefore the key component of a holy lineage, while the latter made her an appropriate moral model for late medieval wives and mothers. St. Anne possessed qualities of physical and moral virtue that made her worthy of bearing the Mother of God, and which she passed down to her daughter. In the fifteenth century, as St. Anne became more popular in Northern


\(^5\) “Projektions- und Explikationsfläche für ... religiösen Bedürfnisse,” Dörfler-Dierken, Verehrung, p. 42.
Europe, the interest in the transmission of these physical and moral virtues from mother to daughter led to the inclusion of St. Anne’s mother, St. Emerentiana, in accounts of St. Anne’s life. St. Anne was presented as a model for late medieval matrons. An increasing interest in lineage among the nobility and urban middle class in late medieval Europe helped the growth of St. Anne’s cult as a model of how noble qualities could be transmissable from generation to generation. The physical side of St. Anne’s motherhood remained crucial for late medieval Christians in her relics, while images showing St. Anne depicted her role as an exemplary model to be followed by other women.

I. Legend of St. Anne

By the time her cult bloomed in late medieval Northern Europe, the contours of St. Anne’s legend were already well-established. While the widely-accepted form of her story took centuries to develop, the basics originated fairly early in the history of Christianity. The canonical Gospels contain no reference to Mary’s parents, although they provide extensive genealogical lists of Jesus’ ancestors through to Joseph (who, as Jacobus de Voraigne noted, was not actually involved). There was, nonetheless, an unsurprising amount of interest in the parentage of the Virgin Mary, the woman who had been worthy to bear the Son of God. St. Anne’s story first appeared in the context of establishing Mary’s background. The seminal written record of St. Anne’s legend is the Protoevangelium of James, a Greek text written around 150 A.D. and translated into Latin by the fourth century. Other, later, apocryphal texts, such as the Gospel of Pseudo-

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6 For an exploration of how St. Anne and her family served as a model for aristocratic women in France, see: Elizabeth L’Estrange, *Holy Motherhood: Gender, Dynasty and Visual Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, Manchester Medieval Series, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

Matthew (mid-fifth century A.D.) and the Gospel of the Birth of Mary (sixth century A.D.) take the core of their material from the Protoevangelium. In addition to the texts, a group of specific physical locations believed to be connected to St. Anne became sites of devotion during the first centuries of Christianity.

The parameters of the story told in all three versions are the same. Anne and her husband, Joachim, have been married for twenty years, and living according to the laws of God. The couple, although rich and of noble descent from the line of David, has no children. When Joachim goes to the Temple to make his yearly offering, the High Priest Isachar angrily turns him away, claiming that the lack of offspring means that Joachim and Anne have been cursed by God for some unknown sins, and that it is unseemly for a man with no children to stand among men who have begotten sons and continued their lineage. Unable to face his friends or his wife, Joachim travels out into the desert to stay with his flocks, leaving Anne behind. He spends his time fasting and praying. Meanwhile, Anne learns what has happened from friends and neighbors, and responds with weeping and praying.

Although Anne’s lament is not always written out in the text, the versions which do include it present it as one of the most emotional moments of the story. In the Protoevangelium, she mourns her childlessness in biblical cadence:

Woe to me, who begot me,
What womb brought me forth?
For I was born as a curse before them and before the children of Israel...
Woe is me, to what am I likened?
I am not likened to the birds of the heaven;
for even the birds of the heaven are fruitful before thee, O Lord.

Kleinschmidt, Heilige Anna, p. 5.

For a discussion of these locations, see Kleinschmidt, Heilige Anna, pp. 13-27.
Woe is me, to what am I likened?
I am not likened to the dumb animals;
for even the dumb animals are fruitful before thee, O Lord....
Woe is me, to what am I likened?
I am not likened to this earth;
for even this earth brings forth its fruit in its season and praises thee, O Lord.  

In her grief, she sees her childlessness as unnatural, a curse from or affront to God. While the rest of Creation brings forth offspring in praise of God, St. Anne has failed to do this and thus views her status as a curse upon her entire family. The worry and sorrow expressed by St. Anne could very easily be identified with by many of her medieval devotees, who would have experienced concerns about child-bearing, including the fear that failure to do so indicated not only physical but moral failings. Historian Elizabeth L’Estrange traces images of St. Anne and the birth of the Virgin Mary in a series of French medieval Books of Hours owned by noblewomen who were understandably concerned with their own ability to provide an heir.  

In a late fifteenth-century vita, while Anne still laments her infertility, the anonymous author gives her an additional cause for grief:

Almighty God, all things stand in your hand; is the curse and shame of infertility not enough for me, will You also take my beloved husband Joachim, who has been my life’s support? What in me has displeased You, and what else do You want me to do?  

Although these two texts are from very different cultural contexts, having Anne refer to

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11L’Estrange, Holy Motherhood.
the loss of her husband as an additional punishment from God, comparable to her many years of sterility, and her reference to Joachim as her “life’s support,” speaks to the development of a new focus on marriage and family life which was connected to the overall rapid expansion of St. Anne’s cult in the fifteenth century. The author further emphasizes the connection between Anne and her husband by saying that Anne “went daily out to the field and looked around at all the paths from which she hoped her husband Joachim would return.”

After a month, during which the couple has been praying separately, an angel (often identified as the Archangel Gabriel, thus establishing a parallel with the Annunciation) visits both of them to inform them that God has heard their prayers, and that they will soon be blessed with a daughter, who will herself be an especially holy child. In this moment, Anne moves from cursed to blessed, her former barrenness transformed into fertility. She joyfully replies that, whether it is a boy or a girl, she will dedicate the child to God.

The entire narrative establishes clear parallels with Old Testament examples, in particular that of Anna (or Hannah), the mother of Samuel, to show that Mary had been born under special, holy circumstances, and raised as a child dedicated to God. It follows the established biblical paradigm of a woman who suffers barrenness for years so that God may miraculously intervene, resulting in the birth of a child who is destined for holiness. Jacobus de Voraigne makes this theme explicit in the *Legenda Aurea* when he has the angel who appears before Joachim declare,

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13 “Sy gieng täglich auff das feld vnd sahe vmb sich auff alle weg durch welche[n] sy wz hoffen ir man ioachem wider zu° kome[n].” *Ain gar nutzliches Buch*, 162R/aiiiR.
Did not the first mother of your race suffer the shame of childlessness until she was ninety years old, and yet bore Isaac, to whom was promised the blessing of all nations? Was not Rachael barren for a long time and yet bore Joseph, who had power over all Egypt? Who was stronger than Samson or holier than Samuel? Yet they both had sterile mothers. Believe these reasons and examples, which show that delayed conceptions and infertile childbearing are usually all the more wonderful!  

Putting St. Anne’s motherhood in the context of these other “delayed conceptions” from canonical Scripture gave Mary’s birth a context which presaged her role as the mother of God. What had been a curse has become a sign of blessing.

After the angel has departed, both Joachim and Anne leave the site of their lamentation and travel to meet each other, embracing joyfully before the gates of the Temple. Their reunion before the Golden Gate was a beloved motif in medieval art, a key scene in cycles showing the Birth of the Virgin Mary. The focus on the meeting between Joachim and Anne harmonized with beliefs about the specific circumstances and nature of the Virgin Mary’s conception. A vigorous debate about the Immaculate Conception of Mary (the belief that Mary herself had been conceived without Original Sin) took place across the fifteenth century, and a wide range of attitudes towards the conception of Mary could and did exist within late medieval texts about St. Anne. In De laudibus sanctissimae matris Anne, Abbot Johannes Trithemius argues that all devotees of Anne must believe in her daughter’s Immaculate Conception. One strand of belief held that the Virgin Mary had actually been conceived in the moment of Anne and Joachim’s embrace; the depiction of their meeting thus served as an illustration of the Immaculate Conception.

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16 Johann Trithemius, *De laudibus sanctissimae matris Anne*, (Mainz: Peter Friedberg, 1494), p. aiiijV. Angelika Dörfler-Dierken uses a little-known German version of Trithemius in her work, which demonstrates that his arguments and description of St. Anne’s history found an audience beyond those who could read only Latin. Dörfler-Dierken, *Verehrung*, p. 62.
itself. A song printed on a broadsheet in 1498, accompanied by an illustration of the *Anna Selbdritt*, declares that

Maria was born
From Anne [who was] chosen
From Joachim the holy man
Joachim longed greatly
He kissed her on the cheek
That gave him joy and courage
Through the kiss was conceived, without damage,
Mary full of grace
The greatest good
Now therefore believe without doubt
That Mary so lordly
was born without sin
From St. Anne so pure
God was with her alone
Mild in all virtues

This text not only argues that Mary herself was “born without sin,” it also refers to St. Anne as “chosen,” and “so pure,” words frequently applied to Mary. Joachim, although “holy,” is not even allowed to kiss Anne on the lips, merely chastely on the cheek. In addition, he doesn’t appear in the woodcut accompanying the song. Here we see the holiness of Anne set up as a parallel and precursor to the holiness of Mary, a connection between mother and daughter which leaves the male parent on the outside.

The idea that the Virgin Mary’s conception had taken place without normal sexual intercourse was by no means a universal view at this time. A vita of St. Anne published in the same year as this broadsheet followed a description of the meeting at the Golden Gate by stating, “and shortly thereafter Anne was impregnated from male seed from her

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husband Joachim”¹⁸ Sermons by Geiler of Kaisersberg and the *Vita* of St. Anne written by Peterus Dorlandus state explicitly that Anne was “born in the normal way,” rather than conceived through a kiss. When it came to the exact circumstances of the Virgin Mary’s conception, room existed for a wide range of beliefs within the legend of St. Anne in the decades preceding the Reformation. The Immaculate Conception provided one possible belief, present across various strata of society.

The official doctrine of the Immaculate Conception did not exist in the late Middle Ages. Arguments about the wide variety of possible interpretations of the term took place largely within the Church hierarchy, particularly between the Franciscans and the Dominicans, not among the lay devotees of St. Anne who formed the main impetus behind her cult. Scholars’ earlier assertion that the rise in the veneration of St. Anne directly resulted from belief in the Immaculate Conception, because “people wanted to honor Mary through Anne,” does not reflect late medieval reality; rather, it clearly connects to post-Tridentine and nineteenth-century beliefs about the Virgin Mary.¹⁹ Projecting these later views onto an earlier time period ignores the complex rise of the cult of St. Anne.

One of Angelika Dörfler-Dierken’s primary contributions to St. Anne historiography is her debunking of the widespread belief that the rise of St. Anne’s cult was the result of a belief in the Immaculate Conception. While the focus on Mary’s conception did bring more official attention to Anne, the discussion regarding the

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¹⁸ *vnd anna was bald darnach von manlichem samen vo[n] irem man ioachim entpfahen,* *Ain gar nutzliches Buch,* p. 163R

¹⁹ *In Anna habe man Maria ehren wollen,* Dörfler-Dierken, *Verehrung,* p. 30. For Dörfler-Dierken’s analysis of the contemporary debate about the Immaculate Conception and subsequent historiographical interpretations, see Dörfler-Dierken, *Verehrung,* pp. 47-53 and 61-66. Beda Kleinschmidt, the major source used for this argument, had difficulty accepting many aspects of the late medieval cult of St. Anne, including the wide range of possible interpretations of “Immaculate Conception” circulating at the time.
Immaculate Conception never constituted a major part of late medieval devotion to St. Anne. In the fifteenth century, the sometimes acrimonious debates about the exact nature of Mary’s conception paled in comparison to the sure and certain knowledge that St. Anne was the grandmother of Christ (*avia Christi*), the matriarch of the Holy Kinship, and a model for leading a fully religious life while remaining a member of the laity.

**II. St. Anne and Physical Motherhood**

St. Anne’s physical motherhood rested on the medieval belief that a mother’s blood and body constituted the building materials from which a child was formed in the womb. Donna Spivey Ellington has noted the overwhelming emphasis late medieval devotion placed on the body of Mary as the physical material from which the body of Christ was constructed.\(^{20}\) Just as Mary had formed the body of Christ, so Anne had formed Mary, and had thus been responsible for the physical qualities of purity and holiness which had made Mary’s body a fit resting place for the Son of God. Anne’s position as the maternal grandmother of Christ made her the ultimate physical source of the holy lineage.\(^ {21}\) An *Anna Selbdritt* from around 1500, currently located in Gotha, demonstrates this connection (Illustration 3). The figure of St. Anne (depicted in the appropriate dress for a mature woman or widow) appears much larger than the other two, and holds the Virgin Mary (shown as a very young girl) and the infant Jesus, one on each arm. She pulls her red cloak (the traditional color for St. Anne) across her body, almost enveloping her grandson. Anne looks out directly at the viewer, while the Christ Child and the miniature Virgin look out at an angle. This presentation foregrounds Anne as the origin of both Mary and Jesus, elevating her own status. Mary might be Jesus’ mother,

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\(^{20}\) Ellington, *Sacred Body*.

\(^{21}\) Some popular beliefs denied any role at all to Joachim in Mary’s conception; see above, p. 36.
but she is still Anne’s daughter. This style of *Anna Selbdritt* is also used to signify Anne within a group of other saints; her daughter and grandson serve as attributes, showing her identity and proving her sanctity in the same way as St. Peter holds his keys, St. Barbara her tower, or St. Catherine her wheel.

The holiness that made St. Anne worthy to bear the Virgin Mary was enhanced by the physical fact of her pregnancy. When addressing the theme, “Why St. Anne’s feast is more and more widely celebrated than the feast of Joachim, the father of the Virgin Mary,” the Anonymous Franciscan argued that

> as the scent of a rose can be smelled more strongly and for longer in the hand which had the rose in it for a long time than the hand which merely broke the rose or gave it to somebody else’s hand. Therefore, so it is similarly that more grace and holiness flowed from the Virgin Mary, who was conceived in her mother’s body without any stain of Original Sin and who was blessed especially with great grace and freedom, into St. Anne than into the father Joachim….

Carrying the future Mother of God within her own body for nine months had further sanctified St. Anne; indeed, the effect seems to have been viewed as a kind of holy radiation, as the author concludes that “additionally, there is no doubt that the other two daughters of St. Anne therefore were carried and born more rich in grace.”

The image of the *Anna Selbdritt* served as a counterpart to images of the Holy Trinity; where the Father and Holy Spirit represented the source of Christ’s divinity, St.

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23. “ia do zu° vnzweyfel das die andern zwu° iöchtern [sic] sant Anna sind dester gnadreicher getragen vnd geboren synd worden.” *Ain gar nützliches Buch*, p. 174R/biiR. St. Anne’s other two daughters will be discussed in Chapter Three.
Anne and the Virgin Mary represented the sources of his humanity and physical form. Sometimes, the two lineages are combined, with God and the Holy Spirit forming the vertical axis and Mary and Anne forming the horizontal (Illustration 4). In these images, although God the Father and the dove representing the Holy Spirit are present, they are not the main foci of the image. God occupies a fairly small space at the top of the image, and the dove is proportionally small. While the viewer is reminded of Jesus’ divine nature, it is his human side, shown through the larger figures of Anne and Mary, which conveys the main message. St. Anne and the Virgin Mary, “a carnal and material Trinity,” show the ancestry of his humanity and physical form, and “...the grouping of Anne, Virgin, and Child is equal to and as sanctified as the more traditional triumvirate of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

In some images, the baby Jesus is held by the two women with his arms outstretched, in a reference to the Crucifixion. Almost always, he is unclothed. The baby Jesus’ nudity serves as further proof to the faithful that he is fully human, in what Leo Steinberg referred to as an *ostentatio genitalium*, the display of Christ’s being fully male and ergo fully human.

St. Anne’s gesture in a woodcut by Hans Baldung Grien echoes St. Thomas requiring proof of the resurrected Christ’s reality through touching his wound (Illustration 5). The composition of the *Anna Selbdritt* in this woodcut emphasizes the blood relationship between St. Anne, the Virgin Mary, and Jesus. St. Anne, positioned at the center of the picture, is in front of a barren tree which has become the support for a vigorous grapevine. She reaches one hand out to touch Jesus’ genitals, demonstrating his humanity. Her gesture forms one part of the triangle

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among the three figures. Rather than being held between the two women, or sitting on his mother’s or grandmother’s lap, the baby Jesus lays horizontally across both of them, reaching his arms up to grasp his mother’s face, while one foot rests on his grandmother’s knee. While Jesus’ attention is directed up to Mary, the Virgin Mary looks across to her mother, who in turn looks down at Jesus. Both the physical contact and the direction of their gazes demonstrate the unity of these three figures.

Descriptions of the physical connection among Anne, Mary, and Christ illustrate the relationship using various metaphors; Anne was the root which had produced the flower of Mary, resulting in the fruit of Christ; Anne was the earth which had produced the silver of Mary and the gold of Christ. A fifteenth century mass dedicated to St. Anne extolled her as “this good tree, from which the virgin bloomed through divine influence; here is the high heaven which produced the star of the sea through birth. Here is fertility from sterility and sanctity from simplicity. Here is the root praised by all worshippers, from which a virgin came from the root of Jesse. Here is [one] blessed among women, and blessed among mothers.”

The root or tree of Jesse, a reference to Isaiah 11:1-3, strongly influenced the iconography of St. Anne. In works of art, vines or branches often appear as literal depictions of the blood connections among members of St. Anne’s family. The story of St. Anne’s mother centers around a dream depicting her progeny as parts of an exquisitely beautiful tree. Conceptualizing St. Anne’s connection to her

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26 illa arbor bona. de qua virga excisa per se diuinitus floruit hec est celum excelsum de qua stella maris processit ad ortu[m]. hec est sterilitas fecunda et simplicitas sancta. Hec est radix omni laude cole[n]da dequa egressa est virga de radice yesse. Hec est inter mulieres benedicta. et inter matres beata.” Anonymous, Officium de sancta Anna, de sancto Joachim et de sancto Joseph. Mit einem Gebetsanhang. Mit Vorrede und dem Konzilsdekrete Elucidantibus zur Unbfleckten Empfängnis Mariens, Basel 17.9.1430, (Basel: Martin Flach, pre-1476), p. 4V.

descendants in organic terms highlights her physical role as mother and grandmother.

St. Anne’s strong connection to the Virgin Mary is emphasized through the reference to St. Anne as particularly blessed among mothers. Using this phrase in the liturgy augments the strong echo of the Rosary text: Where her first daughter is lauded for her virginity, St. Anne is praised for her status as an exemplary mother. Both receive the appellation “blessed among women.” This is the textual equivalent of the Master of Osnabrück’s sculpture of the two women. Their physical relationship and their shared status as holy mothers join them together. Applying terms normally used for the Virgin Mary to veneration of St. Anne foregrounds this connection.

III. Lineage

St. Anne’s position as part of a larger lineage which exemplified the transmission of noble qualities from generation to generation added to her popularity. Questions of lineage became an area of increasing interest in the late Middle Ages, both among the nobility and among the urban middle class. These two groups also played a major role in the cult of St. Anne. Ton Brandenbarg suggests that the interest in family trees, including that of St. Anne, “could have been influenced by the middle class hankering after symbols from knightly culture, in which lineage played such an important role, albeit in an adapted form as regards content.”

Artistic depictions of the family tree of St. Anne were known as the “Tree of Anne” (Arbor Annae). Similar in nature and structure to the “Root of Jesse” (Radix Jesse) discussed above, the Arbor Annae provides an overview of the central figures in the Holy Kinship (Anne, her three husbands, her children and their husbands, and her

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grandchildren; see Chapter Three), using the motif of branches or vines to demonstrate the connections and emphasize the idea of lineage. The vines trace connections from generation to generation, showing who is descended from whom. They also demonstrate the expansion of St. Anne’s line through the increasing number of branches. An example in Hartmann Schedel’s *Liber Cronicarum* places St. Anne and her three husbands at the top left, with the vines extending out from each of the husbands, rather than from the haloed St. Anne, although all three men are pointing towards and looking at her (Illustration 6). The vine extending from St. Joachim actually extends off of the main Holy Kinship page over to a series of miniatures depicting the life of the Virgin Mary, drawing a direct connection between this kinship (*Geschlecht*) and the story of mankind’s salvation.

Altars rarely used the *Arbor Annae* style to display the Holy Kinship, instead tending to emphasize factors other than lineage (see Chapter Three). One notable exception is found in the impressively ornate late Gothic church at Annaberg in Saxony, which surrounds the visitor with images of its patron saint. The ornate swirls of the vaulting, the light pouring in through the windows of the *Hallenkirche*’s sanctuary, and the richness of the interior decoration, combine to inspire devotion. St. Anne is present on the walls, the pulpit, and numerous altars, including the marble central altar which still forms the centerpiece of the church. Completed in 1522, it was commissioned by Duke George from the Augsburg workshop of Adolf Daucher and his son Hans, whose work on the Fugger cemetery chapel the Duke had probably seen and admired during the

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30 *A Hallenkirche* is a style of Gothic architecture in which the aisles and central nave are all at the same height, as opposed to a more standard style of Gothic, in which the side aisles are not as tall as the center.
Reichstag of 1518. A sign of the wealth of the mining town and the saint chosen as its patron, this altar is not only made out of marble rather than carved or painted wood, but it also represents the incorporation of Italianate, Renaissance-style elements (for example, perspective and foreshortening) into German art, decorated with classical columns, flowers, and cherubs.\(^3\)

When Duke George commissioned the elaborate marble altar intended to serve as the showpiece of his new church in Annaberg, he chose to emphasize the concept of lineage and dynasty in the depiction of the larger human family of Christ. The iconographic program of the Annaberg central altar presents the entire family tree, originating from Jesse, who is shown at the very bottom of the altar in his own centralized panel. An intricately curling vine originates from his torso, moving upwards through a group of Old Testament prophets and kings, highlighting the nobility of St. Anne’s lineage (it would not do for a duke to chose a less-than-noble saint as the patron of his newly-founded mining town). Above this line of ancestors is the main portion of the altar, divided into a main section and two side sections through a pair of pillars. The center of the altar contains half-figures of Anne and Joachim, in the midst of the twining branches of the tree, with shoots leading from both of them up to a full figure of the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child on a cloud or blossom. On a neighboring cloud, Joseph kneels, hat in hand, in front of Mary and Jesus. The Annaberg altar gives unusual prominence to Mary’s husband; while he is clearly in a supplicant position, he is present in the same space as Mary, Anne, and Joachim, and is the same size as Mary. The side panels show Anne’s other two husbands, Mary’s half-sisters, and their families, again

connected through carved vines.

Instead of placing himself within the actual altar as a kneeling donor, Duke George had heraldic shields placed above the top of central altar panels, to emphasize his family’s connection to the altar and the saints shown and to once again foreground the idea of dynastic prestige presented through this style of showing the Holy Kinship. Presenting the entire group of saints and Old Testament figures connected to St. Anne highlights the concept of nobility as something passed down through physical descent. Considering the overall purpose of Duke George in commissioning an elaborate, imported marble altar to highlight the power of his patron saint and her family, and the existence of the heraldic shields connecting the altar to his own lineage, it is possible that the larger size and more prominent position of St. Joseph is meant to carry an additional meaning as a reference to Duke George’s own status as a supplicant and venerator of the Virgin Mary. The emphasis on St. Joseph, combined with the presence of the male figures of Jesse and the prophets and kings, makes the male figures of the entire lineage a stronger presence within the iconographic program of this St. Anne altar. Duke George has placed his patron saint in a family-tree focused setting which could more easily be seen as a parallel construction to his own noble dynastic line than many of the St. Anne or Holy Kinship-focused altars which will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

IV. St. Emerentia

Fifteenth-century interest in St. Anne as a model mother and the growth of her cult naturally led to questions about Anne’s own mother, whose story was accordingly related. The story of St. Emerentia, or Emerentiana, further demonstrates the importance of physical and moral motherhood within St. Anne’s lineage. The role of the Carmelite
order in the promotion of her story shows how claiming a connection with St. Anne’s extended family could be used as a source of religious or spiritual authority, a phenomenon we will see again with the case of St. Servatius (see Chapter Three).

A letter attributed to St. Cyril, widely incorporated into *vita* of St. Anne, provided the details. According to this document, Emerentia, a young woman of the lineage of David, “devoted to God, zealous in meditation on the divine law, completely chaste in all conversations,” was a friend of the monks and hermits living on Mt. Carmel (the fictive precursors of the Carmelites, a member of whom was most likely responsible for the creation of at least one of the anonymous *Vitae*). When her parents want to find a husband for her, Emerentia is uncertain about what she should do: she wants to maintain her virginity, but does not wish to go against the wishes of either her parents or God. She seeks counsel from three particularly holy brothers, hermits on Mt. Carmel, and all three receive a vision three nights in a row of a beautiful tree with beautiful branches, blossoms, and fruit, “and on one branch, which was the most beautiful, there was the most beautiful flower, and in this flower was enclosed the most beautiful, sweetest fruit, which was superior to all the fruits of this world.” This vision, with clear connotations of the Tree of Jesse, represents the entire family which will spring from Emerentia, leading to Mary and thus to Christ as the culmination. The brothers, however, remain confused by their visions until a voice from Heaven explains to them that it represents “the shining purity of the noble virgin Emerentia and her holy progeny which

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32 “deo deuota. in legis diui[e] meditacione sedula. in o[m]ni conversacione tota pudica,” Anonymous Franciscan, *Legenda*, p. 7-8. Angelika Dörfler-Dierken details these connections, and the ways in which the Carmelite order sought to use them to increase their own prestige. Dörfler-Dierken, *Verehrung*, pp. 148-149.

33 „vnd auff ainem ast der doch der aller schönest WAS. do WAS auff die aller schöneste blom vn[d] in dyser blomen WAS beschlossen die aller schöneste siesesse frucht die all frucht diser welt WAS über treffen...” *Ain gar nutzlichs büchlin*, p. aiiR.
for all time is arranged within the will of God. However God desires that she marries.”

Upon hearing this pronouncement, Emerentia immediately goes home and tells her parents that she will marry, and prays in the Temple that her husband will be an appropriate God-fearing man. After turning away six candidates who only desire her for her beauty (a parallel to the story of Tobias and Sara, which the anonymous author of the Matrone Anne notes), Emerentia finds a husband in Stollanus. They have two daughters, Anne and Esmeria. Anne, of course, marries Joachim, while Esmeria is the mother of Elizabeth, who later became the mother of John the Baptist.

While Emerentia never developed her own cult, and only featured in art on very rare occasions, the inclusion of her story serves as background to St. Anne and the Holy Kinship (much as St. Anne herself had functioned as background to the story of the Virgin Mary in the early centuries of the Church). It emphasizes the eternal will of God as the moving force behind the Holy Kinship and the Incarnation of Christ. It also sets forth the recurring pattern within the entire Holy Kinship in regards to concepts of purity, marriage, and family relations: Emerentia’s personal purity is praised, as well as her obedience to her parents, and above all her obedience to God; marriage is a blessed state, when undertaken for the purposes of having children and raising them to be properly devout. By connecting the Carmelites to Anne’s mother, the story of Emerentia becomes a direct link between the Carmelite order and Christ’s own family.

V. Relics

The idea that St. Anne’s physical body enjoyed a particularly distinct sanctity,

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34. "die scheinende rainikait der edlen iunckfrawe[n] emerencia vn[d] iren hayligen fürsatz der do zů aller zeyt ist geordnet in den willen gottes. aber gott will das sy greiff zů der ee.” Aín gar nutzlichs büchlin, p. aiiR.
36. This connection also explains Mary’s relationship to Elizabeth, as seen in Scripture.
connected to her status as a mother, was evident in the treatment of St. Anne’s relics. This involved both the importance given to specific relics, and the choice of saints to group together with St. Anne in reliquaries which contained multiple relics. By the late Middle Ages, the sacred landscape of Europe was awash in relics. Bits of bone, fragments of the True Cross, strands of hair, articles of clothing, and objects believed to have been connected to saints were the object of veneration, the target of prayer and pilgrimage, and the source of miracles. The community of the dead existed in close contact with that of the living; through their relics, saints remained a real presence in society, capable of providing help and aid to their devotees. Richard Southern calls them “the main channel through which supernatural power was available for the needs of ordinary life. Ordinary men could see and handle them, yet they belonged not to this transitory world but to eternity. … Among all the objects of the visible, malign, unintelligible world, relics alone were both visible and full of beneficial intelligence.”

While dramatic stories of miraculous cures served as thrilling reminders of the potential involvement of saints in everyday life, the majority of visitors expected a different benefit. The complicated system of indulgences and remission from specific amounts of time in Purgatory which had evolved to become a key component of pre-Reformation piety meant that every shrine visit, every relic viewing, every saint’s day festival, had a value which could be tabulated. Frederic the Wise had a massive collection of relics, with the amount of remission for each one carefully noted. The Halle Relic Book (Hallesche Heiltumsbuch), from the church of St. Moritz and Mary Magdalene in Halle, published in 1520, is careful to note how many “pieces” or

“particles” of each saint or group of saints is in each reliquary described. This includes not only traditional reliquaries, but also large “boards” (Tafeln) with paintings on the exterior (for example, the Annunciation) and a vast collection of small relics on the inside.\(^{38}\) Sometimes, these pieces are simply defined as “a relic,” (ein heiltum) with no further description, as in a set of monstrances from Bamberg, one of which contains relics of both St. Anne and St. John the Baptist, the other which contains relics of St. Anne, St. George, the Holy Innocents and “many other worthy relics”—not to mention the consecrated wafer which would have formed the centerpiece of each monstrance.\(^{39}\) Less impressive relics were thus combined into a single piece which would then have even greater redemptive power for the beholder. However, with the larger collections, the impact of individual saints could be lost, subsumed within a larger grouping which expressed the general concept of holiness and salvation in a nearly anonymous fashion. The devotees who prayed before this relic would not have been able to discern which fragment came from which saint, unless specifically told in the context of a feast day or descriptive text.

The physical arrangement of the crowds of relics being venerated, and even the form of the reliquaries themselves, could be used to create connected groups for the benefit of the faithful. The \textit{Hallesche Heiltnmsbuch} visually combines an Anna Selbdritt and John the Baptist, in a reliquary described as “An image of St. Anne; next to it St. John the Baptist; inside, [a relic] from the city where Jesus was born. [A relic] from the pillar on which Christ was whipped. [A relic] from the city where Mary the Virgin [was


\(^{39}\) Anonymus, \textit{Heiltum zu Bamberg}, (Bamberg: Johann Pfeyl und Heinrich Petzensteiner, 1493), p. 3v
born. [A relic] from the city where St. John the Baptist was born.” This combination represents a more clearly-defined family group than the monstrances listed above. Both the shape of the reliquary and the contents share connections with each other and with St. Anne. While St. Anne is not mentioned in the list of relics, the relic “from the city where Mary the Virgin was born” would obviously provide a link. Mary, Christ, John the Baptist, and St. Anne, all related to each other by blood, are linked visually through the design of the reliquary.

The reliquary is shown in an illustration next to the textual description (Illustration 7). From the picture, it is clear that the main part of the reliquary was a small chest, being carried by John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary (shown as a young girl, notably shorter than John, with a crown and flowing hair), while an oversized St. Anne holding the Christ child (who holds an orb or apple out to John) stands behind the chest. The traditional arrangement of the Anna Selbdritt has been disrupted so that the Virgin Mary can support one side of the relic container. An Agnus Dei is at the bottom of the group. The contents of the chest—a piece of the pillar Jesus was whipped against, and earth from the cities in which Jesus, John the Baptist, and Mary were born in—are not physical relics of the people depicted; rather, they have absorbed holiness through their connections with births or the Passion. At the same time, the image itself could serve as a focus of devotion.

Later in the book, another reliquary is described as “a beautiful silver St. Anne,” (Illustration 8) and the illustration shows it to be identical in form (if not in material) to countless other Anna Selbdritte. It could thus be venerated on its own, as an image of St.

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Anne, but had been made even more worthy of veneration due to the inclusion of physical fragments of numerous saints:

A beautiful silver St. Anne image. Inside is a piece of St. Anne’s jaw. Two particles from her skull. From her arm nineteen other particles of her bones. From her grave. … From St. Mary the mother of Jacob and John the Evangelist two particles. From Mary Salome.41

Not only is St. Anne present as both relic and image, the two daughters who are not depicted as part of the reliquary itself are present as relics within it, borne within their mother’s statue. Juxtaposing these specific relics with an image of St. Anne presented the same group holiness we see in Chapter Three in paintings and sculptures of the Holy Kinship.

Participation in these relic groups included more than the members of the Holy Kinship. In addition to the (already impressive) list mentioned above, the second reliquary contained pieces of seventeen other saints, with a particular focus on St. Afra. This included various relics of Afra herself as well as relics from her “companions,” two saints classified as her “friends,” one cousin, and her mother. A princess and repentant prostitute might seem like an odd choice to combine with the grandmother of God; however, the reasoning behind the choice of relics to include within the Anna Selbdritt described here becomes clearer when we consider that the other saints are also most frequently identified as mothers—St. Helena, the mother of Constantine; St. Monica, the mother of Augustine; St. Bertha, mother of St. Ruprecht; Sts. Pistis and Felicity with their children. St. Afra is being presented in the context of her mother Hilaria, and her

companions and cousins, a group of saints being presented together with St. Anne and the
two Marys as holy mothers or relations (the only male saints are the friends and cousins of St. Afra). The overall theme of the relics thus coordinates with the theme of the Anna Selbdritt within which they are all placed: family connections and kinship, with an emphasis on holy motherhood.

The “piece” of St. Anne’s jaw and the “particles” of her skull were still fragments, albeit better-defined fragments. Halle’s collection, however, also had three larger, more specific St. Anne relics:

… the thumb of the holy woman and grandmother of Christ St. Anne, placed within a silver-gilded Monstrance…

A large silver tablet, embroidered with pearls. In it [is] a finger from the holy woman St. Anne…

An old gilded treasure on four gilded angels. In it is a notable piece of St. Anne’s arm. An entire thumb with her flesh, skin, and nail….\(^{42}\)

In the illustration of the monstrance containing a thumb of St. Anne, the thumb is prominently displayed in the middle section, behind a clear window, underneath the consecrated wafer (Illustration 9). This is the only reliquary which foregrounds the actual relic in the book illustration; the second major St. Anne relic (a finger) is inside of another Anna Selbdritt, and the final “gilded treasure” holds its contents in a tube elevated within architectural-looking elements, supported on a platform borne by angels. The tube presumably would have been made of rock crystal, the better to display its contents; however, this is not clear from the picture (Illustration 10).


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According to their *Heiltumsbuch*, Halle possessed two thumbs (one with flesh, skin and nail), a piece of St. Anne’s arm, and a finger. Annaberg, dedicated to St. Anne by Duke George the Bearded and supplied with appropriate relics, possessed a finger, obtained from Lyons.\(^{43}\) Nürnberg prided itself on possessing one of St. Anne’s arms.\(^{44}\) Frederick the Wise brought back one of St. Anne’s thumbs from the Holy Land in 1496 to add to his massive collection of relics and indulgences.\(^{45}\) The prevalence of hand or finger/thumb relics of St. Anne is notable; there are more thumbs, for example, than one saint could have had. This focus on the hands, arms, or fingers of St. Anne extends beyond actual physical relics. It also continued past the Middle Ages. Herbert Fastner notes the Baroque practice in cloisters of making replica *Annenhändchen* from black wax, to be displayed in reliquary-like glass containers.\(^{46}\) Fastner states that these wax hands were not only reminiscent of votive picture motifs, they were also meant to call to mind the St. Anne hand relics in Vienna and Oberthalheim, acquired in the late seventeenth century.

A clue about the reason for this particular interest in the hand or arm of St. Anne can be found in the Nürnberger *Heiltumsbuch*. The full listing for St. Anne’s arm relic reads, “Then the arm of the holy woman St. Anne, the mother of the aforementioned virgin and child-bearer Mary, with which she physically carried and handled her.”\(^{47}\) The emphasis on “bodily carrying and handling” seen here is repeated in a St. Anne rosary text by Trithemius which praises St. Anne with the words, “Anna, you did not hesitate to

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\(^{43}\) Kleinschmidt, *Heilige Anna*, p. 143.


\(^{45}\) Dörfler-Dierken, *Vorreformatorische Bruderschaften*, p. 50.

\(^{46}\) Fastner, *Vergessene Heilige*, pp. 27, 216.

\(^{47}\) “Dar nach den arm der heiligen frau[-]jen Sant Anen der muter der vorgenanten Junckfrauen vnd kintpeterin maria da mit sie sy leiplich getragen vnd gehandelt hat.” *Heiltum zu Nürnberg*, p. 268v.
touch with [your] hand [your] daughter, before whom every star, every sun, pales.”

These texts situate the emphasis placed on the hand or arm of St. Anne as a valuable relic in a larger context of emphasizing St. Anne’s role as the physical mother of Mary and grandmother of Jesus, who carried and cared for her daughter and grandson, extending the holy benefits of “carrying” the Virgin Mary during pregnancy out past her birth. The many *Anna Selbdritt* images which show St. Anne carrying both Jesus and the Virgin Mary in or on her arms also draw attention to the importance of St. Anne’s arms as part of her maternal role.

**VI. Images**

The *Anna Selbdritt* consists of St. Anne, the Virgin Mary, and Jesus. This iconographical composition grew out of representations of the Madonna and Child; in fact, the Bayerische Nationalmuseum owns an *Anna Selbdritt* which originated as a twelth-century Madonna and Child and was reconfigured in the fourteenth century. This style became one of the two main types of *Anna Selbdritt*. Like the Gotha figure mentioned above, this style features a larger St. Anne, holding a smaller Virgin Mary, sometimes depicted as a young girl, sometimes as a miniaturized adult, and an infant Jesus (Illustration 11). By presenting St. Anne as the adult figure, with both Mary and Jesus in miniature or child form, these versions of the *Anna Selbdritt* foreground St. Anne’s role as mother and grandmother and source of the holy lineage. In the second main form of the *Anna Selbdritt*, both St. Anne and the Virgin Mary are shown as adults, usually sitting across from one another (Illustration 12). Jesus, still shown as an infant, can be on either of their laps, or held between them, or reach across, often towards a

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49. Bayerische Nationalmuseum, Inv.-Nr. MA 156.
piece of fruit or book, symbolizing Anne’s role in educating both Mary and Jesus. The gazes of the women focus on the baby, directing the viewer’s attention towards the Christ child. As with the Grien woodcut described above, the composition and gazes found within many late medieval Anna Selbdritt images emphasize common lineage and the human side of Christ’s heritage.

The massive proliferation of images featuring St. Anne (particularly the Anna Selbdritt) formed one of the hallmarks of her late medieval cult. As discussed in the introduction, the use of images in Latin Christianity reached a highpoint in the late Middle Ages, and “[f]ew if any churches would have been without at least one image of Saint Anne, whether in family, confraternity, or guild side chapels, as occasional images placed against walls or piers, or in the side panels or predellas of main altarpieces.”

Like other images of saints, the paintings and statues of St. Anne “operated in phenomenal reality”—they were part of active religious practices, both communal and individual.

While images of the saints could be seen everywhere in the late Middle Ages, the image of St. Anne—more particularly, the Anna Selbdritt—enjoyed a special status as an object of devotion. Reliquaries were not the only objects through which St. Anne could be venerated. Collections of miracle stories frequently make reference to praying and lighting candles in front of images of St. Anne and her entire family. A king of Hungary, for example, after seeing how effective devotion to St. Anne is for achieving success, becomes devoted to her himself, ordering beautiful images of St. Anne set up in all the

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50Nixon, Mary’s Mother, p. 36.
churches of his kingdom, with candles burning in front of them.\textsuperscript{52} The particular connection of the cult of St. Anne with images also received justification through the belief that Pope Alexander VI had given specific indulgences to those who prayed before a picture of the \textit{Anna Selbdritt}:

The aforementioned Pope Alexander gave all who recite the prayer written above in front of the image of St. Anne who had Jesus Christ on her right arm, as it is painted in this figure [ie, the woodcut accompanying the text] ten thousand years indulgence for deadly sins and twenty thousand years for venial sins. And the aforementioned pope put up the prayer in Rome on the churches himself in the year that is counted as 1493 after the birth of Christ on the holy day of Easter.\textsuperscript{53}

Venerating an image of Anne thus receives sanction at the highest level of the Church, as well as from the various individual anecdotes referencing images in miracle stories. The date of 1493 places this supposed papal indulgence in the early years of the explosive growth of St. Anne’s cult, and connects venerating her to specific salvational benefits by granting a significant indulgence. Unlike the many indulgences associated with pilgrimages or viewing specific relics, the indulgences ascribed to this devotional prayer could be carried out in front of any \textit{Anna Selbdritt}, from an elaborated sculpted and painted figure in a church to a broadsheet hung up on a wall.

\textbf{VII. Anne as the \textit{Erzieherin} of the Virgin Mary}

Although Mary was believed to have been sent to the Temple at a young age, St.


\textsuperscript{53} “Der obgenampt babst alexander geit allen menschen die vor dem bild sant anna das auff dem rechten arm hat ihesum cristum. als es dan[n] hie in der figur stat gemaelt die obgeschrieben gebet sprechent x tausent iar ablaß tödlicher sund. vn[d] xx tausent iar läßlicher sund. vn[d] der obgenampt babst hat das gebet zü rom selbs an an [sic] die kirche[n] geschlage[n] in de[m] iar als man zalt nach cristus geburt Mccccxcii. an de[m] hailge[n] ostertag” \textit{Ain gar nutzlichs büchlin}, p. 174V/biiV.
Anne was presented as the formative influence in her development, as well as that of her other daughters and her grandsons. Her role is defined as Erzieherin, implying a responsibility for moral development and education. Iconographically, this role is expressed through St. Anne often holding a book in Anna Selbdritt figures, presumably religious in nature, and teaching Mary. The book is also frequently being held out to the Christ Child by St. Anne, indicating her active role in the education of her grandson as well as her daughter. St. Anne’s link with education made her a symbol for individual lay piety achieved through learning. This aspect of St. Anne’s cult held particular appeal to Northern Humanists such as Agricola and Erasmus, and other adherents of the devotio moderna. St. Anne, standing at the boundary between the Old and New Testaments, represented a return to an earlier and purer form of religiosity, unmediated by the hierarchy of the Church.

Carla Casagrande defines the image of “good” older women and their role in regards to younger women as instructional: “If they were wise and virtuous, they could be models to be imitated and could teach and correct younger women. ... sermons and moral tracts continued to call up images of the sober and modest old woman who cared for her family and indulged in intense devotions, prayers, and fasts.”

St. Anne provided the ultimate example of this function. Trithemius, following a long description of Anne’s virtues which set her up as a model of pious female behavior, exhorts, “Oh mothers, teach your daughters to honor God; not to love the pomp of the world, to flee the shameful gaze of the public; to stay at home. .... The archangel did not come to Mary in public but in

secret; not chattering in the street, but silently in her chamber.” This direct address to mothers within the audience for his text gives them St. Anne as an example to follow when raising their own daughters.

The idea of a mother’s responsibility for the religious and moral education of her children, particularly daughters, is directly relevant for gender and family issues as expressed through the cult of St. Anne. The crucial role of Anne is summed up in the phrase: “Just as we know the tree from its fruits, so the mother may be recognized through her daughter.” This recognition is both physical and lineage-based, and centered around the transmission of morals. Anne is the mirror of her daughter’s virtues; Mary’s unique qualities are the proof that her mother was exceptional. While her devotees could not hope to imitate the physical purity and particular holiness which had made Anne worthy of bearing Mary, they could take direct lessons from Anne’s model raising of her daughters.

\[55\] Discite o matres filias vestras ad honore[m] dei instituere: mu[n]di pompas non amare: publicu[m] turbecol[n]spectum fugere: domi residere. … Ad mariam archangelus venit non in publico sed in secreto: non in platea loquente[m]: sed in camera tacentem….” Trithemius, De laudibus, p. bviR.

\[56\] Sicut arbor ex suo fructu cognoscitur: ita qualis sit mater in filia declaratur” Trithemius, De laudibus, p.aiijV-aiiiijR.

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Chapter Two:  
Sacred and Secular Economies

In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, St. Anne was the focus of a rapidly expanding cult embedded within Northern European communities. Through confraternal organizations and veneration in conjunction with other pilgrims to shrine sites, Anne became the subject of public and group devotion. The rapid growth of confraternities was one of the most notable characteristics of St. Anne’s cult from ca. 1480 through the first years of the Reformation. St. Anne also had specific shrine sites within Northern Europe, which developed into major pilgrimage destinations in the early sixteenth century. Kleinschmidt highlights the importance of pilgrimage as an expression of St. Anne’s cult and argues that “In the time when her cult rose so high in German lands, it could not be otherwise than that her ardent devotees streamed together in great numbers to her relics.”

The popularity of St. Anne-centered pilgrimages increased with growth in interest in devotion to St. Anne; in fact, two of the major pilgrimage sites, Düren and Annenberg, were only established in the early sixteenth century. Because they originated during the years of St. Anne’s greatest popularity, these two sites provide a crucial example of both

1 „Zu den Äußerungen des volkstümlichen Annakultes gehören auch die Wallfahrten.... In der Zeit, wo ihr Kult in deutschen Landen einen so hohen Aufschwung nahm, konnte es nicht ausbleiben, daß ihre eifrigen Verehrer in großer Anzahl zu ihren Reliquien zusammenströmten.“ Kleinschmidt, Heilige Anna, p. 143.
how St. Anne devotion developed and, more broadly, how relics and pilgrimages became resources of economic and religious power in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. This economy of salvation and healing encompassed the exchange and acquisition of devotional “souvenirs,” such as pilgrimage badges and small, cheap plaster images of the *Anna Selbdritt*, as well as ornate works of art such as the Düren reliquary.

While Düren achieved its status through a classic case of sacred theft, Annaberg became the target of a concentrated effort by the Duke of Saxony to establish a major pilgrimage site dedicated to St. Anne. These pilgrimage sites and the miracles and indulgences associated with them added greatly to St. Anne’s popularity as she became ever more widely known and associated with specific locations and miracles. The various German confraternities dedicated to St. Anne provided members with a community with both spiritual and social benefits. The confraternity, the stream of pilgrims to the new church, and the wealth of donations (Annaberg was, after all, an extremely prosperous mining town, in the midst of other prosperous mining towns in the beginning of the sixteenth century) ensured that Annaberg became the most significant pilgrimage site in Saxony, and one of the two most significant sites devoted to St. Anne in Northern Europe.

In this chapter, I examine the growth of German confraternities across Northern Europe and the sixteenth-century origins and development of the two major shrines to St. Anne, the Rhineland city of Düren and the Saxon city of Annaberg. These examples illustrate the complex religiosity of the time period surrounding the Reformation, in particular the relationship between the church hierarchy, the secular powers, and the many facets of what is termed “popular belief.” The rapid and widespread rise of
devotion to St. Anne during this time period makes her cult a particularly useful case study for interactions within and between confraternities and around the development of late medieval pilgrimage sites. I argue that these confraternities and pilgrimage sites created socio-religious communities around St. Anne, which reached across the ecclesiastical, lay, urban, and noble sectors of society. Because the network of sources from Düren and Annaberg are so rich and crystallize around the development of the St. Anne cults there, I am focusing on these two cities, where, I believe, clerical authority and popular piety intersected in cultic practices surrounding St. Anne. My reading of this archival data outlines the complex relationship between these two imagined categories of religious society and emphatically demonstrates the involvement of both the lower and upper strata of society in veneration of St. Anne. Based on the evidence I present here, I argue that the exchange of cultic materials, religious displays, and confraternal charity in Düren and Annaberg created sacred economies, where both money and salvation were transferred—often with accrued interest—both within these cities and across Northern Europe. Through a detailed case study of issues of the material remains of popular devotion in Düren and Annaberg, I aim to demonstrate how complex these two categories actually were, and how involved the upper levels of society were in venerating St. Anne.

In late medieval Europe, confraternities and shrines had become key components of the sacred and secular economies, providing salvational, social, and material benefits. One of the most famous St. Anne relics, the skull fragment stolen from Mainz and brought to Düren, inspired the development of a major cult site in the midst of an extensive legal battle over its possession. By winning the court case, Düren not only proved its right to the relic, but also demonstrated the power of St. Anne, giving further
impetus to her veneration in the Rhineland and throughout Germany. It gained a reputation as a site of miracles, growing from a sleepy small Rhineland village to a town with a significant pilgrimage industry. While Annaberg never had an international court case to bring attention to its church and relics, it did have the concentrated patronage of the Duke of Saxony, and the resources of a rich silver mining town. Both cities provided the faithful with abundant proof of the bounty, mercy, and power of St. Anne, demonstrated through miracles and the prosperity which came with being a major center of cult veneration.

I. Locations of Holiness

By the end of the Middle Ages, pilgrimage had developed into one of the hallmarks of Western Christianity, an opportunity for people to “abandon their traditional milieus for a time in order to travel to a place where the power of God broke into mundane existence” before returning to their ordinary lives. Benno Hubensteiner goes so far as to declare that “not the liturgy, but the practice of pilgrimage, even with its aberrations and exaggerations, … stands in the center of popular belief….” in the Middle Ages. For the majority of the late medieval faithful, pilgrimages were not only undertaken as a spiritual exercise; rather, they were an attempt to seek some concrete benefit conferred upon the living pilgrim through contact with the saint. They provided an opportunity for the faithful to experience the feeling of being part of a larger religious community, they provided presumed practical benefits such as healing or the answering of prayers, they granted an opportunity to gain vital indulgences, and the stories of

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miraculous events at pilgrimage sites demonstrated the power of the saints.

In the decades before the Reformation, there was an explosion of popular pilgrimages. This “pilgrimage fever” inspired people of all ages to embark on pilgrimages “on the spur of the moment,” either to an established site, or to one of the newly-established pilgrimages, such as the Holy Blood at Wilsnack, the Schön Maria in Regensburg, or the new St. Anne pilgrimage in Düren.\(^4\) Rhineland pilgrim Phillip de Vigneulle remarked that so many people were crowding into Düren for the festival of St. Anne in 1510 that the roads were barely passable.\(^5\) The image of men and women dropping everything and heading off to make a pilgrimage made authority figures nervous. They feared social disorder, the growth of heretical beliefs, and pilgrimages undertaken for the purpose of tourism or entertainment rather than with true religious fervor. It was this kind of pilgrimage that later drew the ire of Luther, who in 1520 attacked the recent development of the Schön Maria shrine in Regensburg. Classifying it as a deceit of the devil to trick the populace, he blamed the bishops for encouraging such practices in order to reap the economic benefits of the influx of pilgrims.\(^6\)

While bishops, municipal authorities, and local merchants might have relished the prosperity brought by a popular pilgrimage, there was also nervousness about the possibility of uncontrolled popular action or misbehavior during the pilgrimage. The

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\(^6\) “Das die wilden Capellen und festkirchen wurden zu poden vorstoret, als da sein, da die newen walfarten hyn gahen, Welsznacht, Sternberg, Trier, das Gryntal und itzt Regenspurg, unnd der anztal viel mehr. O wie schwer, elend rechenschaft werden die Bischoff mussen geben, die solchs teuffels gespenst zulassen und geniesz davon empfangen!” Luther, “An den christlichen Adel deutschen Nation,” WA 6, p. 447. It is interesting that Luther focuses his criticism on recent shrines which have sprung up out of popular devotions in locations outside of the regular parish structure.
Heiltumsbuch of Bamberg, which includes a woodcut illustration of the festive showing-forth of the relics, contains instructions to pilgrims on how they should conduct themselves when the relics are displayed:

Be quiet, and don’t push at each other. … Then don’t all approach until you are allowed to go, for everything has been well arranged according to every necessity by our gracious lord of Bamberg and his gracious officials and subjects. Whoever therefore defies his prohibition and creates an uproar and ruckus will be heavily penalized without mercy.⁷

This passage resonates with anxiety about a chaotic populace pressing forward to see the sacred objects, to gain the benefits of viewing them. Not only are visitors enjoined not to be disorderly, but they are informed that whoever does not behave in a proper fashion, waiting for permission from the bishop and other officials, will be penalized.

Civic and ecclesiastical authorities worked to maintain a balance between promoting a pilgrimage’s popularity while maintaining order. This was especially important while the pilgrimage was new and still developing. In the formative years of a pilgrimage, pilgrims “trend to arrive haphazardly, individually, and intermittently, though in great numbers, “voting with their feet”; their devotion is fresh and spontaneous.”⁸ If a pilgrimage is successful, “there is progressive routinization and institutionalization of the sacred journey,” organized around specific feast days or sacred events. In addition to individual pilgrims, religious groups make the journey together.⁹ Pilgrimage-oriented industries develop at and around the shrine, to provide food, lodging, devotional objects,

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⁷ “Seyt still vnd dringt nit aneinander … So kert euch nicht daran so lang piß man euch erlaubt zu gen wan es sein alle ding durch vnsern genedigen hern von Bamberg vnd seiner genaden amptleute Vnd vntterthon noch aller notturff wol westelt Wer seinuer verpot also verachtet vnd auffrur vnd geschrey macht der wirt an alle genade schwerrlich gestrofft,” *Heiltum zu Bamberg*, p. 294V.
and mementos to the shrine visitors.

Both of the cases under study in this chapter developed into successful pilgrimages. The pattern described above is especially visible in the case of Düren, which became a major St. Anne pilgrimage sites around the turn of the sixteenth century, following the acquisition of a relic through theft at the height of devotion to St. Anne. The case of the St. Anne pilgrimage at Düren shows the complex interaction of different social groups around the stolen relic of a saint whose popularity was on the rise.

II. Stealing St. Anne

Historians wishing to study the history of Düren confront two difficulties. First, the city suffered a major fire in 1543 as a result of the occupation by Charles V and his troops during the war of Guelders Succession against the Duke of Jülich. This fire destroyed the city and parish archives, along with many documents relating to the struggle over St. Anne’s relics. Of those documents which survived the 1543 fire, many were destroyed towards the end of World War II, when most of the center of town (including the late Gothic church of St. Anne) was completely destroyed in Allied bombing raids. Fortunately, the account of the pilgrim Phillip de Vignuelles, a merchant from Metz who made an extensive trip through the religious sites of the Rhineland in 1510, survives. There are also documents from other participants, particularly Mainz and the Duke of Jülich. One of the largest remaining sources for information regarding Düren and its relationship with St. Anne is thus from the mid-seventeenth century, when Jacob Polius (a Franciscan from the Bethanien monastery in Düren) wrote an exhaustive history, using both documents and oral sources. While Polius was a thorough chronicler whose accuracy has largely been confirmed by subsequent research in the nineteenth and
twentieth centuries, he was writing during the Baroque revival of the cult of St. Anne. His account must be viewed in the overall context of Jesuit efforts to revive the cult and processions which had died out following the 1543 fire.

Düren lies in the middle of an extremely active late medieval pilgrimage area based around the Rhineland cities of Cologne and Aachen. The city itself dated back to the eighth century, and its first chapel was on the site which the later Annenkirche would occupy. After 1246, it belonged to the territory of the Dukes of Jülich. By 1500, it was a thriving town of ca. 3,000 inhabitants. The main church was dedicated to St. Martin, but possessed no major relic from that saint to stimulate interest and devotion on a wider scale. The most significant relic possessed by the town up until their acquisition of St. Anne’s skull fragment was a relic of St. William, also defined as a “head” relic. However, this relic also seems to have inspired local devotion without awakening any wider interest. It took the arrival of St. Anne to catapult this small city into the ranks of major northern European pilgrimage sites.

Long before Düren gained fame as a pilgrimage destination, the surrounding cities had built up reputations and made significant profits from the pilgrimage industry. Cologne was famous for the relics of St. Ursula and the legendary eleven thousand virgins; the twelfth-century acquisition of the relics of the Magi had added to its status as an important pilgrimage destination. The city of Aachen possessed its own set of major relics; most importantly, a group of four biblical relics consisting of the robe the Virgin Mary wore on Christmas Eve, Christ’s swaddling clothes, the cloth Christ wore on the cross, and the cloth John the Baptist’s head was wrapped in.\(^{10}\) The “Aachen Pilgrimage”

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(Aachenfahrt), a pilgrimage based around the festive display of these four relics, dates back to the thirteenth century. In 1349, this pilgrimage was put on a seven-year cycle, taking place during the fourteen days around the Aachen church consecration festival (Kirchweihfest), held on July 17th. During years when the Aachenfahrt took place, the Rhineland city overflowed with pilgrims, achieving comparable status to Santiago de Compostela and Rome. Surrounding cities, such as Maastricht and Cornelimünster, also benefitted from the influx of pilgrims. Düren was geographically part of this pilgrimage region, but lacked special attractions of its own—at least until it acquired a segment of St. Anne’s skull in 1501.

Düren’s advance to the rank of significant pilgrimage site came about through a saint whose widespread veneration was comparatively new; however, the method of acquisition was one with deep roots in medieval Christianity. Furta sacra (sacred theft) was involved in some of the most famous relic translations of the Middle Ages. Patrick Geary, in his classic study of the development of sacred theft as a form of relic transmission in the central Middle Ages, notes that there were specific conventions involved in the establishment of a sacred theft, intended to prove the saint’s acquiescence, and often their direct involvement. Because relics translated through theft often lost their identifying markers, the story of the theft (with as many corroborating details as possible) was used to authenticate the holiness and power of the bits of bone which were being moved from one location to another. By itself, without any accompanying narrative, a relic “carries no fixed code or sign of its meaning as it

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11 Wynands, Aachen, pp. 41, 64. The most recent Aachenfahrt was held in 2007.
moves from one community to another or from one period to a subsequent one.\textsuperscript{13} The sacred theft paradigm was well-established by the sixteenth century, not least because the production of hagiographical texts, miracle stories, and pilgrimage songs relating the details of specific sacred thefts were an important component of validating the new sites of these relics.

The \textit{furta sacra} which brought St. Anne to Düren took place on November 29, 1500. According to Polius, the thief was a twenty-five year old stonemason named Leonhard, originally from Kornelimünster (a small village near Düren), who was working at the cathedral in Mainz when he stole the relic. This Gothic \textit{Hallenkirche}, built between 1257 and 1338, was a sign of the prestige and power of one of the largest cathedral chapters in the Empire and the seat of one of the three ecclesiastical Electors, the Archbishop of Mainz. Among its relics was a piece of the skull of St. Anne. According to Mainz, this fragment had been brought to Mainz from the Holy Land (specifically Bethlehem) in 1212 by Canon Theobald, a doctor and professor of theology who had traveled east as a Crusade preacher and had purchased the relic from a Christian cleric. This account represents several \textit{topoi} of medieval relic transmission. The Crusades had in fact sent a flood of relics back to Western Europe, particularly following the fall of Constantinople in 1204. Since these relics were completely dislocated from their previous context and brought across vast cultural and geographic distances, it was necessary to provide proof of their authenticity; ie, a story involving a well-educated, devout canon who obtained the relics from an authoritative source in the area where the saint (in this case, St. Anne) was known to have died. This origin story provided Mainz with the greatest possible authority for the authenticity of their relic. However, according

\textsuperscript{13} Geary, \textit{Furta Sacra}, p. 5.
to a chronicle from Aachen, the relic had actually been “previously taken out of the
church in Alfter near Bonn.”\textsuperscript{14} The source of this version is not clear, and it is certainly
not the version Mainz would ever promote. Claiming direct transmission from the Holy
Land had an authority and authenticity which an origin in a German monastery simply
couldn’t match.

As Geary notes, the motivation and moral character of the thief grew to be key
components of a \textit{furta sacra}, part of the evaluation of whether what had happened was a
truly sacred theft or merely a case of greed.\textsuperscript{15} It is thus unsurprising that the argument
about Leonhard’s motivations for his actions form a key component of the subsequent
battle over the relics of St. Anne. Polius, writing long after Düren had established itself
as a major site for the veneration of St. Anne, emphasized that Leonhard was inspired by
the fact that St. Anne was not being venerated as she should be by Mainz. This same
point of view was expressed earlier in a low German chronicle written much closer to
actual events in Düren: The pious stonemason, distressed that such an important saint was
not being given her due, stole the relic in order to make sure it would be taken to a place
where proper honor could be shown.\textsuperscript{16} Concurrent with this lack of respect, Polius notes

\textsuperscript{14} “auch vormals genommen zo alfter by bon us der kirchen.” P.S. Käntzler, “Kleine Aachener Chronik,”
edited and commented on, “Annalen des Historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein (AHVN), vol. 21/22
(1870), pp. 91-106. The Aachen Chronicle describes events up to 1600, but occasionally references
Polius’ \textit{Exegeticon} of 1640; although no exact date for its composition is given by Käntzler, the mid-
seventeenth century seems most probable. Erwin Gatz cites German Hubert Christian Maafjen, as arguing
that the Mainz relic had come from Alfter, “in den Vorgebirge,” near Bonn. German Hubert Christian
Unfortunately, as Gatz notes, Maaßen does not give a source reference for this information. Gatz,
“Annaverehrung,” in Gatz, \textit{St. Anne in Düren}, p. 188. Kleinschmidt classifies Maaßen’s source as “less
believable,” but notes that a history of St. Anne printed in Cologne in 1519 also mentions Alfter as the
original source of the relic. Kleinschmidt, \textit{Heilige Anna}, p. 375.

\textsuperscript{15} Geary, \textit{Furta Sacra}, p. 117.

\textsuperscript{16} J. Habets, ed., “Cronijk der landen von Overmaas en der aangrenzende gewesten door eenen inwoner von
Beek bij Maastricht,” in \textit{Publications de la Société d’Histoire et d’Archéologie dans le Duché de Limbourg
that the clergy in Mainz weren’t even keeping the relic in a secure location—Leonhard essentially was just able to pick it up and walk off.

Documents from St. Stephen’s, written in the course of the struggle to get the relics returned, unsurprisingly paint a different picture. Leonhard is characterized as a sacrilegious robber and common thief, who took advantage of his position working on a new niche behind the high altar where the reliquary was intended to be placed. The Mainz documents also emphasize the violence of the theft, arguing that Leonhard had had to break an iron grate in order to gain access to the relic. A third point of view is provided by the record of Philipp de Vigneulles, a merchant from Metz who went on an extended pilgrimage trip through the Rhineland in 1510, in conjunction with one of the cycles of the Aachenfahrt. De Vigneulles was an enthusiastic participant in contemporary religious culture, and fond of recounting his own journey and the stories of the sites he visited.

Recounting his trip to Düren for the feast of St. Anne, de Vigneulles also relates the story of the relic’s acquisition:

The same head was miraculously brought to this good city of Düren as you will hear; for it is true that a little before, about the year 1500, I don’t know exactly the correct day, there was a young mason at Cowelance, and this young mason was working in the church of the said Cowelance and every day said his prayers in front of some head images; these heads on the altar were not very reverently decorated or honored; among them was the head of this glorious saint Anne.

Then one day when the clerk of this church did not want to pay this mason, as it has been told to me, and it was said and divinely revealed to him that he would pay himself and that he would take the head of this glorious saint Anne to the good city of Düren, as he did. Others say differently and say that the clergy made him take it thinking to mock
him; but however he did it, it is true that the said mason brought the said head to Düren.\textsuperscript{17}

It is impossible to determine what de Vigneulles knew about the relic’s journey from Mainz to Düren before his pilgrimage trip. At the time of his visit, the legal fight between Mainz and Düren had only been settled for four years. However, the priest in Düren, Hildebrand von Weword, had been assiduously promoting the new pilgrimage and devotion to St. Anne, and written texts as well as oral accounts were circulating. Particularly around the feast of St. Anne, when pilgrims were streaming into Düren, the story of how the relic had come to be there would have been a topic of discussion. Since the fight over St. Anne had been settled in Düren’s favor, Mainz’s portrayal of Leonhard as an unscrupulous robber had not taken root. The picture de Vigneulles presents is not unstintingly positive. While he emphasizes that Leonhard prays daily before the (unappreciated) relics, including that of St. Anne, the actual trigger for the theft is a dispute over wages; not an entirely pure motivation. However, Leonhard only acts after receiving a vision specifying that the solution to his problem is to take the relic of St. Anne to Düren. The true motivation for the \textit{furta sacra} thus comes from a divine vision given to a pious young man, who has already been showing proper devotion to the saint whose relics he takes. The alternate account de Vigneulles mentions, ie, that the clergy

\textsuperscript{17} “… lequel chief fut apourte' miraucleusement à ycelle bonne ville de Dur comme vous oyrez; car il est vray que ung peu devant, environ l'an mil v.c. je ne sc.ay pas bien le jour à vray, il y avoit ung jonne mac,on a Cowelance et owroit ycellui jonne mac,on en l'e'glise de la dite Cowelance et faisoit tous le s jours sa apriere devant aulcuns chiefs d'imaige, lesquels chiefs estoient sus l'autel aissez peu re've'ramment acoustre's ne honoure's, entre lesquels estoit le chief d'icelle glorieuse saince Anne.

Or avint ung jour que les commis d'icelle e'glise ne vouloient pas paier yceluy mac,on, comme il me fut dit, et tellement qu'il lui fut dit et re've'le' diviniment qu'il se paiait et qu'il empourtait  le chief d'icelle glorieuse ste Anne à la bonne ville de Dur, comme il fit. D'autres en disent aultrement et disent que les ministres lui firent prendre se cuidant mou cquer de lui; mais comment qu'il en fu^t, il est vray que le dit mac,on apourtait le dit chief à Dur.” Philipp de Vigneulles, \textit{Gedenkenbuch}, p. 179. I have not yet been able to identify “Cowelance” from this text—one translation says “Coblenz,” which seems geographically suspect.
“made” Leonhard take the relic as a form of mockery, does not paint Mainz in a flattering light. The first version depicts the clergy of St. Stephen’s as parsimoniously refusing to pay a hardworking stone mason who was devoted to the saints they themselves were failing to honor properly. The second implies that the clergy sacrilegiously used a holy relic as part of a joke. In both cases, the clergy in Mainz appear as unworthy possessors of St. Anne.

The extent to which St. Anne was being venerated in her former location in the cathedral was an important point of contention between Düren and Mainz. Right from the moment the theft started being discussed, the different sides in the argument put forth different pictures of devotion in action. For Mainz, the position of St. Anne’s relic, kept in a magnificent cathedral along with other relics and protected by members of the clergy, was being undermined by a greedy member of the laity, who saw the saint purely in terms of economic gain. Supporters of Düren emphasized the rescue of a neglected relic by an earnest, simple, pious young man. They also focused on the idea of divine guidance, using the belief that a relic could not be stolen without the saint’s acquiescence to lend credence to their arguments.

A standard trope in *furta sacra* accounts was the idea that the stolen relic had been unappreciated in its former location. Stealing the relic thus became a way to ensure that the saint was given proper honor. de Vigneulles refers to this in his account, when he describes an entire set of relics in head-shaped reliquaries which were “not very reverently decorated or honored” in Mainz. During the legal case against Düren, Mainz repeatedly emphasized that the relic had been held in great honor: there was an altar dedicated to St. Anne in the cathedral, and Mainz served as a center for the spread of
devotion to St. Anne.\textsuperscript{18} In addition, a confraternity dedicated to St. Anne had been founded in 1493 by the Carmelites, and had been expanding throughout the 1490s, winning confirmation from Archbishop Berthold of Mainz in 1499, a year before the theft.\textsuperscript{19} St. Anne appears to have had a level of veneration in Mainz commensurate with the growing status of the saint around the turn of the sixteenth century, promoted by members of the religious establishment. However, in Mainz, St. Anne’s cult faced competition from numerous other saints. In Düren, there were no other major relics to draw attention away from the new arrival.\textsuperscript{20}

The degree of importance attached to the St. Anne relic possessed by St. Stephen’s is also connected to the question of what exactly Leonhard stole; specifically, whether he removed the skull fragment only, or whether he took the entire reliquary. The Düren reliquary, which still exists, is in the form of a silver bust of St. Anne. The relic itself is placed as part of the top of the head, underneath a hinged top panel which can be lifted to display it to pilgrims. The reliquary, later with the additions of a crown and base, rapidly became widespread as an image associated with Düren in woodcuts and on pilgrimage badges. Polius’ \textit{Exegeticon} contains such a woodcut, in which the hinged top section of the reliquary is clearly visible (Illustration 13). The woodcut shows the reliquary displayed on an embroidered pillow, without a crown. Heinrich Appel’s analysis of this central component indicates that it was made in the Rhineland in the fourteenth century, and that “in its basic form, it was certainly made in Mainz, the

\textsuperscript{19} Dörfler-Dierken, \textit{Bruderschaften}, p. 133.
\textsuperscript{20} The situation in Mainz is in some respects parallel to Augsburg, where, Virginia Nixon has argued, St. Anne never developed an extensive cult because of competition from other saints. Nixon, \textit{Holy Mother}, pp. 81-98.
original location of the St. Anne head.” Subsequent additions, including the crown, a base, and a linked belt which could be detached and lent out (for example, to women expecting a child), were made once the original reliquary was in Düren. A letter written on February 5, 1501 from Archbishop Herman von Hessen of Cologne to Duke Wilhelm IV of Jülich refers to the relic as being in a bust when it was in Mainz. However, not only does Polius not mention theft of the actual reliquary, the documents from Mainz’s side of the court case make no reference to it either; a surprising omission considering how eager they were to paint the stonemason as a common thief motivated by greed. Emperor Maximilian I, writing to Archbishop Berthold on June 15, 1501, noted that Leonhard had “left all accompanying ornaments [gezierde] in Mainz.” It is unclear what these ornaments would have been, although they may have resembled the base, crown, and other decorations which were added to the reliquary once it was in Düren.

In spite of Polius’ and the Mainz documents silence about the theft of the reliquary, I would argue that Leonhard did in fact take it. The fact that analysis of the central portion of the reliquary (the silver bust) shows a fourteenth-century origin from somewhere in the Rhineland speaks very strongly in favor of it being the original bust referred to by the archbishop of Cologne, one of the set of head-shaped reliquaries mentioned by Philipp de Vignuelles in 1510. Emperor Maximilian, in his letter, refers not to a reliquary (Reliquie, Reliquienschrein) but to ornaments (gezierde). In Düren, the reliquary was added to over the centuries (as mentioned above); it is possible that Mainz had similar ornamentation attached to or around the reliquary, objects which Leonhard

left behind.

Two other significant arguments favor the allegation that Leonhard stole the reliquary. Physically, the skull fragment is attached to the middle top section of the reliquary by means of screws. For a stonemason in the middle of a theft, sacred or not, taking the time to open the reliquary and unscrew the fastenings holding the relic in place seems unlikely, particularly after may have had to spend time breaking the doors in front of the relics. More importantly, the reliquary provided a key part of the relic’s identity. As Geary notes, a relic without context is nothing more than a bit of bone or cloth; a relic moved from one place to another needs authentication, either physical (a parchment defining the relic and naming the saint, or a reliquary) or textual (for example, the story of the prior from Jerusalem who had sold the relic to Canon Theobald of Mainz in the first place).

If Leonhard did abscond with the entire reliquary, why do the records contain no reference to it? I believe that the answer lies in the late medieval approach to saints and their reliquaries in the Rhineland. As discussed in Chapter One, relics could be contained in statues or images. These statues, like the Anna Selbdritt in Halle, were venerated both because of their relics and because they were images of the saint. Anton Legner argues that a shift from a focus on relics as the primary objects of veneration to a focus on images took place in the course of the fourteenth century.24 By the time of Leonhard’s theft, the relic and its container represented a single holy object. This conflation of holiness meant that there was no distinction drawn between the bone relic and the silver bust. Rather than stealing two distinct objects, Leonhard stole a single saint.

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The theft of St. Anne’s relic unleashed a storm of activity from the authorities in Mainz. Whether St. Anne was being venerated appropriately there or not, the canons and officials of St. Stephen’s cathedral were not about to allow any of their relics to be stolen, particularly when devotion to St. Anne was on the rise. It is unclear exactly when the theft was noticed; however, it must have been prior to December 18th, 1500, when Archbishop Berthold issued a travel pass to representatives from Mainz charged with tracking down the thief and returning the relic. According to documents from Jülich, the party consisted of three men: Deacon Johannes Moller, Cantor Johan Thus, and Canon Richard an den Niederrhein. They first travelled to Cologne, then to Aachen, then Cornelimünster, then finally reached Düren. Meanwhile, the chancellor and counselor (Kanzler und Rat) from Cologne, Dr. Johann Menchyn, had also sent a Carthusian to Düren to retrieve the relic. The Mainz documents mention only two representatives, a Carthusian named Hans and his traveling companion, and states that they caught up with Leonhard in Cornelimünster. Depending on the amount of information the Archbishop of Mainz had before he sent people out to retrieve the stolen relic, it is possible that both documents are accurate, and two groups were sent out. The version of the story in the Mainz documents is the only version which mentions Leonhard himself having contact with the representatives searching for St. Anne.

Leonhard had in fact brought the relic back to his home town. Apparently, he first attempted to give the relic to the local Benedictine monastery, where Abbot Heinrich von Binsfeld refused to take it. Considering the amount of ecclesiastical, economic, and political resources available to the archbishops of Mainz (including recruiting aid from the archbishop of Cologne), it is understandable why the abbot refused to become
involved. Subsequently, the stonemason brought the relic home to his mother, who insisted that it be returned. Leonhard complied by bringing the relic to the Observant Fransiscans at the Bethanien convent in Düren. This transfer took place in January or February of 1501. According to the Mainz documents, Hans and his companion met with Leonhard in the presence of Abbot Heinrich, and learned that the relic had been given to the Franciscans in Düren. At this point, the story moves to Düren, and Leonhard ceases to play a role, aside from a brief mention in a letter from June of 1501 to Deacon Moller, which complains that the inhabitants of Düren are honoring the stonemason. Philipp de Vigneulles claims to have seen Leonhard working (presumably as a stonemason still) in Düren in 1510.

Much like the Benedictine abbot in Cornelimünster, the Franciscans were not inclined to defy the archbishop of Mainz. All accounts agree that they handed the relic over to the delegation in February of 1501. However, exactly what happened afterwards is described differently in different versions of the story, and provides insight into the interplay of popular and elite religion in the early sixteenth century. Polius, working with over a hundred years of accumulated local tradition, paints a dramatic and detailed picture. The delegation from Mainz, having successfully completed their mission and retrieved the relic in Düren, stopped briefly at an inn, “Zum Stör,” where they were planning on resting briefly before continuing. While they were there, word spread that

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25 This lack of involvement did not prevent him from having an altar erected to commemorate St. Anne’s brief visit to Cornelimünster. Heribert Reiners, Die Kunstdenkmäler der Landkreise Aachen und Eupen, (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1912), p. 59.
26 Kleinschmidt dates the transfer to January 5, 1501; Gatz says Leonhard left Cornelimünster on February 8, 1501 and arrived in Düren the next day. Kleinschmidt, Heilige Anna, 376; Gatz, “Annaverehrung,” p. 164.
these were the representatives from Mainz, come to take the St. Anne relic back with them. When they learned of this, the populace of Düren, particularly the women, became upset. A group of women attacked the coach driver, who was preparing to depart, and another group, led by a woman named Klara von Pera, forced their way into the inn and argued with the Mainz delegation about the fate of the relic. This went on for three days and three nights, Polius reports, and the women kept watch over the relic the entire time. Finally, the women went to the city council members and got them to begin legal proceedings. An official named Frambach von Birgel suggested to the city council that they take possession of the relic, which they then did, bringing it to St. Martin’s, the main church in Düren.

The events as described in the court documents from Mainz are significantly less dramatic. After meeting with Leonhard in Cornelimünster and learning that the relic was with the Observant Franciscans in Düren, the Mainz delegation travelled to Bethanien to retrieve it. The Franciscans immediately handed it over, but before the delegation could make any move to return to Mainz, the mayor, lay assessors (Schöffen) and city council of Düren with their servants came and relieved them of the reliquary.\textsuperscript{28} When Mainz deployed more representatives to obtain the relic, this time sending Deacon Johannes Fust with several capitularies (\textit{Kapitularen}), the council of Düren claimed that they had acted on the orders of the Duke of Jülich and could not return it without his express order. This is the point at which both the government of the Holy Roman Empire and the papal bureaucracy got involved in the dispute, in Spring of 1501.

Much as the accounts from Düren emphasized Leonhard’s piety while official documents from Mainz emphasized his theft and the authority of the cathedral, the two descriptions of how the relic came to stay in Düren and become the subject of a legal battle demonstrate the positions of the two sides as they fought over possession of a valuable relic. Mainz’s records focus on the government officials of Düren and the authority of the Duke of Jülich. Here, preventing the return of the relic is a political issue, with possible economic overtones. From this perspective, Düren wanted to keep the head of St. Anne because it was a valuable prize for the town. Like Leonhard, the officials are described as motivated by greed. The popular account, as set forth by Polius and the Northern German/Dutch and Aachen chronicles referenced before, however, emphasizes spontaneous popular action based on faith. The good citizens of Düren, especially the women, are moved to action when they learn (apparently for the first time; all things considered, it is unsurprising that the Observant Fransicans would have wanted to keep things quiet) that St. Anne’s relic is in their city, but about to be taken away. This spontaneous outpouring of popular piety fits perfectly with the earlier spontaneous theft of the relic, also motivated by Leonhard’s piety. Rather than the rational and calculated seizing of the relic by city officials presented in the Mainz account, the story as it was constructed in Düren focuses on elements which fit with the idea of *furta sacra* and give credence to the idea that St. Anne belongs in Düren. Polius’ emphasis on women as the primary actors is an interesting contrast to the male politicians who are given the active role by Mainz. Spontaneous, emotional piety could be presented as a female response to the loss of an important relic, especially one from a female saint.\(^{29}\)

\(^{29}\) Interestingly, an early nineteenth-century text from Düren recounting the theft carries this theme even further, expanding the role of Leonhard’s mother and emphasizing that women are the more pious sex.
Even though Polius’ description of a debate lasting for a (very biblically proper) three days seems highly unlikely, the combination of popular and official action taken to prevent the relic from leaving Düren—i.e., that people learned of the relic’s presence and imminent departure and gathered at its location, and that the officials of Düren took action to retrieve the relic and bring it to the parish church—is highly plausible. Whether the Duke of Jülich was involved directly or not is less clear, although there is evidence that local belief held him to be interested in acquiring the relic for himself. Martin Luther, recounting a visit to Düren in his “Table Talk,” describes an argument with an innkeeper over the truthfulness of a miracle which had taken place there. The innkeeper ends his declaration of the miracle’s veracity by observing, “The Duke of Jülich wanted to raise St. Anne’s bones and bring them to another location, then all of his horses perished.”

The story of a saint punishing a greedy duke by killing his horses served two purposes; it demonstrated that St. Anne’s relics were genuine and powerful, and it proved that the saint herself wanted to remain in Düren.

Motivations within and around Düren were undoubtedly mixed, a combination of religious devotion and the knowledge that a major relic from a saint whose popularity was on the rise could be an amazingly profitable asset for the city. The economic side of the argument regarding the importance of the relic to Düren is shown in a letter by the deacon of St. Stephan’s cathedral in Mainz from February 14, 1501, written to the appropriately-named canon Valentine Snatz. In it, the deacon relates that the city was prepared to offer the cathedral 12,000 gulden, as well as a yearly payment of an

Johann Baptist Eisermann, Lobrede auf die hl. Anna, geh. in Düren 1801, (Köl: Christian Eberaers an St. Laurenz N. 2040, 1801).

additional 100 gulden, and the payment of all legal costs. Such a large sum of money indicates how valuable Düren felt the Annahaupt would be to their city, as a source of miraculous power (as discussed above) and as an economic boost. Seeing the same potential in the relic for their city (and undoubtedly furious at the theft), the archbishop and cathedral chapter of Mainz turned them down.

The dispute about the stolen relic rapidly involved the highest levels of ecclesiastical and political power within the empire. The archbishop of Cologne, who had already assisted his colleague in Mainz by sending some of his own people in search of the relic, informed the Duke of Jülich that if Düren did not return St. Anne, the city would face interdiction. The duke himself asked Mainz if the relic could stay in Düren. Meanwhile, Mainz was using every available avenue to obtain the return of what had been stolen. A delegation was sent to region in the middle of February 1501, dealing with the councils of Cologne and Jülich. In the middle of March 1501, Mainz sent Moller and Gerlach to Nürnberg, where Archbishop Berthold was staying in conjunction with his position as Imperial Chancellor. He brought the matter before Emperor Maximilian, who demanded that Düren return the relic. Mainz also sent a representative to Pope Alexander VI, resulting in two briefs in Summer 1501. The first ordered Düren to return the St. Anne relic; the second ordered the Duke of Jülich to ensure that the first brief was carried out.

The surviving records from the struggle over the Annahaupt show the extent to which both Duke Wilhelm of Jülich and Emperor Maximilian were working to balance between the demands of both sides and the possible will of the saint herself. The emperor, writing from Innsbruck at the beginning of June 1501, attempted to persuade

\footnote{Gatz, “Annaverehung,” in Gatz, \textit{St. Anna in Düren}, p. 166.}
Archbishop Berthold to allow the relic to remain in Düren. A month and a half later, Emperor Maximilian tried to persuade the Duke to return it to Mainz. Because Emperor Maximilian was himself devoted to St. Anne, the task of mediating between what could have been a truly sacred theft and the demands of his Chancellor as well as another major archbishop presented complications. In January of 1505, at the request of the Emperor and representatives from the cathedral chapter of Aachen, a group of representatives from the duchy of Jülich talked with representatives from Mainz about the practical difficulties of returning the Annahaupt, since such a significant pilgrimage, attended by various miracles, had sprung up in Düren in the four years the head had been there. Duke Wilhelm himself was also walking a line between the demands of Düren and Mainz, although his sympathies clearly lay with Düren (which was, after all, in his territory). His response to the papal order that he should ensure the return of the relic was to order Düren to return it, but to then report back that the city had moved the relic to the parish church, and would not return it without a proper legal process. This incident seems reminiscent of the city official telling the representatives from Mainz that the Duke had ordered them to take the relic back; both Duke Wilhelm and the city officials of Düren seem willing to use the other as an excuse in order to keep St. Anne in Düren.

While this argument was being carried out at the local, imperial, and papal levels, the Annahaupt was drawing attention in Düren. In August of 1501, the duchess of Jülich, Sibilla von Brandenburg, came to visit the “worthy holy relic.” At the end of the same month, the Düren city council wrote to Duke Wilhelm at the Imperial Court, saying

Thus if it is possible to achieve that the holy relic were able

to stay in Düren, that would be a great thing; your Grace
will want to know, that in the past two or three days, two
Observants from Düren were here and truly said, that in the
six or eight days prior, an old man, who had been blind for
four years, regained his sight in front of the relict. And
daily, many similar miracles and signs occur, and there is a
very great number of people from foreign lands who visit.\textsuperscript{35}

The council emphasizes not only the miracles, but the stream of pilgrims which the relic
is already drawing to Düren, even from “foreign lands.” Accordingly, the city council
seeks to recruit the Duke to their side, because it would be “a great thing” and to the
Duke’s honor for the relict to remain where it is, bringing the economic benefits of
pilgrimage and the incalculable benefits of an active source of miraculous holy power. In
October 1501, the council wrote a second letter, again emphasizing the constant miracles
(the blind receiving sight, the lame and crippled being healed, and many other miracles)
and many pilgrims, and requesting “if ways could be found, that the relict might stay in
Düren”—something which would be of great benefit both to the Duke himself and to the
entire territory.\textsuperscript{36} At this point, Düren had possessed St. Anne’s relic for less than a year,
and a significant pilgrimage had already developed. During the entire course of the long
legal battle over the \textit{Annahaupt}, the Düren pilgrimage grew in size and significance, and
miracles continued to occur. In light of these clearly visible signs of St. Anne’s favor and
power, it is no surprise that the people of Düren refused to return the relict, even when the

\textsuperscript{35} “So idt mogelich zu erlangen, dat hilige heiltom mit willen zo Duyren verbliven mochte, wer ein groisse
sache; u.f.g. wille gelieven zo wissen, dat binnen zwen oeder drin dagen zwene Observatedn van Duyren
alhi gewest sin ind wairlich gesach, we dat binnen 6 off 8 dagen neist vergangen ein alt man, der 4 jar blint
gewest, vur dem hiltom weder siende worden si. sust geschien degelichs vast ind vil mirakel ind zeichen
ind da ist boeven maiise groisse geleuffe van voulk uiss vrembden landen.” O. R. Redlich, “Zur Geschichte
der St.-Annen-Reliquie in Düren,” \textit{Zeitschrift der Aachener Geschichtsverein}, vol. 18 (1896), p 317, ft. 2.

\textsuperscript{36} “Sust ist dat geleuffe ind zo zidonge zo Duyren na dem heiltom boeven maiise, idn da geschien degelichs
vast ind will offenbaern zeichen ind mirakel, dat blinden sien, lamen ind krüppelen gesont werden ind
voirdir andern manichfeldinklich; mochten da wege gefonden werden, dat heiltom mit willen zo Duyren
verbleve, sulchs wer vor u.f.g. ind u.g. lande ein groisse saiche.” Redlich, “St.-Annen-Reliquie,” p.317.
city was placed under interdict by the archbishops of both Mainz and Cologne.

The final decision about the proper location for the Annahaupt was reached in 1506 by Pope Julius II, who had inherited the dispute from his predecessor. One of the key factors in influencing him to decide in favor of Düren was the Emperor, who had decided to fully support the city’s claims to the relic. In fact, the papal bull announcing the decision says that it came about “assuredly in consideration for our dearest son in Christ, Maximilian, illustrious king of the Romans.” Gatz speculates that the Emperor’s decision to support Düren wholeheartedly was due to his being in Duke Wilhelm’s debt due to the latter’s assistance in the Swabian wars of 1499. While this may well have contributed to Maximilian’s decision, the constant stream of miracles in Düren and the growth of a significant pilgrimage to a saint the Emperor himself was personally devoted to cannot have failed to play a role. Indeed, the presence of so many miracles in Düren is given as one of the key arguments in the papal bull; the fact that no miracles had occurred in Mainz during the relic’s stay there, while miracles had started occurring as soon as the relic had found a new home in Düren served as proof that the relic had not in fact been shown enough honor in its previous location, and that it had truly been divine inspiration which had moved Leonhard to steal it.

With the bull Altitudo divini consilii, Pope Julius ended the legal fight over the Annahaupt. In order to prevent further difficulties, he ordered that the cathedral chapter of St. Stephan’s in Mainz be eternally silent on the issue, and that the records of the court case be sealed. Düren paid 1600 gold gulden for the bull, the grandeur of which Polius

37 “necnon consideratione charissimi in Christo filii nostril Maximiliani Romanorum regis illustriss.” Julii II, Altitudo divini consilii, March 18, 1506.
39 “ut versimile est, divina inspiratione motus” Altitudo.
raptly describes in great detail from the clarity of its handwriting to the meaningful clauses, to the signatures and the intricate decorations.\textsuperscript{40}

Although the total costs of the legal proceedings were significant, by the time the decision came down in their favor, the city government of Düren could well afford it. Even in 1501, the newly-acquired relic was attracting attention and bringing revenue to the city. It is unclear when the first pilgrimage badges for St. Anne in Düren were made, but Kurt Köster argues on the basis of evidence found on bells (the image of the Düren St. Anne bust reliquary, which was to become the iconic symbol of the Düren pilgrimage) that it was as early as 1501.\textsuperscript{41} In 1504, when the legal proceedings were still undecided, a golden St. Anne pilgrimage badge ("ein golden sent Annenzeichen") was made for Duke Wilhelm.\textsuperscript{42} Although fancier versions such as this one were available for wealthier pilgrims, the normal pilgrimage badges, generally round, oval, or five-sided, were a mixture of lead and tin, were cheap pilgrimage mementos, meant to be sewn onto a hat or cloak. For Düren, there were two common images to be found on the badges; either a representation of the St. Anne reliquary itself, or a more traditional \textit{Anna Selbdritt}. In addition to these badges, other pilgrimage souvenirs existed, such as small white pipe clay \textit{Anna Selbdritt} statues, intended to be carried rather than displayed (Illustration 14).

Another popular souvenir in Düren, mentioned by Philipp de Vigneulles, demonstrates how connected the pilgrimage to St. Anne was to an entire network of local pilgrimage sites. After describing the hordes of pilgrims on their way to St. Anne’s festival in Düren (so many people that it was difficult to get down the road), de

\textsuperscript{40}in ampla verborum forma, cum clausulis praegnantibus, sub plumo et variis signaturis, miniculatoris ope per circuitum pretiose illustrata” \textit{Exegeticon}, p. 283. The bull itself was destroyed in World War II.


Vigneulles describes the actual ceremony:

And then someone came to preach a short sermon as at Aachen and other places, and once that was done they brought out the jewels in the same order and manner as at the other places, then all the clergy came in order and showed the people who were below the said holy head and then they returned it to the prelate who holds it upside down in order to show the bone of the head uncovered, for it is decorated all over with silver, but on the head there was a little plate that lifts up, and then it seemed that everybody could have burst from the force of blowing their horns and piping, so much so that they wept as if from joy.  

The “horns” described here were small clay horns known as *Aachhörner*, from the long-established pilgrimage at Aachen, where they had first been developed. They were intended to be taken home as souvenirs after pilgrims had blown them during the festive showing-forth of the relics, similar to those described in the previous chapter for pilgrims to Bamberg. The sermon and the display of the jewels and finally the relic are also all done “in the same order and manner” as de Vigneulles had seen at Aachen and elsewhere, all leading up to the (unique to Düren) moment when the reliquary is displayed upside-down so that the panel on the top of the head can be opened and the actual relic shown to the jubilant throng. Throughout this paragraph describing the celebration, he emphasizes the similarities between devotions in Düren and what he had seen in other places during his trip up the Rhine.  

These similarities to other, more established pilgrimages were not accidental. The
priest of Düren, Hildebrand von Weworden, deliberately worked to promote the St. Anne pilgrimage and incorporate it into the pre-existing Aachen cycle of pilgrimages. In order to display the new relic to large crowds, Hildebrand even arranged for the construction of a balcony similar to the one in Aachen, from which the St. Anne relic could be shown forth to the pilgrims gathered below. In addition to promoting devotion to St. Anne at home, Hildebrand had traveled to Rome and represented Düren in the legal proceedings before the pope, paying a portion of the legal costs himself. This was not entirely a selfless act; an agreement from 1503 between the city council and Hildebrand had stated that the pilgrimage revenues (already at a level which necessitated such legal agreements between the interested parties!) were to be divided such that the priest received one quarter as his share—an amount set to increase to one third if the legal proceedings against Mainz were successful. As the Aachenfahrt took place in 1503, it was obviously important to come to an understanding regarding the revenues from pilgrims visiting St. Anne in Düren as part of their trip through the Rhineland. The coincidence that St. Anne’s feast day, July 26th, fell in the middle of the Aachenfahrt linked the two sites even more closely together. Unfortunately, this harmonious agreement did not last, and there were years of fighting over division of revenues between the priest and the city following resolution of the dispute with Mainz.

The St. Anne shrine in Düren was promoted through various means in addition to the production of pilgrimage badges and souvenirs which visitors could take home with them. A fragment from a now-lost relic guidebook (Heiligtumsbüchlein) printed by Arnt von Aich in Cologne in 1507 includes woodcuts and descriptions in very poor French,

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(indicating the international nature of interest in this set of pilgrimage sites) of Maastricht (4 pages), Aachen (5 pages), Kornelimünster (5 pages), and Düren (3 pages). The Düren woodcuts show the *Annahaupt* next to the prayer attributed to Pope Alexander (quoted in Chapter One), a French and Latin prayer to Mary with praise of Joachim and Anna, and depictions of the *Annahaupt* and the *Wilhelmhaupt*, Düren’s other significant relic, now destroyed. This grouping is similar to the itinerary of Philipp de Vigneulles, who traveled up the Rhine from Metz and did in fact visit the major pilgrimage sites en route. Düren became a major stop on the route along the Rhine. In 1518, Helius Eobanus Hesse and Master Johann von Werter, en route to visit Erasmus in Rotterdam and bring him the veneration of the Erfurt humanists, traveled to Düren from Bonn and visited the St. Anne church to venerate the relics and pray for St. Anne and Jesus’ protection on their journey. Afterwards, Hesse wrote a poem in honor of the saint, publishing it in his travel book.

A surviving broadsheet also shows promotion of the St. Anne shrine in Düren. Printed in Augsburg sometime after 1503, “A song of St. Anne, about the great wonders that she performs in Düren,” (*Ein lied von sant Anna vo[n] den grossen zaichen die sy zu Teüren thut,* recounts numerous miracles associated with the shrine (Illustration 15). The fact that it was printed in Augsburg, rather than Cologne or someplace else more local, indicates the extent to which Düren had become a significant pilgrimage site with a

wider impact after only two years.\textsuperscript{49} However, rather than show an image of the Düren reliquary, the broadsheet uses the same Anna Selbritt woodcut found illustrating the song about Joachim and Anne discussed in the previous chapter. Even though Düren was becoming recognized as a miracle-working shrine, the reliquary that held St. Anne’s skull fragment was not yet established as the definitive image of the Düren pilgrimage. After an introductory verse, thirteen song verses tell of eleven specific miracles wrought by St. Anne in Düren. These include instances of the blind being given sight (although the song mentions young men or children, not the old man mentioned by the Düren city council), the possessed or bewitched being freed, St. Anne protecting a group of pilgrims from the Netherlands who had been struck with plague, and several instances of children being raised from the dead. One of the verses relates the miracle for which Düren was most famous: a small boy who had fallen into a well was miraculously preserved from drowning. The miracle, related in verse nine (between a child healed of blindness and two young murdered children brought back from the dead) states:

A child fell rapidly
Into a deep well
[For] five hours, nobody could find it
Its mother wailed loudly
Oh holy St. Anne
I will give you an offering
The child was found
It received its life again.\textsuperscript{50}

This miracle story is regularly repeated in conjunction with Düren, albeit with some variations. Martin Luther also encountered it, and relates the experience in his Tabletalk:

\textsuperscript{49} Or, if it was printed between 1503 and 1506, it could indicate that no printers in Cologne wanted to print materials supporting a city their archbishop had placed under interdict.

Once I was at a place, where St. Anne was called upon, and a description was officially circulated about a miracle, which St. Anne had performed at that same place, that a child had lain in the water two nights, and had not drowned, but had remained alive. I, as a young theologian, spoke against this, but the innkeeper said, “Make of it what you want, that child was in the water [for a] day and night.”

Two things are striking about this incident: first, Luther, in spite of his personal devotion to St. Anne, is skeptical, arguing from his position as a “young theologian” against what he perceives to be an impossibility and folk legend. Second, it is noteworthy that in the less than fifteen years between production of the broadsheet and Luther’s encounter with the story, the amount of time the child was in the water has substantially increased, thus rendering the miracle even more impressive.

III. Establishing Devotion

The case of St. Anne in Düren demonstrates the complex interactions between clerical and secular authorities and the popular segments of society, and a struggle over whether the events surrounding the theft would be defined according to the ecclesiastical establishment in Mainz and Cologne or in the popular religion terms promoted by Düren.

Compared with the story of Düren, the establishment of the other major pilgrimage in Northern Europe was astonishingly simple. In Annaberg, the cult of St. Anne was very clearly established by the top layers of secular society, and aimed at including those higher layers within the devotional community. Duke George the Bearded of Saxony, known for his personal devotion to St. Anne, named a new mining settlement for the saint.

51 “Ich bin einmahl an einem ortthe gewesen, da wurde S. Anna angeruffen, und gieng davon ein aufschreiben offentlich aus von einem wunderzaichen, so S. Anna an selbigen ortthe gethan hatte, das ein kind zwei nacht im wasser gelegen war und dennochs nicht ersoffen, sondern lebendig blieben. Ich als ein junger Theologus widerfocht es, aber der Wirdth sprach: “Macht draus, was ir wollet, das kind ist tag und nacht im Wasser gewesen.” The innkeeper concludes his story by using the tale of the Duke of Jülich’s horses to emphasize the power of St. Anne (see above). WA, 47, 581; 45, 528-9
in 1501. The new city of Annaberg, formerly known as Schreckenberg, had not been of any real significance until the discovery of significant quantities of silver ore there in 1492, when, according to legend, an angel showed a miner named Daniel Knappius where the silver was to be found. In light of this story, it would have seemed more appropriate to name the new, improved Schreckenberg after the miraculous event to which it owed its fortune. However, Duke George chose instead to name it after St. Anne, his personal patron and a saint enjoying an unprecedented upsurge in her popularity. The connection between St. Anne and worldly prosperity would also not have come amiss for a silver mining town. In fact, St. Anne’s status as patron saint to a major mining town may have been responsible for the subsequent belief that she had historically been the patron saint of miners.

Once the town had been renamed, Duke George set about ensuring that it would honor St. Anne properly. Relics were procured by asking his wife to ask her brother for the relics he owned, or by purchasing them from the Benedictine monastery of Lyons. A spectacular Gothic Hallenkirche was built between 1505 and 1526, the highlight of which was a carved marble altar from an Augsburg workshop known for supplying intricate Italianate works to the Fugger family. The Fuggers themselves were not uninvolved in Duke George’s financial affairs, including those related to Annaberg and the new altar. Jacob Fugger was in charge of the collection and administration of half of the indulgence proceeds in Annaberg, which were to go towards the building of St. Peter’s in Rome. These payments were doubtless one of the arrangements worked out with the Pope so that Duke George could gain all of the indulgences and special

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52 Including the newly-developing pilgrimage in Düren, which had just started to increase in popularity after the arrival of the relic and the burgeoning fight with Mainz.
53 Dörfler-Dierken, *Verehrung*, p. 93.
privileges he was seeking in his attempt to build up Annaberg as a major cult site.54

Where the pilgrimage to Düren appears to have originated largely spontaneously, Annaberg was much more deliberately developed as a site of veneration. Virginia Nixon uses Annaberg as an example of “the pattern of a saint’s cult used to generate income in more clear-cut lines.”55 She argues that Duke George had acquired spiritual “franchises,” including those used in fundraising for the new church, and that promoting St. Anne’s cult in Annaberg and Saxony was in his own best interest. However, Nixon, focusing primarily on comparing the financial success of St. Anne’s cult and confraternity in Annaberg with its lesser successes in Augsburg, does not spend enough time looking at Duke George’s personal devotion to St. Anne as a factor in his promotion of the saint’s cult and the city. In Annaberg, St. Anne enjoyed the status of being almost the only game in town, whereas Augsburg enjoyed a host of other saints and churches, including local patrons such as St. Afra. Duke George also enjoyed a higher level of authority and control over the city itself, and the religious establishments within it. His efforts were particularly focused on obtaining indulgences for visitors to the Annenmarkt, special permission for townfolk to work on holidays if needed, permission to trade with the Hussites, various measures intended to ensure that Annaberg funds and revenues would remain in Saxony, and promoting the confraternity which he had founded in his new city.56

IV. Confraternities

The St. Anne confraternity in Annaberg was one of the key facets of Duke

55 Nixon, Mary’s Mother, p. 92.
56 Nixon, Mary’s Mother, p. 94
George’s promotion of the saint. This focus on founding and supporting a confraternity was unsurprising; the rapid development of St. Anne confraternities (Annenbruderschaften) across Germany was one of the most notable features of late medieval devotion to St. Anne. Some large cities, such as Cologne, had as many as four different confraternities dedicated to St. Anne. Angelika Dörfler-Dierken has counted 464 St. Anne confraternities across central Europe, of which 330 can be dated. Out of that number, the vast majority (241) of the Annenbruderschaften in Germany were founded between 1480 and 1565, the overall highpoint of St. Anne veneration, while 89 were post-Tridentine foundations. The majority of St. Anne confraternities were thus founded during the time period when confraternities themselves were at the zenith of their importance within European religious life, one of the reasons why they achieved such growth over such a short period of time. When the “secretaries, notaries, and nuncios of the episcopal court and administration within the … city of Koblenz” founded their St. Anne confraternity in March of 1500, the reason they gave for their desire to do this was that “every single guild, organization, or society of a trade within the city of Koblenz has its own confraternity,” and they wanted to enjoy the benefits of participating in one of their own.

57 Confraternities are lay organizations dedicated to the veneration of a specific saint or to a religious observance such as the Rosary.
58 Dörfler-Dierken, Bruderschaften, p. 18. Because their existence might only be documented through mention in somebody’s will or a similar secondary document, it can be hard to track down and date some of the smaller confraternal foundations.
Based on the structure of secular guilds and clerical corporations, confraternities were lay religious organizations which “provided a form of mutual assurance linking their living with their dead members, creating a solidarity of prayer and collective intercession, while offering a form of pious sociability that created a sense of social belonging.”

One of their key tasks was to collect indulgences from bishops and papal legates seeking to ensure the salvation of their members. The growing focus on salvation and indulgences also fed into the growth of confraternities; in addition to prayers to help deceased members get out of Purgatory and into Heaven, confraternities were able to obtain indulgences for their members. The Annenbruderschaft of Koblenz, for example,

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60 The map was compiled by plotting the latitude and longitude of the medieval confraternity locations listed in Angelika Dörfler-Dierken’s Vorreformatorische Bruderschaften and then using Planiglobe’s online vector map creation software.

had ninety-two different indulgences from various church officials, granting an
indulgence of 10,000 days for attendance at the mass on specific days.\textsuperscript{62} The members of
this confraternity also enjoyed special dietary privileges on fast days, except for during
Holy Week. Confraternities also engaged in specific, regular group activities, including
daily masses and yearly or twice-yearly processions, where members showed off both
their piety and their status.

While membership in the Annaberg confraternity was extremely expensive—500
ducats for the privilege of brotherhood, another 500 for the Jubilee indulgence—the
amazingly comprehensive indulgence obtained by the Duke for members of the
confraternity made it a worthwhile expense. Brothers could choose their own confessor,
who had the power to exempt them from all ecclesiastical punishments, as well as ensure
them of forgiveness for various sins relating to the acquisition of property, offices, or
other goods, forgiveness for marrying within the third or fourth degree, and permission to
eat forbidden foods, including meat, on fast days.\textsuperscript{63} This amazing list of benefits ensured
that St. Anne’s confraternity would not lack members; indeed, the Annaberg
confraternity rapidly became so wealthy that it was able to lend 6000 guilders to the town
council and the Duke himself.

The high fees involved in joining the Annaberg confraternity meant that
membership was restricted to the upper levels of society. In this, Annaberg was very
typical for the social patterns seen within St. Anne confraternity membership in pre-
Reformation Northern Europe. When dealing with the St. Anne confraternities in
particular, questions of piety run directly into questions of social status. Kleinschmidt

\textsuperscript{62}Dörfler-Dierken, \textit{Bruderschaften}, p. 116.
\textsuperscript{63} Summary by Richter; quoted in full by Nixon, \textit{Mary’s Mother}, pp. 95-97.
declared that the confraternities were a perfect example of St. Anne’s cult representing widespread, egalitarian popular devotion; they represented opportunity for the laity to join together and venerate their chosen patron saint. He also attributed a wide range of patronages to St. Anne (most notably miners, “female professions,” and merchants). Angelika Dörfler-Dierken’s careful analysis of the professions which later historians claimed had been devoted to St. Anne demonstrates that these attributions were inaccurate, or at the least mis-dated. The well-known idea that St. Anne was the patron saint of miners, for example, based largely on the association of St. Anne with the silver-mining town of Annaberg (which features her in the town coat-of-arms), could not be proven to have existed in the Middle Ages. Rather than St. Anne’s connection with miners leading to a town being named after her, the naming of the town after a popular saint who the founding Duke was devoted to led later to an association between the saint and the town’s main source of income.

While Kleinschmidt is accurate about how widespread confraternities were, and how important their role in late medieval religion was, subsequent scholarship has made clear that the opportunities presented to the laity were restricted to those who could afford the membership dues and other expenses involved. As Dörfler-Dierken has noted, membership in many of the St. Anne confraternities consisted largely of the upper strata of urban society; joining one could serve as a sign of status or social connections in addition to an act of piety. The depiction of Anne and Joachim in the various sources as well-off, well-established members of their community fit well with middle- and upper-class urban conceptions of piety and the social structure of confraternities, which “often mirrored local social stratification, and were not infrequently dominated by social
elites.”64 Two thirds of the top third of the richest inhabitants of Kitzingen were members of the city’s Annenbruderschaft in 1522.65 The belief that St. Anne had belonged to the social elite of her day made her a model this group could easily identify with. There was doubtless also an aspect of fashion involved in participating in devotion to the Modeheilige of the moment with other social elites. The St. Anne confraternity in Worms, founded in 1496, boasted a membership list which included Emperor Maximilian I, the archbishops of Mainz, Cologne, and Trier, Frederick the Wise of Saxony, Albert of Saxony, Georg of Bavaria, the bishops of Worms, Speyer, Eichstätt, and Freiburg, as well as many other nobles, clearly a social elite to be imitated.66

One professional connection which does seem to have existed is the link between St. Anne confraternities and merchants, who constituted a significant percentage of confraternal members. The growth of cities and trade networks in general had a strong impact on the Blütezeit of German confraternities in the late Middle Ages; both Dörfler-Dierken and Klaus Militzer have noted the importance of these trade networks for the spread of new religious ideas. While St. Anne confraternities themselves had a specific location, their members could live elsewhere, participating in confraternal activities when they were in town. Merchants, for example, could hold membership in confraternities in cities they visited for trade fairs, in addition to possible confraternity memberships in their home city. Mathias Noeck, a merchant from Lübeck was a member in the St. Anne

66Dörfler-Dierken, Bruderschaften, p.175. The author notes that this confraternity must have had “an enormous cult propaganda impact” (“eine enorme kultpropagandistische Wirkung”) due to the prestige of its members.
confraternity at the Franciscan monastery in Cologne; in fact, an extensive legal battle resulted after his death over a significant donation he wished to make to them.67

Far from being promoted by bishops or monastaries, the Annenbruderschaften were almost entirely lay-initiated organizations, based around the parish church or chapel; indeed, from their charters, it is clear that the laity structured them to ensure that they themselves were firmly in charge, assigning lay members the responsibility of governing the organization and even hiring priests to hold masses for them. Nese von Overroede, a widow who was involved with several Cologne confraternities, sponsored a St. Anne altar and the appointment of a vicar to go with it for the confraternity at St. Cunibert in 1487. As part of her sponsorship, she retained the lifelong right to name the vicar for the confraternity, who would be responsible for reading five masses at the altar she had sponsored, including choral accompaniment.68 When she died in 1497, the document confirming Johannes von Urdingen as the new vicar contains clear instructions: every week, he is required to read five masses at the altar. In addition, after every mass, he is required to go to the grave of his patron, sprinkle it with holy water, and read prayers for the dead and a De Profundis. If he neglects this duty, he is to be fined, with the money going towards candles to light the sacrament.69 Militzer notes that the upper-class urban laity who formed confraternities also “exercised certain disciplinary rights over the clergy, in that they could engage their fiscal power. For their good money, they wanted a priest with a correct lifestyle, whose prayers and requests would be

67 HASt Köln Zivilprozeß 360. The suit was filed by the St. Anne confraternity, the monastery itself, the parish church of St. Martin, and the four main Spitaler (hospices) in the city of Cologne, all of whom Noeck had left money to, and none of whom his executors in Lübeck had paid.
68 HASt Köln Kunibert U 3/650.
69 HASt Köln Kunibert U 3/672.
worth something before God.”\textsuperscript{70} If confraternity members were unhappy, they could procure a different priest, or could even change location, taking their wealth and whatever artwork or church decorations they’d sponsored with them. This high degree of lay initiative indicates “that the \textit{Annenbruderschaften} were less instruments of directed church pastoral care than products of the interests and the religious and church activities of the laity.”\textsuperscript{71}

The members of St. Anne confraternities sought to follow the lead of their patron in successfully combining religious piety and a fully involved and active lay life within medieval urban society. Part of this active lay life involved group activities, both private (as with the regular masses) and public. Traditionally, \textit{Annenbruderschaften} had major processions and masses for St. Anne’s Day on July 26\textsuperscript{th}, and sometimes additional processions on other major Church holidays. Confraternities which had sufficient funds often held masses dedicated to St. Anne each Tuesday.\textsuperscript{72} The description of the annual St. Anne’s Day festivities in Koblenz provides a picture of a religious organization which was well-aware of its own status. Beginning the Sunday prior to St. Anne’s Day with a ceremonial display of the confraternity’s possessions and privileges for its members, the Koblenz \textit{Annenbruderschaft} held vespers the evening before St. Anne’s Day and a major procession on the day itself. This procession began between seven and eight in the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{71}"Man hat den Eindruck, daß die Annenbruderschaften weniger Instrumente gezielter kirchlicher Seelsorge waren als Produkte des Interesses und der religiösen-kirchlichen Aktivität der Laien.” Dörfler-Dierken,\textit{Verehrung}, p.118.
\item \textsuperscript{72}Long-standing oral and written tradition had established that Tuesday was the day on which St. Anne herself had been born and had died, as well as the day on which the Virgin Mary had been born. This was fortunate, as most of the other days of the week were already spoken for by various other saints and events.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
morning with students carrying flags and singing antiphons, a priest sprinkling holy water, the head of the confraternity carrying its reliquary, two more students with flags, a group of young girls with unbound hair, more students carrying candles, young maidens in fine clothes carrying the image of St. Anne and supported by two members of the confraternity, still more students with candles, and finally three priests carrying the monstrance and the confraternal St. Anne relic (Annenheiltum). The entire spectacle displayed the piety and the prosperity of the confraternity and its members, and the status of its patron.

VI. St. Anne and Lay Activity

The cases of Düren and Annaberg, and the membership and activities of St. Anne confraternities, demonstrate the adaptability of St. Anne’s cult across a wide range of social groups. In particular, these examples all show the extent to which the laity were active participants in shaping the cult. Düren’s presentation of the furta sacra case emphasized popular piety and lay activity carried out because of faith in St. Anne, while the activity of the Duke of Jülich and the Emperor demonstrate that lay activity in support of a pilgrimage could extend into the upper ranks of society, and did not preclude economic motivations. A successful pilgrimage could bring significant wealth and prestige to a city; pilgrims, after all, needed places to stay and places to eat. In order to remember their experience, they bought souvenirs from pilgrimage sites—the badges, statuettes, and other mass-produced articles which served to bring a bit of the holiness back with them. Duke George’s efforts to develop Annaberg as a major site of devotion to the saint were much less complicated, not least because he relied on personal connections and official purchases to obtain relics for the new church. The shrine and

\[\text{Dörfler-Dierken, Bruderschaften, pp. 118-9.}\]
confraternity at Annaberg show that lay devotion within the cult of St. Anne was not restricted to the social groups often implied by the term “popular religion.” Anne offers a condensed model of how devotion to saints can develop, allowing us to look both at popular interest in a new relic and at aristocratic sponsorship as two successful methods of propagating this kind of piety.
Once there was a rich young man, who squandered his inheritance after his parents’ death from plague. After a succession of disasters, he decides to go on a pilgrimage to St. James’ tomb at Campostella. Along the way, he meets another traveler in pilgrim’s dress, who advises the young man to devote himself to St. Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary, “and then [he] should have no doubt that [he] would have good fortune.”\(^1\) After giving explicit directions for how and when St. Anne is to be venerated, the mysterious traveler explains that he is “St. James, her daughter’s son,” before vanishing.\(^2\)

The young man breaks off his pilgrimage, and wastes no time following the instructions he received from St. James. His devotion is, of course, richly rewarded. Over the course of a lifetime spent “honoring St. Anne and her lineage \([\text{Geschlecht}]\) and teaching all people to honor St. Anne and her lineage \([\text{Geschlecht}]\),” primarily through devotions in front of a richly-decorated image of St. Anne he commissions and other altars and images he helps establish, the young man not only regains his previous wealth,

\[^1\] “so bedarfftu kain zweifel haben es wirt dir glicklich gan,” \textit{Ain gar nutzlichs büchlin}, p. 170r.

\[^2\] “vnd ich bin sant iacob irer tochter sun,” \textit{Ain gar nutzlichs büchlin}, p. 170r.
he becomes mayor of a large city and advisor to a king. On his deathbed, he laments the fact that he is dying alone, with no kin to support him, having never married and established a family of his own. Appearing to him in a vision, the Virgin Mary says, “Dearest brother, how are you?” Not realizing that it is Mary, he says, “You call me brother, but I have no sister.” To this the pious Virgin replied, “If St. Anne is your mother, then I am your sister, and you are also my brother, and the uncle of my Son.”

This story, known as the “Young man from Doch,” (“Jüngling von Doch”) was the most popular St. Anne miracle in her numerous late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century vitae, with versions in German, Latin, and Dutch. The two versions quoted here are both from late fifteenth-century printed texts; one by an anonymous Franciscan author, the other by the Carthusian writer Peter Dorland. Juxtaposing the two demonstrates how widespread this story was within St. Anne texts; both a Latin-reading and non-Latin-reading audience would have been exposed to it. The active presence of St. James within this widely-known St. Anne miracle and the instruction to venerate not only St. Anne but her entire Geschlecht demonstrates the importance of the extensive and holy family surrounding St. Anne in late medieval belief as a model for proper familial relationships and as a group which could be expanded to include the faithful. This group

3 “in der ere sant Anna vn[d] ires geschlecht vn[d] er was alle mensche[n] leren eren sant anna vn[d] ir geschlecht,” Ain gar nutzlichs büchlin, p. 170r. The word “Geschlecht,” meaning “lineage,” is defined by Michael Mitterauer and Reinhard Sieder as “a group of people linked in real or imagined common descent”; Erich Mashcke further notes that “Das Wort wurde eingeengt auf die ratsfähigen, der städtischen Oberschicht angehörigen Familien bezogen, so daß der Plural “die Geschlechter” das Patriziat meint.” “Geschlecht” thus connotes both an extended family, in terms of the ability to trace the line back through ancestors and the inclusion of a larger kingroup (beyond just a father, mother, and their children) and one of a higher social level. In both senses, it is the best word to be applied to the Holy Kinship. Michael Mitterauer & Reinhard Sieder, The European Family: Patriarchy and Partnership from the Middle Ages to the Present, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 10; Erich Maschke, Die Familie in der deutschen Stadt des späten Mittelalters, (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1980), p. 14.

was known as the Holy Kinship (*Heilige Sippenschaft*), a family consisting not only of St. Anne, St. Joachim, and the Virgin Mary, but the entire set of saints related to St. Anne through her sister’s line and her own family through her three marriages (known collectively by the Latin term *Trinubium*).\(^5\)

## I. Family Ties

First developed in the course of early medieval biblical exegesis, by the late fifteenth century, the Holy Kinship had expanded to provide a model for the lives of pious laity and a direct and beneficial connection to a large family of saints.\(^6\) More than a mere means of streamlining the New Testament or explaining terminology, the Holy Kinship was a concrete part of European devotional life, present in texts, liturgies, and works of art. For late medieval Christians, the *Trinubium* and the Holy Kinship positioned Jesus firmly within an extended human family which paralleled their own. Thus, St. James, properly respectful towards his elders, appears in order to promote his grandmother’s cult; the young man in the story spends his life devoted to St. Anne and her entire *Geschlecht*, not only venerating them but expanding the “family” of her devotees; and, on his deathbed, the Virgin Mary (or, in some variants, St. Anne) explicitly defines him as kin to her through his devotion, a status which assures his place in Heaven. Individual members, such as St. James, St. Servatius (a fourth century bishop active in the Rhineland and the Netherlands), Mary Cleophas, and Mary Salome (the Virgin Mary’s two half-sisters), had their own cults and traditions, which form part of the

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\(^5\) The term “Sippenschaft” refers to the members of an extended family who share or who are believed to share descent from a common ancestor. It can include cousins, their spouses, and their descendents. The term “Sippenschaft” implies that the family group in question also has political, economic, and/or religious commonalities or functions. George Peter Murdock, *Social Structure*, (New York: The Free Press, 1965).

\(^6\) Esser, *Die Heilige Sippe*. 
context within which the entire Kinship functioned in late medieval Northern Europe. As we saw in the story of the “Jüngling von Doch,” these individual cults could be used to promote the cult of St. Anne. In the case of St. Servatius, the Holy Kinship connected Christianity in Northern Europe directly with the family of Jesus.

The picture of the entire Holy Family, living harmoniously and virtuously, provided an example for the laity to emulate. In this chapter, I will analyze the functions of the Holy Kinship in pre-Reformation Northern Europe. I argue that St. Anne’s extensive and holy family served as a model for a truly Christian marital and familial life which passed on its values to future generations (in particular, from mother to daughter), and represented a group whose membership could include the devout as members of the family. The Holy Kinship itself was presented as expandable, providing a melding together of the heavenly and the human in which the devotees of St. Anne, like the Jüngling von Doch, are themselves “taken up into the Holy Kinship.”

The emphasis throughout is on marriage having the potential to be a divinely-sanctioned state when both partners act in accordance with the will of God and treat the married state as sanctified, intended for producing and raising children, and living in the fear of God and according to the law. Here, several decades before Luther and other Protestant reformers began promoting marriage as a holy life, marriage becomes a sacred state, a true sacrament, through the example of St. Anne and her extended family.

7 St. James’ shrine at Campostella was one of the major pilgrimage destinations during the Middle Ages, and continues to be an extremely active pilgrimage site even today. Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome, along with Mary Magdalene, were venerated in southern France as the “Three Marys.” St. Servatius is the patron saint of Maastricht.

8 This includes not only St. Anne’s daughters and grandsons through the Trinubium, but also the line descending through her sister.

9 “Die Annenverehrer sind aufgenommen in die himmlische Sippe.” Dörfler-Dierken, Verehrung, p. 252. On earth, this membership in the family of St. Anne was believed to lead to wealth—after all, St. Anne had been from the wealthy upper-class, and she would hardly leave her “children” unprovided for—and, for young women, to finding a good husband.
It was this invented family of saints whose structure and functions mirrored human society which became a target of attack from both sides of the confessional divide during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (see Chapter Four). Beda Kleinschmidt, who described the entire concept of the Holy Kinship as a “popular expansion” of the original, pure legend of St Anne as described in the Apocryphal Gospels, believed that the entire extended family surrounding St. Anne in the late Middle Ages was an error, a set of mistaken folk beliefs which had encrusted the truth like barnacles (this was particularly true when it came to the family of St. Anne’s sister, Esmeria, discussed below). In this, the twentieth-century Franciscan echoed earlier criticisms from both Protestants and post-Tridentine Catholics. The nexus of this criticism is a lack of understanding—at times, a disdain—for the idea that an extended family of saints could be believed in so fervently, and could achieve such importance as a keystone of belief. The family is the family; the divine is the divine and never the twain shall meet. However, the strict division enunciated within this post-Reformation argument misses the resonance this particular image had for the faithful with their own lives. As Virginia Reinburg notes, “In their prayers, late medieval Christians addressed saints as relatives, friends, and lords. Not only were forms of address familiar from secular life, but the very modes of relating to saints suggested the support, responsibility, and protection expected within family and community.” This increased exponentially when dealing with a large group of saints who were in fact themselves a family. It lends a different flavor to the Easter story, for example, when Jesus’ aunts are among the women visiting the tomb and

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encountering the angel.\textsuperscript{12}

The vital importance of the \textit{Trinubium} and the \textit{Heilige Sippenschaft} was that they positioned Jesus firmly within an extended human family, with Anne as the matriarch. This differentiated them from other groupings of saints, such as the Fourteen Helpers (\textit{Vierzehn Nothelfer}).\textsuperscript{13} The idea of family permeates the cult of St. Anne; indeed, even when other members of the Holy Kinship were not specifically present in works of art or texts involving St. Anne, the knowledge that St. Anne belonged to a larger, related network of saints would have remained, just as people would have been aware of the familial connections of their own friends and acquaintances. The familial structure was recognizable, and the relationships within a family were understandable. Eric Maschke argues that the family was the fundamental structural and organizational unit of the late medieval German city, the basis for how people conceived of society:

\begin{quote}
The family was the most important social organization in the German city of the late Middle Ages. The continuation of institutions—trade company, council, guild or confraternity—rested on the continuation of middle-class \textit{[bürgerliche]} families. Through their encompassing of not only a lineage group based around a single ancestor, but also of multifaceted relationships by marriage, a basis was created which was essential to all of urban life, its continuation, and its endurance.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

By perceiving Christ and the other members of the Holy Kinship as part of a “lineage

\textsuperscript{12}Mark 16:1-3; Luke 24:8-11.
\textsuperscript{13}The “Vierzehn Nothelfer,” or “Fourteen Helpers in Need” are a group of saints, primarily martyrs, who were worshipped together. They were venerated mostly in the Rhineland, from the fourteenth century onwards. Rather than being connected by blood, the fourteen saints in this group were all associated with curing or protecting from various illnesses.
\textsuperscript{14}“Die Familie war in der deutschen Stadt des späten Mittelalters die wichtigste gesellschaftliche Organisationsform. Die Dauer der Institutionen—Handelsgesellschaft, Rat. [sic] Zunft oder kirchliche Bruderschaft—beruhte auf der Dauer bürgerliche Familien. Indem sie nicht nur die von einem Vorfahren abgeleitete Abstammungsgemeinschaft umfaßte, sondern auch durch vielseitige Verschwägerung einen weiten Verwandtenkreis, war eine Basis geschaffen, die für das ganze städtische Leben, seinen Fortgang und seine Dauer unentbehrlich war.” Maschke, \textit{Familie}, p. 97.
“group” created by the multiple marriages around St. Anne, late medieval Christians not only had a large group of saints they could appeal to for protection and support, they also had a model for the emotional side of family life and domestic relationships.

Since Philippe Ariès’ groundbreaking work on the emotional tenor of family life in European history, the role of affection and emotional ties within the household has been a subject of discussion and analysis.\(^1\) In the Holy Kinship, we see a family where affection, emotional ties, and the idea of filial piety are presented as ideals for the faithful to strive for. The texts themselves emphasize loving, harmonious relationships among members of the family, and how St. Anne raises her children properly, so that they love and obey God and their parents. Filial piety forms a constant theme throughout texts about the Holy Kinship; the devotion of Mary and Jesus to their respective mothers was, after all, a foundation of St. Anne’s ability to assist those devoted to her. Both Agricola and Erasums emphasized this filial piety—a piety which their audience would hopefully emulate as well as benefit from more concretely.\(^2\) Anne and Joachim (the most-discussed of her husbands) exemplify the perfect upper-class urban married couple in their relations to each other. The focus on inter-familial ties provided both a model and a mirror. Images presented an ideal family; authors exhorted their audiences to follow the Holy Kinship in their own lives. The model would not have become so popular, however, if it did not have a connection with reality, and how people experienced family life.

Steven Ozment’s most recent work on the European family praises the family as a source of strength and continuity across history, arguing (much as did his earlier work, \textit{When

Fathers Ruled) that the family was viewed a source of deep emotional bonds and stability within society.  

II. The development of the Holy Kinship

The basis of the Holy Kinship’s construction lies in the Trinubium, the three marriages of St. Anne. From simple lists in poem or hymn form to extended versions which elaborate on Anne’s emotional state as her husbands die and she is faced with the question of whether to marry again, this was a story which was told and retold in vitae, works of art, and liturgical texts dedicated not only to St. Anne, St. Joachim, and the Virgin Mary, but also to the “sweet personages, Mary’s sisters” and their families up through the Reformation and Catholic Reformation.  

The Trinubium and the Holy Kinship were originally rooted in the need to explain the references to “brothers of Jesus” in the New Testament while allowing for the continuing virginity of Mary. In the fourth century, St. Jerome, writing to counter the belief that Mary and Joseph had children together after the birth of Jesus, argued that the Hebrew word “brothers” was being used in the sense of “cousins,” and went further to argue that the Mary who was named as the mother of James the Lesser was in fact the sister of the Virgin Mary, and the mother of two other men named as brothers of Jesus.

The ninth-century monk Haimo of Auxerre, also writing about St. James the Lesser, provides the oldest written explanation of the Holy Kinship, again invoking it to

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counter the idea that the “brothers of the Lord” could have been sons of St. Joseph. He presents the story of the Holy Kinship as a short explanatory digression in the midst of telling the story of St. James, concluding with “But now let us return to the order of narrating this history,” an indication that Haimo is not inventing it himself, or presenting a controversial arrangement which requires defending, but is rather reporting a more widely-known tradition. Because the primary theme of the passage is St. James, the starting point of Haimo’s description of the Holy Kinship is the issue of St. James’ position as a “brother of the Lord.” For this, he takes up St. Jerome’s linguistic argument, stating that it “a custom of the Hebrews, to name or call either kinsmen or relations brothers,” concluding, “Therefore, he is called brother of the Lord, because he was born of Mary, the sister of the mother of the Lord, and his father Alpheus; from which he is called James Alphei.”

Haimo then finishes his explication of the references to brothers of Jesus by laying out the relationship between three of the Marys present in Scripture, declaring that “Mary the mother of the Lord, and Mary the mother of James, the brother of the Lord, and Mary [mother] of John the Evangelist, were sisters, begotten of different

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22 “Sed jam ad historicae narrationis ordinem retractamur.” Haimo of Auxerre, *Patrum*, Col. 824C.

23 A further indication is an anonymous 9th century Easter sermon, quoted by Angelika Dörfler-Dierken, which refers to the four Marys found in the Gospels, listing the first three as Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary, the mother of James and Jesus’ aunt, and Mary, mother of Zebedee’s sons, who was the Virgin Mary’s sister. The sermon author presents this arrangement as an error, believed by others. Dörfler-Dierken, *Verehrung*, p. 127-28.

24 “Hic enim mos Hebraeorum, cognatos vel propinquos fratres dicere vel appellare,” “Frater igitur Domini sic dictus est, quia de Maria sorore matris Domini, et patre Alpheo genitus est; unde Jacobus Alphei appellatur,” Haimo of Auxerre, *Patrum*, Col. 824B.
fathers, but of the same mother, namely Anne.”

The idea that these three Marys all shared St. Anne as a mother, but had different fathers formed the nucleus of the Holy Kinship. Haimo of Auxerre lists Anne’s three marriages, and traces the relationships between various people mentioned in the Gospels, in addition to the entirely apocryphal Anne and Joachim:

That Anne first married Joachim, and from him bore Mary the mother of the Lord. Upon Joachim dying, she married Cleophas, and from him she had the other Mary, who in the Gospels is called Mary Cleophas. Further, Cleophas had a brother, Joseph, who he married to his step-daughter the blessed Mary; his own daughter he gave to Alpheus, from whom was born James the Lesser, who is called the Just, brother of the Lord, and the other Joseph. And upon Cleophas dying, Anne married a third time, namely Salome, and had from him the third Mary, from whom, she being married to Zebedee, were born James the Greater and John the Evangelist.

This, then, was the basic outline of the family of St. Anne as experienced by the late medieval faithful, a family tree which neatly tied together a wide range of New Testament figures, and placed Anne at the head of an extensive and holy kinship.

Why were all three girls named Mary? The solution proposed by some authors was that Anne “did not know which one was the one that the angel had announced to her.” (“west nicht, welche die was, die ir die engel verkundet hat.”) University Library of Heidelberg Pal. germ. 153, Bl. 283rb (Passionale Sanctorum, 1474), quoted in Dörfler-Dierken, *Verehrung*, p. 145.
as Anne’s second husband Cleophas is responsible for giving his stepdaughter in marriage to his brother, a situation mitigated by the fact that Joseph was defined as the “protector” or “caretaker” of Mary rather than an actual husband.\textsuperscript{28}

The basic structure elucidated by Haimo remained largely the same from the ninth century to the fifteenth. One significant change did take place; namely, Mary Cleophas and Alpheus were given another two sons; namely, Simon and Jude. Up until at least the thirteenth century, the structure of the Holy Kinship was in a state of flux. Different texts posit different relationships among the Marys, assign different sons to different couples, and argue against the Trinubium as a whole.\textsuperscript{29} While the texts cited do show that there was no single, unified familial arrangement around St. Anne for several centuries, it is notable that Haimo’s structure repeatedly appears, both in texts describing the Holy Kinship and in texts arguing against it. When Jacobus de Voraigne composed the \textit{Legenda Aurea} in the thirteenth century, it was Haimo’s version of the Holy Kinship (with the addition of Simon and Jude) which appeared in the text on the birth of the Virgin Mary.\textsuperscript{30}

By the late fifteenth century, when Hartmann Schedel produced the \textit{Liber Chronicarum}, the Holy Kinship was a settled part of Western European belief. The \textit{Liber} places the story of St. Anne and her family at the very end of the Fifth Age of the world; that is, they represent the end of that age, and lead naturally into the Sixth Age, which starts with the birth of Jesus. In fact, the illustration of St. Anne’s family tree (see Chapter One) is located on the page after her story, at the beginning of the Sixth Age.

\textsuperscript{28} The status of Joseph as the “nutricii domini” was a widely held belief.  
\textsuperscript{29} Dörfler-Dierken, \textit{Verehrung}, p. 131-138.  
\textsuperscript{30} de Voraigne, \textit{Legenda vol. 2}, pp. 150-152.
Figure 1: The Medieval Holy Kinship

Schedel relates that

Anne, a Hebrew woman, a daughter of Ysachar the Jew, was given in marriage to Joachim, the holiest man from her lineage [Geschlecht]. This Anne, after she was barren for a long time, after many prayers and tears, through the angelic announcement sent to her bore a daughter, Mary, the future bearer of God. And shortly thereafter Joachim her husband died, she married another man by the name of Cleophas. The same Cleophas married the aforementioned Mary his stepdaughter to the man Joseph, and married Mary his daughter to the man Alpheus. From here were born James Alphei, Simon Chananeus, and Judas Thadeus. This Anne, after the death of Cleophas her second husband, was married for the third time, following the law of Moses, to a man named Salome, and with him bore the third daughter, Mary Salome. Afterwards she [ie, Mary Salome], married to Zebedee, bore James the Greater and John the Evangelist. This Anne had a sister named Esmeria. From her was born Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist.
After Anne had walked all her days in the commandments and ways of the Lord, then she rested, full of days, in the Lord.\textsuperscript{31}

The focus in this recounting is quite clearly on St. Anne. Whereas Jacobus de Voraigne followed Joachim out into the wilderness, and had the Archangel Gabriel give a long speech about the blessings of miraculous late pregnancies, here there is no mention of Joachim’s feelings or actions at all. St. Anne is the one who, after “many prayers and tears,” is visited by the angel. She is also the one whose death is described in more detail, and represented as blessed, whereas her husbands simply die without any commentary.

The focus on St. Anne as the emotional center of the Holy Kinship in Schedel’s recounting parallels the \textit{vita} discussed in Chapter One, in which the anonymous author gave St. Anne the emotional lament to God about her childlessness and missing husband.

The Holy Kinship also appears in liturgies dedicated to St. Anne, the Virgin Mary, or Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome. Use of the connections between members of the Holy Kinship seen in Scripture—Mary Salome and Mary Cleophas travel to the tomb on Easter Morning; while on the Cross, Christ tells John the Evangelist to look after the Virgin Mary—further accentuates the connectivity of this kingroup and their vital role in

Christianity. The emphasis is on laying out the structure of St. Anne’s Geschlecht, providing the participants in the mass with an overview of the figures involved and how they were connected within devotional life. 32 Two printed sets of liturgies from the late fifteenth century, one produced in Nürnberg and one in Basel, group together collections of offices dedicated to different members of the Holy Kinship, repeatedly mention Anne’s three marriages even in the masses not specifically dedicated to her. 33 Praised as “Saint Anne, mother of mothers,” St. Anne is foregrounded as the source of an exceptionally holy lineage, who are all worthy of veneration and prayer.34

III. St. Servatius and German Christendom

In addition to St. Anne’s children and grandchildren, there was another branch of the Holy Kinship that was venerated in text and art, adding to the overall sacred power of the Geschlecht, and creating a set of connections which spoke very strongly to late medieval Christians in the Netherlands and Germany (particularly the Rhineland). This was the line descended from St. Anne’s sister, Esmeria. According to legend, Esmeria was married to a man named Assra, with whom she had a daughter, Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist, and a son, Eliud. While Elizabeth, Mary’s cousin, is a known figure

32 3a. The husband of Anne/ Was Joachim/ Afterwards Cleophas/ From whom she received/ Mary, who,/ Married to Alphaeus./ Was the mother of four./ 3b. After he [Cleophas] had died/ She was lead to Salome/ From whom she got/ The third Mary/ Who delivered herself/ To Zebedee./ Father of two.” “3a. Conjux Anna/Joachim fuisti/ Post Cleophae/ A quo recepisti/ Mariam, quam/ Alphaeo nupsisti/ Tetras matrem/ 3b, Hoc defuncto/ Salome duxisti/ Quo Mariam/ tertiam sumpsisti/ Zebedaeum/ Sibi tradidisti/ Duum patrem,” Dreves, G. M. Annelecta Hymnica Medii Aevi. (Leipzig: Fues Verlag (R. Reisland), 1891); “De ss. Maria et Cleophae,” Vol. VII, No. 293, “De ss. Maria Salome et Cleophae,” p. 292. Note that this hymn doesn’t mention the Virgin Mary at all. According to medieval legend, Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome had in fact traveled with Mary Magdalene and eventually ended up in Provence; Ibid, Vol. X, No. 168, “De Sancta Anna,” p. 128.


34 “sancta anna matronarum materona,” in “Officium de sanctis Joachim, etc.,” p. Cijr.
from the Gospels, Eliud is an apocryphal figure who serves several particular purposes. First of all, he himself is tied to another group of New Testament figures, much as St. Anne was connected to Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome. Eliud’s wife, Elizabeth, was identified with the widow mentioned in the seventh chapter of St. Luke’s gospel, whose son Jesus raises from the dead. This scriptural connection adds veracity to the entire story of the Holy Kinship. Eliud’s other son, Emiu, travels to Armenia and marries a woman named Memelia, who bears him one son, Servatius, who later becomes a particularly saintly bishop of the city of Tongeren.

St. Servatius was the linchpin of this branch of the Holy Kinship. The fourth-century bishop’s cult in the Netherlands dates back to the eighth century, and the ties between the saint and the Holy Kinship were a consistent feature in his vitae and legends. When the cult was made official at the Diet of Worms, neither Pope Leo IX nor Emperor Henry III were particularly convinced by the legendary genealogy; however, it remained a key component of St. Servatius’ cult up through the time of the Reformation. His inclusion in the Holy Kinship was not a new invention following St. Anne’s rising popularity; it was a family connection which had existed for centuries in his own cult. Heinrich von Veldeke’s Legend of Saint Servatius lays out his genealogy in a manner similar to the vita we encountered earlier, beginning that part of his tale with,

35 According to the story related in late medieval vitae, this son, Martiales, takes the name Maternus and is sent with St. Eucharius and St. Valerius to “das teutsch lands,” in particular to Trier, where Maternus dies again, only to be revived when Eucharius and Valerius bring back St. Peter’s staff from Rome (“welcher stab ist noch halb zů ko”llen vn[d] halb zu- trier”), finally becoming “bischoff in dreyen bistume[r] zů trier. vn[d] zů köllen vn[d] zů vn[d] zů tungern vn[d] in disem land was er treülich predig en vn[d] leren den kristenlichen glauben darnach was er seligklich sternen vn[r] wrd begraben zů trier in [der] kirchen darin.” Ain gar nutzliches büchlin, p. aiiiV/aiiiR.

36 Tongeren (in French, Tongres) is a city in present-day Belgium. Ain gar nutzliches buchlein, pp. aiiiV/aiiiR. For those who might wonder how a fourth-century bishop of Tongeren could end up as a direct relative of Jesus, the explanation I have read is that both Eliud and Emiu married and had children when they were very, very old.
Now hear further about this holy lord, how noble he was born, humble St. Servatius… Back in the time of the Jews there were two sisters, noble and well-born, pure and brought up well. … One sister was named Anne; she was the mother of our Lady, good St. Mary, who bore Jesus our Lord. … The other sister was named Esmeria. Of her it is written that she had a daughter and a son. Of them I will tell you more as I found written.  

In his description of St. Servatius’ origins and lineage, Heinrich von Veldeke repeatedly emphasizes the nobility of the saint’s family, stating later, “He was born in the kin of our Lady; in the direct line of descent; he was the cousin of our dear Lord, as the books tells [sic] us, and of His mother, St. Mary.” By foregrounding this familial connection, the author also provided a direct linear connection between the Holy Kinship and the German- and Dutch-speaking parts of Europe. The infant St. Servatius, with his tiny bishop’s mitre, is often included in images of the Holy Kinship, a further sign of this connection between St. Anne and Northern Europe. The holy bishops who preached and taught the Christian faith in this story did so long before even the Roman Empire was completely Christianized. Much as Anne served as a model for a direct, individual faith, so her grand- and great-grandnephews proved that Christianity in Germany was not beholden to Rome, but bore a more exalted lineage. The inclusion of St. Servatius in

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38 “…was van Onser Vrouwen geslechten/ gheboren: uut der lyniën rechte/ was hij neve Ons Lieven Heren,/ als ons die boece leeren,/ ende sijnre moeder, sinte Mariën,” Servatius, pp. 19-20.

39 This desire to show a connection between contemporary European families or areas and figures from Biblical or Classical antiquity is reminiscent of family geneologies that attempt to show descent from noble members of the Trojan diaspora. See: Michael J. Curley, Geoffrey of Monmouth, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994).
images of the Holy Kinship in the decades before the Reformation, when Rome and the Papacy were viewed as corrupt, and a financial drain on lands north of the Alps, provides a reminder of this direct connection between Northern European Christianity and the extended family of Jesus.

IV. Model of Marriage

While the hymns and liturgical texts provide succinct recounts, designed to be informative and easily remembered, the vitae are freer to develop the story in more depth. This includes discussing St. Anne’s feelings about her three marriages, and the justification for the Trinubium. A woman who married three times, and who was explicitly defined as older (having been married for twenty years before Mary’s birth), was not an unproblematic role model. Ton Brandenbarg points out the danger of St. Anne appearing like one of the stereotypical lusty older women in late medieval critical or comical texts and images. In fact, St. Anne texts sometimes directly express the tension between the idea of the Trinubium and medieval beliefs about women, sexuality, and remarriage. Virginia Nixon relates this to the clerical status of many of the authors, arguing that “at the same time that they introduce this new theological ideal of marital sanctity, the lives also retain an older model of marriage,” in which sexuality and holiness are set at odds with one another.

We have already encountered the importance of reasons behind marriage in the example of Anne’s mother Emerentia (see Chapter One). It is only after she has been shown that her marriage is part of the divine plan that she consents to it, and she refuses any candidates for her hand who are acting out of carnal motives. Her daughter, raised in

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the Temple, “did not want to have taken a husband; however, she had to get married on account of the law.”

In the longer descriptions of the *Trinubium*, the motivations behind Anne’s decision to get married multiple times are given in more detail. The Anonymous Franciscan who wrote a *Vita* and prayer collection in 1496 states that after Joachim’s death, “then Saint Anne was almost sad and did not want to take another man, but rather she wanted to devote herself to God alone and forever reverently serve him. But her friends wanted her to take another husband, because they saw that she had become fruitful. And so she reverently prayed to God that he might give her to understand whether she should take another husband or not.”

While her friends’ arguments that she is now “fruitful” and should thus marry in order to have more children does bear weight with Anne, it is only after an angel appears and tells Anne that she should get married again, because she is destined to bear two more daughters, that she accepts Cleophas. However, when he also dies, Anne is distraught—apparently not so much over the death of her husband as at her failure to bear the promised third daughter, a fact which causes her to fear that she has insulted God. Again, her friends urge her to marry, and, again, Anne prays to God to determine whether she should take a third husband or not.

When the angel appears, he once again salutes her with “Hail, you friend of God,” (“gegrüst seyestu du freündin gotz,” a clear reference to the Angelic Salutation) and informs her “you should know that it is the will of God that you take a third husband. And in the same way that God is threefold in person and singular in being, you shall also

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42 “wolt kain man haben genome[n] doch mú st sy zū der ee greiffen vo[n] des gesatz mayst wegen.” *Ain ganz nutzlichs büchlin*, p. aiiiV.
43 “do ward sant anna fast traurig vnd wolt kain man mer nemmen sunder sy wolt sich allain gott vermecchen vnd ym ewigklich andächtigklich dienen aber ir freünd wolte[n] do sy sachen das sy fruchtbar was worden das sy noch ain man num do was sy got andächtigklich bitten das er ir zū verstend geb ob sy wider ain man solt nemen oder nit” *Ain ganz nutzlichs büchlin*, p. aiiiV.
from your single body from three husbands bear three daughters.” Not only are Anne’s marriages acceptable before God, they are presented as a reflection of the Trinity itself, much as the Anna Selbdritt reflected the Holy Trinity in art.

Instead of representing a subtle clerical criticism of marriage, I argue that the details of St. Anne and her mother’s histories present marriage in a positive religious light, when carried out correctly. Both St. Anne and St. Emerentia are shown as models of chaste young womanhood, who are pious and obedient. They are not interested in marriage for carnal reasons, but agree to be married in obedience to their parents, the law, and God. This is an exemplary model to present to the late medieval laity. Anne’s reactions to her husbands’ deaths continue to provide a model. Schedel refers to her remarriage as something she did in order to follow Hebraic law (nach dem gesetz Moysi), again demonstrating her obedience. The vita quoted above emphasizes that Anne married in keeping with the will of God, and specifically for the purpose of having children. Once she has fulfilled the prophecy of having three daughters, she enunciates no interest in marrying again. Through her three marriages, St. Anne not only mirrors the Trinity, she is also responsible for the Incarnation of Christ, which could not have taken place without human marriage.

St. Anne’s thrice-married state and extended family received further validation through the visionary experience of the early fifteenth-century saint, Colette of Corbie. This story was such successful propaganda for St. Anne’s cult that it found its way into many of the collections of St. Anne miracles, although Colette is often not identified by

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44 “du sołt wyssen das es der will gotz ist das du den dritten ee man nemest. vn[d] zu° gleicher weiβ als got ist driueltig in der person vnnd ainig ym wesen also solt du auß deinem ainigen leyb von dreyen ee manen geberen drey tüchtern.” Ain ganz nutzlichs büchlin, p. aiiiV.
45 Schedel, Liber Cronicorum, p. XCIIIr.
46 It is not clear when Salome dies, but he is not discussed in detail in the texts.
name.47 Colette criticizes St. Anne for her three marriages, accusing her of having done it for carnal reasons, and claiming that it was impossible to be truly saintly under such conditions.48 She is punished (or rewarded) with a vision of a noble matron surrounded by a great procession of saints in Heaven, who glare at her with scorn and derision and turn their backs to her. Asking someone standing near her why this is, she receives the reply that because she scorned “Blessed Anna, mother of Holy Mary,” (Beata Anna, Santae Mariae genitricem), she is being justly scorned by the entire Heilige Sippenschaft, the children and grandchildren from St. Anne’s three marriages.49 St. Anne herself addresses Colette, pointing to her multiple marriages as the source of her honor and holiness, because they produced such holy progeny. Colette is then admonished (in a motherly fashion) to make sure not to neglect the appropriate devotions to St. Anne in the future, and she becomes a very devout follower of the saint. This vision served to promote the cult of St. Anne and justify her status as matriarch of the Holy Kinship.

V. Model of Domestic Life

In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, in addition to the increased production of texts, there was a rise in depictions of the Holy Kinship in art, with Anne’s other two daughters and their families (often extended to include the branch of Anne’s family stemming from her sister, Esmeria, which was connected to the early medieval bishop St. Servatius) who display the attributes of their adult selves as signs of their identity (indeed, without St. James holding a scallop, or St. Servatius wearing a baby-

47 The question of whether the audience would have been familiar with Colette from other sources and would have recognized her story is another issue.
48 Colette’s criticism of St. Anne may have been related to her criticism of her own mother for having remarried after the death of her first husband. The fact that Colette herself was the product of this second marriage does not seem to have affected her opinion on the subject.
sized mitre, it would be difficult to differentiate among the mass of boys).

While Susan Karant-Nunn describes the interiors of churches with all their decorations and images of painted and gilded saints as representing “devoted and skilled Christians’ best idea of heaven to come,” what we see in the Holy Kinship altars, where Jesus’ cousins happily play, where Mary’s sisters are often shown nursing their babies, is an earthly domestic reality infused with the divine.50 Rather than trivializing the latter, this elevates the former, holding out the promise of sanctity within and through everyday life. This picture of domestic sanctity could be encountered at every turn in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In the case of St. Anne and the Holy Kinship, the saints in question were presented as so strongly tied to the everyday domestic world, so expressive of concepts of ordinary human families, that it is the sensibilities of the ordinary laity which are most strongly expressed, shown “with the realism and luxuriance that marked the genius of the Late Gothic art of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries—the toys, clothing, and other accoutrements of the comfortably-off middle class rubbing shoulders with subtle nuances of theological meaning.”51

This familial love and harmony radiates forth from the images of the Heilige Sippenschaft, such as this painted altarpiece by Lucas Cranach the Elder from 1509 (Illustrations 16-17). The Virgin Mary and St. Anne play with the Christ Child, one of Mary’s sisters nurses her baby, and the other sister cuddles one of her sons. Another child reads a book, and the strict spatial division of the triptych is countered by having two of Mary Cleophas’s sons dash playfully across the middle panel. Wolfgang Traut’s Artelshofner Altar, from 1514, groups the entire family in the central panel, creating what

51 Nixon, Mary’s Mother, p. 1.
is essentially an *Anna Selbdritt* surrounded by the various husbands, with the sisters and their children and husbands at the bottom of the composition (Illustration 18). The overall composition emphasizes the divinity, piety, and familial harmony within the Holy Kinship. St. Anne, the Virgin Mary, and the Christ Child are emphasized by the richly-decorated tapestry held behind them by angels, and are focused on each other. The other two Marys are likewise shown as concerned with their children. While Alphaeus looks up towards God, Zebedee focuses on his wife and children rather than Anne, Mary, and Christ. In turn, John the Evangelist looks up at his father, while St. James the Greater (holding a scallop’s shell) is tenderly held by his mother.

Elaborate altar paintings were not the only images of the Holy Kinship which could serve to inspire devotion and provide an example of family function. In a woodcut printed and painted around 1490 in Ulm, we see the main members of the *Heilige Sippenschaft*, without Alphaeus and Zebedee, but with St. John the Evangelist (i.e., Jesus’ cousin) (Illustration 19). Each member is identified by text within their halo (some are also identified by the children with them; thus, Jesus is present with St. Joseph, St. Anne, and the Virgin Mary, while the Virgin Mary herself is with both of her parents, separately). In addition to the figures, there is a series of short, rhymed prayers, which work in conjunction with the images in presenting kinship and its functions. The prayers reinforce the presentation of this group of saints as a family unit, to be approached with those connections in the mind of the worshipper. First, the prayer to the right of the Virgin Mary declares that it is impossible to praise her and her family (*Geschlecht*) enough. Next, there are relationships across the generations: the prayer to St. Anne asks

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her to ask “the two children in [her] arms” to have mercy; the prayer to St. Joachim focuses on his interceding with the Virgin Mary due to her filial piety, while the left prayer to the Virgin Mary says that “her son teaches us/ that we should happily honor our father and mother” and asks Joachim and Anna to pray for the readers day and night.

Mary’s two sisters, who share one text banner, are identified as both her sisters and as the mothers of “five of the twelve apostles, and Joseph the Just,” a status which gives them the ability to intercede before God. Taken as a whole, the woodcut presents a powerful image of intercessionary abilities and the function of relationships across the generations.

Among the vast group of Holy Kinship altars produced around the turn of the sixteenth century, one particular group of three carved and painted pieces from Thuringia share some unique and interesting stylistic and iconographic characteristics which illuminate the faithful’s perceptions of the Holy Kinship. Pamela Sheingorn, discussing one of them, believed to have originated in Weimar, disparages it as “less accomplished” and “a crowded group portrait with little indication of the relative importance of its members.” However, when viewed in conjunction with an almost identical altarpiece from Grosserleben and a similar altar from Illeben, it becomes evident that this is one specific style (possibly regional within Thuringia) of showing the Holy Kinship which also makes use of the medium, ie, a single piece of wood (Illustrations 20-21). In all three, Anne sits in the center of the picture, and holds both a miniaturized, crowned Mary and the infant Jesus, while her other, full-sized daughters and their children, as well as Memelia with Servatius and St. Elizabeth with John the Baptist, surround them, and the

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54 The Grosserleben altar, currently part of the holdings of the Anger Museum in Erfurt, is not illustrated here.
husbands form the back row. This arrangement foregrounds Anne as the source of Mary and Jesus, while showing the larger sanctified kingroup en masse, gazing out at the viewer. The theme of the Holy Kinship as a unified group, ready to speak on behalf of those who are devoted to them, echos the experience of St. Colette and the Jüngling von Doch. Praying to one member of the group automatically means involving the rest of the extended lineage.

The idea of venerating the Holy Kinship en masse also makes an appearance in the prayer collections printed with the liturgical texts discussed earlier. These prayers present the entire group of saints in sets based on their connection to the Virgin Mary, moving outward. The first level honors Mary in her parents (“domina nostra in suis parentibus”); this is followed by prayers to Mary’s two sisters. Holiness radiates out from a center based on blood relations. After these prayers to Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome, there are prayers addressed to the two “guardians” of the Virgin Mary—that is, St. Joseph, her husband, and St. John the Evangelist, her nephew, into whose care Jesus committed his mother while on the cross. The next two levels are prayers are directed towards the children of Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome, divided according to their apostolic status. In the sixth level, the two “uncles” (“avunculis”) of Mary are addressed; namely, St. John the Baptist and St. Servatius. Again, we see the circle of kinship spreading ever wider, just as we see in the Holy Kinship altars which present all of the wider family members around St. Anne, the Virgin Mary, and Jesus in the center of the composition. The prayer sequence concludes with a general reference to “all the others of her [the Virgin Mary’s] friends,” covering anybody in the kingroup who has been left
out. The mass of figures addressed in the prayers, like the mass of figures present in the altars images, are all sources of intercession, made more powerful by the fact that there are so many of them, so closely connected to one another by ties of blood and kinship. This is a sanctity which is as far removed from asceticism and celibacy as it could possibly be, with a group of connected saints presented as the archetype of family, a place where holiness can be found in “an undisguised celebration of family ties and the relationships of human kinship.”

While massing together St. Anne and her entire kin-group presented the family as a unified group, ready to act together on behalf of the faithful, this was not the only iconographic program which could be presented through the use of the Holy Kinship. Another common type of image, as is shown in a carved and painted triptych from the Kaufmannskirche in Erfurt dating from the 1520s, focuses on showing the three main families separately (Illustration 22). Anne, Mary, and Jesus sit on a bench in the central panel, with the assorted husbands on the other side. The families of Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome occupy the side panels. While Mary is shown with a crown, and St. Anne is depicted in her traditional matron’s headdress, Mary’s sisters and their families are shown dressed in the contemporary clothing of the well-to-do urban classes. In fact, they are so thoroughly shown as rich citizens of the early sixteenth century that visitors to the church today usually assume that the side panels depict the donors who paid for the altar.

Examining the foci of the figures within this altar, the gazes of the figures in the central

55 “Officium de Sancta Anna,” 33R-34V.
57 Holy Kinship Altar, Kaufmannskirche, Erfurt. Carved and painted wood. Peter von Mainz, 1520s. Depending on the exact date of the completion of this altar, it may or may not have been in the Kaufmannskirche on October 22, 1522, when Martin Luther preached a sermon there, which included among its themes a condemnation of the misuse of veneration of the saints. Luther, WA 10 (3), pp. 362-367.
panel fall upon the Christ Child. In the side panels, however, the attention of the adults is directed outward towards the viewer, while the children play with each other.

VI. Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome

The importance of the Holy Kinship as a model of sanctified domesticity which the laity could identify with and attempt to emulate is clearest in the presentation of St. Anne’s second and third daughters, Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome. While they were both venerated as saints, and while their sons did grow up to become saints and apostles themselves, they were an attainable model in ways the Virgin Mary (and even St. Anne) were not. Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome had gotten married and had children in the normal fashion. The iconography of the images discussed above reflects this in their positioning and depiction of the Virgin Mary’s sisters. First, there is a noticeable separation between St. Anne, the Virgin Mary, and Jesus, and the rest of the Holy Kinship. The first three are actually shown as a self-contained Anna Selbdritt grouping, which does not interact with the rest of the family. In the three altars from Thuringia, the Virgin Mary is even depicted in her miniature form, while her sisters are represented as adults.

By separating out the nuclear families of Anne’s second daughters, the two who married and had children in the normal fashion, this altar puts them closer to the human level, allowing the viewer to directly identify with the people shown and their relationship to Christ, the central figure. In some cases, such as the Cranach altar and the Artleshofner Altar, this is done literally, as these members of the Holy Kinship are positioned in the foreground, closer to the viewer. Mary Cleophas, Mary Salome, and their families are also more regularly shown engaging in normal domestic activities, or
wearing contemporary clothing. The mothers might be shown breast-feeding, or
cuddling their children; the children themselves are often shown with toys. This direct
engagement connects Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome and their husbands with the
devotees of St. Anne, placing them in the same world, the same family.

VII. Incorporation

The idea of Mary’s sisters and their family serving as a bridge between the lay
viewer and the holy lineage centered around St. Anne, Mary, and Jesus, could also be
expressed more directly. A side panel from a painted Holy Kinship altar commissioned
by Frederick the Wise of Saxony (later Martin Luther’s patron) shows Mary’s two sisters
and their children, with their husbands. Frederick the Wise has been painted as Alphæus,
and his brother John the Constant as Zebedee (Illustration 23). This was at least the
second time Frederick had had himself painted into the Holy Kinship; the side panels of
the Cranach altar discussed above, which follow the traditional iconography and show the
Virgin Mary’s sisters and their families, include Frederick as Alphæus again, and his
brother as Zebedee. Pamela Sheingorn criticizes this as “a disturbance” in the
iconography of the Holy Kinship: “In appropriating this subject as a way of flattering the
males of his own family, Frederick the Wise certainly diminishes the importance of
mothers and the matriarchal line.”\footnote{Sheingorn, “Appropriating,” in Interpreting Cultural Symbols, p. 187. The argument she makes becomes much weaker when one reads in her footnotes that such substitutions of real people for historical figures was regularly practiced in sixteenth-century Germany.} However, I would argue what we’re really seeing
here is the pictorial manifestation of the idea of St. Anne’s devotees becoming, quite
literally, incorporated into her family. As such, they have both the obligations—to live a
moral life, including devotion to the matriarch and her oldest daughter and grandson—
and the rewards of such intimate connections with the divine. Frederick the Wise was not
the only man in the early sixteenth century who felt the need to have himself painted into a family of saints. When Bernard Strigel’s painting of the Emperor Maximilian with members of his family, commissioned in 1515, came into the possession of Johannes Cuspinian, this humanist and advisor to the Emperor asked the painter to add Holy Kinship name inscriptions over the emperor’s family, as well as adding a second panel “showing Cuspinian himself as Zebedee, his second wife as Salome, and their two sons as James the Less and John the Evangelist. A painting of the actual Holy Kinship was added on the back, paired with a long inscription” (Illustration 24).59 Direct visual conflation of this sort represented another method by which devotees of St. Anne and the Holy Kinship could be incorporated into the heavenly family.

By venerating St. Anne and her family, through prayers, masses, and devotion in front of images, late medieval Christians hoped that, like the Jüngling von Doch, they too could be considered by the objects of their devotion to belong to the family in Heaven. Investigating the network of kin connections in early modern England, David Cressy concluded that “A dense and extended kindred was a store of wealth, like a reserve account to be drawn upon as need arose.”60 By promoting, imitating, or praying to the Heilige Sippenschaft, the faithful hoped that they were storing up wealth in Heaven, to be drawn upon in their hour of need. In this life, they saw before them an idealized mirror of what familial interactions in the world should be like, and were reminded of the entire group of saints to whom they could connect through venerating St. Anne, and why these

connections were desirable.
Chapter Four:
From Holy Kinship to ‘Holy Household’

“I should walk on horse’s feet/ so that I can stand firmly in honor/ On which I will not fall into sin/ [which] is sweet, [but] will become bitter as gall.”

Anton Woensam’s 1525 allegorical woodcut of the “wise woman” shows viewers the figure of a woman dressed in contemporary clothing, surrounded by blocks of text explaining the symbolic aspects of her appearance (Illustration 25). With snakes wrapped around her waist to guard chastity, a golden lock on her mouth to prevent “unnecessary speech” that might destroy someone’s honor, and a key so that she can unlock her ears to God’s word, Woensam’s wise woman seeks to live a virtuous, Christian life. The instructions to “look at” the image indicate that it is intended to actively influence moral behavior. A woman who follows the practices she describes “will not be short of honor/ [and] will certainly earn God’s eternal Kingdom.”

By the time this woodcut was printed in 1525, the Protestant Reformation was well underway. A decade previously, a pious laywoman looking for a paradigm of

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2 “unnütz red,” Geisberg, Woodcut, p. 1511.
female behavior might have looked to an *Anna Selbdritt* or an image of the Holy Kinship. As discussed in Chapters One and Three, St. Anne appealed to the female laity by exemplifying what it meant to be a good wife and mother who was active in the world and in the affairs of her family. Woensam’s allegorical construction offers a different model of female virtue strongly influenced by new Protestant ideas. Rather than suggesting a saint for his exemplary model, Woensam depicts an ordinary laywoman. The text foregrounds self-regulation of female speaking, looking, and listening. Within the image, Jesus is present, not as a baby with his mother and grandmother, but as an adult on the cross attached to a mirror. The “wise woman,” who carries the mirror informs the viewer that “I will also reject pride/ and will look into this mirror/ by which God saved us/ It is my advice to you women to do this.”

A crucifix on the mirror reinscribes a traditional symbol of vanity as a Christian meditative object. Where St. Anne held and cared for her infant grandson, and served as a matriarch to the Holy Kinship, the “wise women” of 1525 gazes at an adult, crucified Christ as a symbol of salvation.

In this chapter, I analyze the fate of St. Anne within the Protestant Reformation, on both the religious and cultural levels. In the first decades of the Reformation, the figure of St. Anne stood at the center of two significant religious and social changes. The first was the Protestant re-evaluation and eventual discarding of the cult of the saints. The second was the changing perception of women (particularly older women), the family, and proper order within the household and society in sixteenth-century Europe. The

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5 The Catholic side of this shift, and how it affected the cult of St. Anne in early modern Catholicism, will be discussed in Chapter Five.
“theology of gender” that Lyndal Roper sets at the heart of the Reformation sought to incorporate women into an orderly domestic environment under the authority and guidance of their husbands. 6 The majority opinion amongst early Protestant theologians held that a domestic model based on a patriarchal household was most appropriate for the laity. This conception of an ideal Christian married life left little space for older women, especially one such as the thrice-married St. Anne, who was ascribed considerably more importance than her husbands.

The familiar narrative of St. Anne’s demise in the early Reformation focuses on Martin Luther’s transformation from follower to critic and the general Protestant attack on the cult of the saints. While Luther’s changing attitudes towards the Virgin Mary have been well-documented by scholars, no study deals specifically with his views on St. Anne and the Holy Kinship. 7 Even Martin Brecht’s three-volume biography mentions her only briefly, in conjunction with Luther’s earlier devotion and eventual vow during the thunderstorm at Stotternheim. 8 The extensive collection of Luther’s writings on women assembled by Susan Karant-Nunn and Merry Wiesner Hanks refers to St. Anne in the introduction to a set of texts on the Virgin Mary, but does not include any of Luther’s ruminations on Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome. 9 However, Luther wrote more about St. Anne and continued to discuss her over a longer period of time than any other German Reformer. A detailed analysis of Martin Luther’s thoughts on St. Anne provides insight

9 Susan Karant-Nunn and Merry Wiesner-Hanks, eds. and trans. Luther on Women: A Sourcebook, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 34. This introduction to Luther’s writings on the Virgin Mary also claims that the cult of St. Anne “largely disappeared by the sixteenth century.”
into the specific aspects of her cult that drew Protestant criticism and the evolution of Luther’s own position on St. Anne and her family, in particular the structure of the Holy Kinship. Over the course of his career, Luther not only used St. Anne’s cult as a negative example, but he pondered her existence and attempted to understand the family structure around her. His attitudes towards St. Anne and her cult revolved around two points: first, his position regarding the veneration of the saints within the Christian faith; second, his beliefs regarding St. Anne’s historical existence as the mother of the Virgin Mary and grandmother of Christ.

Historians have overlooked the complicated process of criticism and re-evaluation which took place around St. Anne within German Protestantism—in particular Lutheranism—during the first decades of the Reformation. In a way, this is not entirely surprising. When Martin Luther himself has been so helpful to historians by providing such quotable epithets throughout his work, repeatedly lamenting that he had been more devoted to St. Anne than to Christ and had made her into an idol, then the Protestant position on St. Anne seems to be clear, and her decline can be summed up in one or two pithy phrases.10 In this reading, the cult of St. Anne becomes the last gasp of the Middle Ages, or a preliminary fumbling towards ideals which would only become fully realized through the Reformation, and Luther's relationship with St. Anne becomes symbolic shorthand for that theological process.

Rather than focusing on Luther's dramatic self-criticism, Protestant reactions to St. Anne’s cult must be viewed in the overall context of their debates on the entire topic of saints and their cults. During the first two decades of the Reformation, German Reformers attacked the excess and false motivations that had turned the cult of saints into

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10 Luther, WA 36, p. 388; WA 41, pp. 653, 697.
something more like pagan practices than good Christianity, using copious quotations from Scripture to fulminate against the worship of idols and relying heavily on the First Commandment. These “contemporary objections to the saints and their trappings [were] part of a fundamental reevaluation of appropriate expressions of Christian piety.”

Protestants targeted St. Anne’s absence from Scripture, the newness of St. Anne’s cult, the excesses of her followers (seeking worldly wealth rather than spiritual benefits or using St. Anne as an excuse for gluttony and drinking), and the issue of the Holy Kinship.

I contend that the multivalent roles that St. Anne and her family had been fulfilling within Christianity in the Holy Roman Empire strongly influenced Protestant reactions to St. Anne on both the theological and popular levels. The first generation of Protestants grappled with St. Anne’s absence from the Bible and the lack of evidence for the extended family they had grown up believing in or spent years venerating as a positive model. Despite aspects of St. Anne’s cult that represented familial and domestic ideals promoted by Protestant Reformers, in the end neither the Holy Kinship nor St. Anne herself could be incorporated into Protestant thought. Responses to St. Anne by Protestant reformers were thus formed out of a combination of new doubts about the saints, new views on female virtue, and, above all, skepticism regarding the special role St. Anne had held up until the beginning of the Reformation. Protestant rhetoric targeted at the cult of the saints quickly focused on the popular exemplary saints of the Holy Kinship, who until that point had provided the faithful with an example of ideal family behavior.

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I. Holy Kinship: A Potential Model

Even though the novelty of St. Anne’s cult and her connection to worldly gain made her an obvious target for Protestant polemics, her position as a model of domestic sanctity could have made her an invaluable tool for Protestant efforts at social reform and the elevation of marriage. As I showed in Chapter Three, in the late Middle Ages Anne and her kin network offered a strong positive model for the good marriage and pious lay living which in many ways prefigured the Reformation model. Beginning with Trithemius, humanist devotees and promoters of St. Anne had emphasized the ways in which her extensive and holy family served as a model for a truly Christian life within marriage and an active internal religious life which could be passed on to future generations. At the same time as the Holy Kinship was held up as a model, “the Church’s handling of marriage was increasingly singled out by polemicists as the source of widespread disorder, immorality, and general confusion in marital affairs.”  

Many of the marital ideals Protestant advocated overlapped with the ideals embodied in the late medieval devotion to St Anne. St. Anne and her family could have provided a powerful example of an ideal Christian domesticity to set against unnatural Catholic celibacy, and a historical foundation of the superiority of marriage. This was especially true during the first years of the Reformation, when marriage was being widely praised and promoted as divinely ordained, while the proper role of the saints was still an issue of contention and debate.  

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13 In his 1519 sermon on marriage, Luther began with God’s observation that “It is not good that Adam is alone, I will make him a helpmate who will be with him...” “Eyn Sermon von dem Elichen Standt worendert und corrigirt durch D. Martinum Luther, Augustiner zu Wittenbergk, (1519),” Luther, WA 2 2, p. 166.
was one of the most far-reaching and radical changes within sixteenth-century European society. Philip C. Van Vleck describes the Reformation debate on marriage as “theologically complex and highly relevant to both social and religious practices in the early modern era,” encompassing wide-ranging questions of faith, grace, human sexuality and sexual practices, the dichotomy of body and soul, socio-cultural marriage practices, male and female nature, the divine natural order, human obedience to divine will, and the doctrine of mandatory priestly and monastic celibacy.14 Though the model of the holy household offered by Anne and the Holy Kinship could have been harmonized with the Reformers' own promotion of marriage as a natural state of humanity, in the end, Protestant theologians rejected St. Anne's modeling of an ideal wife and mother.

This potential was not immediately dismissed, as demonstrated by the repeated Protestant reissuing of a 1510 woodcut of St Anne and the Holy Kinship by Lucas Cranach the Elder (Illustration 26). The re-issued woodcut, printed twice after 1518, was combined with a Latin text praising the value of education, written by Melanchthon. This text was intended to be sung by the children of Wittenberg on their way to the first day of school.15 The center of the Holy Kinship, as presented in Cranach’s image, is a triangular arrangement of St. Anne and her daughters; the Anna Selbdritt forms the apex of the triangle at the back, and the foreground of the image is dominated by the families of Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome. The overall composition of the piece is very similar to the arrangement of the central panel in the Altershofner Altar (Illustration 18), which

was painted four years after Cranach’s woodcut was originally published. Joseph and Anne’s husbands are outside of the lines of the triangle; in fact, Joachim, Cleophas, and Salome are having their own discussion, and do not seem to be paying any attention to the rest of the family at all. The division between sub-families within the Holy Kinship continues, as the Virgin Mary and a book-holding St. Anne focus on the infant Jesus, who ignores them in favor of looking over towards Joseph, who meets Jesus's gaze. While the iconographic attempt to incorporate Joseph into the Anna Selbdritt by means of Jesus’ gaze is a potentially interesting point of analysis, the incorporation of Anne's three daughters is more interesting, as it stresses Anne's role as exemplary mother/wife in an ideal and harmonious family setting. Other aspects of this image also make it appealing to the new Protestant social reform. Alphaeus and Zebedee are shown with their older sons, either instructing them to read, or sending the eldest off to school, while their wives look after the younger children. St. Anne holds a book out to the Christ Child.

The foregrounding of education made this image of the Holy Kinship appropriate for Melanchthon’s text. Cranach’s direct inclusion of education as a motif (rather than the usual toys or saintly icons shown in conjunction with the future apostles) demonstrates the model of sanctified domesticity represented by the Holy Kinship in the early sixteenth century. Melancthon’s poem could have been appended to any number of woodcuts. Selecting an image of the Holy Kinship to accompany Melancthon's text demonstrates how St. Anne and her family could model proper Protestant Christian behavior. That this image was reissued the year following the first Protestant treatise explicitly attacking the Holy Kinship for its lack of scriptural basis emphasizes that, in the earliest phase of the Reformation, St. Anne was still viewed as a potentially useful tool for educating the laity.
II. The Holy Kinship and the Lineage of Jesus

Even as Cranach’s woodcut and Melancthon’s poem promoted an ideal family life, the Holy Kinship fell under increasing scrutiny. The first debate about the Holy Kinship occurred at the start of the Reformation. It began with Johannes Sylvius Egranus (ca. 1480/1485-1535), a Leipzig-educated Humanist who became preacher (concionator) at the Marienkirche in Zwickau. In 1517 he became involved in a dispute with the Franciscans in Zwickau (and in particular with Hieronymus Dungersheim, his predecessor) over the Trinubium and the Holy Kinship. As a result of this fight, Egranus published his first work, “Against his critics: In which Anne’s Marriage to Cleophas and Salome is Refuted Through Testimony of Scripture,” in 1518. In attacking the Trinubium, Egranus claimed to be protesting against a belief which “reduced the piety of the faithful to believing wonders which had been passed down to be true.”

Egranus lambastes the venerators of the Holy Kinship for devoting themselves to mere legends which do not hold up to critical analysis, rather than looking to Scripture or the Church Fathers.

Egranus applied a threefold critical analysis to the “fabula” of the Trinubium. First, he analyzed the legend from the linguistic standpoint, paying particular attention to the name “Salome,” which he argued could not possibly be a masculine name, and

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therefore could not be the name of anybody’s husband. This was a return to early medieval arguments against the Trinubium, discussed in Chapter Three, which had fallen out of favor in the preceding centuries as the Holy Kinship developed a following. The second function of linguistic analysis was to prove that “Mary Cleophas” was given that appellation from the name of her husband, not her father. Next, Egranus turned to the Church Fathers, particularly Augustine, Jerome, Eusebius, and Origen, for their interpretations of the relevant Scriptural passages. Bringing in these authorities lent support to his interpretation, and helped him to define his arguments. Finally, he applied an Erasmian style of textual criticism in order to remove all of the accretions which had built up since the Patristic age. Taken together, all of this evidence debunked the idea of the Trinubium. In its place, Egranus argued in favor of St. Jerome’s original interpretation of the phrase “brothers of Jesus”; i.e., that the Virgin Mary had had one sister, the aforementioned Mary Cleophas, also known as Mary the mother of James. By using humanist techniques to disassemble this most important group of saints in early sixteenth-century devotion, Egranus aimed to show the critical flaws within the entire cult of the saints. Instead of being able to worship with “true piety,” he concludes that the faithful have been fed mere “wonders,” passed down by the Church over the centuries.

In the same year, theologian Conrad Wimpina published his defense of the Trinubium and the Holy Kinship in response to Egranus.19 After an extensive summary of his opponent’s arguments in Book One, Wimpina devoted thirty chapters to defending the Trinubium and the idea that both Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome were the sisters of

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the Virgin Mary. For his authorities, he relied on Athanasius, Augustine, and Hieronymus, the original compiler of the Holy Kinship. In addition to these sources, Wimpina pointed to the fact that various bishops support not only the belief in and veneration of the Holy Kinship, but also the veneration of specific relics of both St. Anne and other Holy Kinship members. The shrine of Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome in Marseilles (where they were believed to have traveled with Mary Magdalene) is cited as proof; in fact, Wimpina provides his readers with an entire liturgical text devoted to the sisters of the Virgin Mary.

While Luther himself did not get involved with the debate between Egranus and Wimpina over the Holy Kinship, he discussed it in a letter to Spalatin in December 1517. Responding to the latter’s questions about which women had gone to the grave on Easter morning, and how many Marys there were (a question which other authors had wrestled with), Luther presented his current views on the Holy Kinship.²⁰ Discussing the number of Marys, Luther argued that based on the authority of Scripture, there were “only two Marys in addition to the Mother of God, namely [Mary] Magdalene and Mary the mother of James.”²¹ Making the same linguistic point as Egranus, Luther dismissed the error of believing in a “Mary Salome” who takes her name from her father. Salome, he agrees, is a feminine name, not a masculine one, as proven by the fact that it was Herod’s sister’s name.²² Finally, Luther stated, “And in Mark 10, those sons of Zebedee [are] named John and James. On the other hand, in John 19, Mary Cleophas is called the sister of the

²⁰ Martin Luther, *WA.BW* 1, Nr. 55, pp. 129-131.
²¹ “Certum est ex Evangelio probari evidenter posse tantum duas fuisse Marias praeter matrem Domini, scilicet Magdalenum et Mariam Iacobi.” Martin Luther, *WA.BW* 1, Nr. 55, p. 130.
²² “Perspicuus enim error est Mariam Salome nullam esse nisi ipsam Salome. Salome enim mulieris nomen est, non viri, generis femini illius masculini, quod est Salomon, unde et apud Iosephum nota est illa Salome, Herodis magni soror.” Martin Luther, *WA.BW* 1, No. 55, p 130.
mother of God. That, however, is Mary the mother of James. For in Matthew 13 and Mark 6, James, Joseph, Jude, and Simon are called “brothers of Christ,” that is, maternal cousins of Christ, for they are the sons of his mother’s sister.”

When Luther wrote to Spalatin, weighing in on the debate over the Holy Kinship and speculated about St. Anne and the scriptural Marys, the Reformers had only recently started their long struggle over the cult of the saints and what it meant for the Christian faith. In his letter, Luther attacked the excesses associated with the veneration of the saints, and had no patience with those who support the belief in St. Anne’s three marriages. In the closing paragraph, Luther was harshly critical about Wimpina’s upcoming treatise defending the Trinubium on the grounds of the great error of Wimpina’s position and his twisting of piety for the sake of material gain by promoting the veneration of the Holy Kinship. However, Luther acknowledged that Anne had more than one daughter, based on his own interpretation of Scripture. This personal conviction stayed with him, and formed a key component of his later attempts to map out the lineage of Christ.

Luther’s first discussion of St. Anne and her family was a brief mention in this letter to Spalatin discussing the Holy Kinship debate between Egranus and Wimpina. St. Anne herself is barely mentioned. Spalatin and Luther are concerned with the proper relationships between members of the Holy Kinship. Spalatin’s original question dealt not with the morality of St. Anne’s three marriages, but with the interpretation of a

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24 “maxime cum sit error ille de pietate descendens non adeo damnandus, ut ille, quo propter pecunias sancti coluntur,” Luther, WA B 1, Nr. 55, p. 130.
specific biblical passage. Luther’s answer focuses on his interpretation of Scripture and his knowledge of Hebrew grammar. While he dismisses the idea that St. Anne could have had a husband with the feminine name “Salome,” Luther still believes that the Virgin Mary had a sister, and that that sister had four sons (James, Joseph, Jude, and Simon) who grew up to follow their cousin Jesus.  

This conviction rests on the same Scriptural evidence about the “brothers of Jesus” which had begun speculation about Jesus’ wider family in early Christianity (see Chapter 3).

This 1517 letter is the earliest of the documents through which Luther’s attitude regarding St. Anne and her family can be traced. His beliefs integrate elements that later Protestants accepted and elements that died out as the Reformation progressed. Criticism of the Trinubium not only continued to be a consistent Protestant belief, it was later taken up by early modern Catholics, who saw multiple marriages as inconsistent with the high moral character of the Virgin Mary’s mother (see Chapter Five). Luther’s belief that the Virgin Mary had a sister, and that this relationship could be proven through Scripture, did not become widely accepted. Instead, Protestant opinion regarding Luther’s beliefs on the subject underwent a change.

The parameters of the Holy Kinship remained an open question for Luther throughout his career. In an undated remark collected in the Table Talk, he speculated regarding Salome, “If she is not the sister of Mary, the Mother of God, then perhaps she is Joseph’s sister, for she did also stand next to the cross, like someone who was a close relative.”

Luther also continued to conflate Mary the mother of James with Mary Cleophas and believe her to be the mother of the brothers of Jesus, but argued that this...

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25 Luther, WA 1, p. 130.
26 “Ist sie nicht Mariae, matris Domini, schwester, so ist sie vielleicht Josephs schwester, denn sie aht ja auch mit beym creutz gestanden, als eine von nahen frenden,” Luther, WA.TR 47, p. 364.
Mary had in fact had two husbands; namely, Alphaeus as her first husband and Cleophas as her second.

Reconciling the relationships for which he could find Scriptural verification with the family structure which had evolved around St. Anne proved to be a complicated, and frustrating, task. Although St. Anne was not in Scripture, other members of the Holy Kinship were. Preaching on Matthew 20 in 1538, Luther discusses St. John the Evangelist and St. James the Greater, the two “sons of Zebedee” mentioned in this passage.\(^\text{27}\) He begins by explaining that “they were close friends of the Lord, but how close, I cannot know.”\(^\text{28}\) Luther’s admission of his own ignorance provides an opening for criticizing the “empty lies and fables” about St. Anne’s three husbands:

For one finds nowhere in Scripture, who Our Dear Lady’s father or mother were, and in spite of that [we] have attached so much to St. Anne and Joachim, that people have even built cities, like Annnenberg and Joachimsthal, in order to honor them. If Anne did not exist, then the other story about her three husbands and about the lineage are also false. Let that be as it may; the two disciples were closely or distantly friends of the Lord; we will not ask anything about it.\(^\text{29}\)

Luther’s need to elucidate the primary problem with accepting the entire Holy Kinship indicates that belief in St. Anne’s three husbands had not ceased by the time of this sermon. This passage also sheds light on Luther’s main quandary regarding St. Anne’s absence from Scripture. More than the immoderate devotion shown to her or the greed exhibited by her followers, Luther is concerned because removing St. Anne from

\(^{27}\) “Matth. 18-24 in Predigten ausgelegt. 1537-1540,” Luther, WA 47, p. 364
\(^{28}\) “die waren des herrn nahe freunde, wie nahe aber, kann ich niht wissen.” Luther, WA 47, p. 364.
\(^{29}\) “Eytel lugen und Fablen,” “Denn man findet nirgendt ihn der schrift, wer unser lieben frwaen Vatter oder Mutter gewest sey, und haben dennoch mit S. Annen und Joachim so viel wesens ahngerticht, das man auch Stedte, als Annnenberg unnd Joachimsthal ihn zu Ehren gebawet hat. Ist nuhn Anna niht gewest, so wirdt die ander rechnung auch falsch, vorn ihren 3 Mennern unnd vorn dem geschlechte. Ihm sey nuhn, wie ihm wolle, es seindt die Zwene Junger nahe oder weit dem Herrn gefreundt, wir fragen nihts darnach,” Luther WA 47, 364.
Christian belief takes away the linchpin of a set of relationships connecting biblical figures. Because Scripture is authoritative, the relationships described within it must be true. They must also be interpretable. The difficulty lies in separating Scriptural truth from centuries of additions and the complicated family structure built up as part of St. Anne’s cult. Without Anne to validate Mary’s virtue and connect the Messiah to a long line of Old Testament ancestors, Jesus's family tree no longer makes sense. In his sermon on the sons of Zebedee, Luther confronts the difficulty in reconciling what Scripture states to be true with the elaborate constructions built up around this of kin network.

Luther wrote his most detailed explication of these connections, and his final word on St. Anne, in 1543. The second part of his virulently anti-Semitic tract “Concerning Shem Hamphoras and Concerning the Lineage of Christ,” written in conjunction with his infamous “On the Jews and Their Lies,” offers an extensive discussion of biblical lineage.\(^{30}\) Luther fulminates against what he sees as Jewish attacks on Christ’s lineage, particularly claims that Jesus could not have been of the house of David. His defense involves detailed references to the Old and New Testaments, establishing the lineage of the Virgin Mary in order to demonstrate that Jesus was connected to the correct ancestors through his mother. Alternating extensive scriptural quotes concerning lineage and descent with vitriolic barbs against the Jews, Luther’s argument concludes with his own scripturally-founded version of the family tree, which he introduces brusquely by saying, “I will lay out the entire kinship (\textit{Freundschaft}) following my idea or understanding. Whoever can do it better, they are welcome to.”\(^{31}\)


\(^{31}\) “Ich wil die gantze Freundschaft setzen nach meiner Idea oder begriff. Wers besser macht, der habe danck,” Luther, \textit{WA} 53, p. 629. Luther also sketched a draft of this family tree, printed in Luther, \textit{WA} 60, p. 167.
His chart and discussion repeat Luther's many earlier speculations about connections between members of the medieval Holy Kinship. The upper section of the family tree is devoted to lists of ancestors, tracing the houses of Aaron and David in order to show Mary’s eventual descent from them.

In Luther's version of the family tree, David’s line produces both Mary’s father, given the name “Eli,” and Joseph’s father, Jacob. Luther goes into great detail about Mosaic marriage law in order to explain Mary and Joseph’s marriage, arguing that first cousins were allowed to marry, and marriage outside of the tribe was forbidden. For the other side of Mary’s parentage, Luther bases his argument on Luke’s references to Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. Because Elizabeth is referred to as Mary’s aunt or relation, Luther says, “That cannot mean anything other than that the mother of Mary was Elizabeth’s sister; we will let her stay Anne, as she is called everywhere.” Luther’s opinion of St. Anne has changed radically from his earlier devotion or his criticism of her cult; now, he accepts her name as a place-holder within a larger, scripturally-based family tree aimed at demonstrating Jesus’ lineage in accordance with prophecy. Luther refuses to speculate about St. Anne beyond this casual acceptance of the common name for Mary’s mother.

The two figures Luther spends the most time working into the new tree are Mary Cleophas and Salome (the former Mary Salome). Mary Cleophas, Luther argues, was the Virgin Mary’s older sister, as well as the mother of four Apostles known as brothers of Jesus. While St. Anne no longer has multiple husbands, Mary Cleophas (also known as Mary Jacobi after her eldest son) does. Luther refers to Alphaeus as her first husband,

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32 Luther, WA 53, p. 625.
33 “Das kan nicht wol anders sein, denn das Marien mutter sey Elisabeth Schwester gewest, die wollen wir lassen sein Anna, wie sie uberal genennet ist.” Luther WA 53, p. 629.
(though he is strangely absent from the chart itself). On the other side of the family, Luther continues to list Salome as Joseph’s sister, and the wife of Zebedee. His justification is that “because she asks [Jesus] that he accept her two sons in his kingdom, one at his right side, the other at his left side, I believe, she must have been closely related to him.” Salome’s willingness to ask for the kind of favors one would request from a relative proves to Luther that she must have been a close relation. The degree of that favor must be commensurate with the closeness of the relationship,

Therefore I place her as Joseph’s sister. She thought, Mary Jacobi [ie, Mary Cleophas] is the sister of [Jesus’s] mother; however, I am the sister of [his] father. Therefore, I and my children have precedence over [his] mother’s sister with her children. For because Joseph has no other children, my sons are the closest relatives of Jesus.35

Salome’s willingness to make requests of Jesus demonstrates that she believes him to be kin to her through Joseph. As Luther notes, this was not true; Joseph was not Jesus’ father. It is a sign of Jesus’ compassion and love for those who are close to him on earth that he grants her request anyway. The Holy Kinship may no longer be part of Luther’s faith; however, family members still make requests of one another and expect them to be granted for the sake of blood kinship, mirroring sixteenth-century familial dynamics. St. Anne still serves an essential function as part of Luther’s interpretation of Scripture and the family lineage of Jesus, although she is no longer a source of intercession, or even a target of criticism.

34 “weil sie in bittet, Er solle jre zween Söne setzen, einen zur rechten, den andern zur lincken, inn seinem Reich, das ich halt, sie müsse jm seer nahe zugehort haben.” Luther WA 53, p. 630.
Figure 2: The Holy Kinship as Described by Martin Luther
III. Veneration and Greed

Hildebrand von Weworden’s negotiations with the Düren town council over the proceeds from the newly-established St. Anne pilgrimage (see Chapter Two) were exactly the sort of practice Reformers deplored. The first Protestants criticisms of St. Anne, including those by Luther, were aimed at the entire sacred economy surrounding her. This network of money and grace became another example of the flaws within the way saints were being venerated. Protestants interpreted the entanglement of the sacred and the worldly as idolatrous practices. The laity gave their money to shrines and churches in order to buy salvation, or, in the case of St. Anne, to ensure a comfortable life in this world. By doing this, followers of St. Anne ignored the precepts of Christian charity. Brother Heinrich in Kettenbach’s Gespräch, criticizes the Altmütterlein for wasting what could go to the living poor on wooden saints: “You burn many candles before the saints’ statues, St. Anne, St. Helfferin, St. Rutzkolben, etc., and they see nothing. Why don’t you burn such light for the poor women here in Ulm who try to spin in winter by moonlight?”36

In his 1518 sermon series on the Ten Commandments, Luther censures “those who go to excess in regard to relics and the veneration of the saints” in great detail.37 He places this criticism in the sermon on the First Commandment in order to connect excessive veneration of the saints with idolatry, a stance that became a hallmark of Protestant denunciations.38 The main target of his anger at this point is not the cult of the saints, but with the people who are venerating them incorrectly. Rather than seeking to

36 Hemming, Protestants, p. 51.
37 “Alterae eorum, qui circa reliquias & venerationem santorum excedunt,” Martin Luther, Decem praecepta Wittenbergensi praedicata populo, 1518, Luther, WA 1, p. 411.
38 See Heming, Protestants, passim.
follow the examples of the virtuous lives of the saints on earth, people sought ways to use the power of the saints in heaven “only for worldly and bodily benefits.” 39 When people “worship the saints falsely, … they rather worship themselves insofar as they seek from them only their own benefits, not the things which are of God.” 40 The model provided by the saints is a good one; the problem is that the faithful are failing to follow it, and are turning the saints into gods.

The main body of this sermon consists of a series of examples of male and female saints whose cults Luther singles out for criticism. St. Anne holds the first position among the female saints, due to her “extremely dubious legend,” and the recent development of her cult. 41 The “dubious” aspects of St. Anne’s legend which Luther is attacking do not involve whether St. Anne was the mother of the Virgin Mary or not, or even whether the Trinubium existed. Rather, in keeping with the overall theme of people worshipping the saints for their own benefit, Luther directs his ire against the claim that St. Anne brings worldly wealth to her followers. Without the belief in St. Anne’s ability to enrich those who pray to her, he argues, nobody would have followed this new saint. 42 Human greed has caused St. Anne’s cult to eclipse even that of her own daughter.

The disjunction between the positive model provided by the saints and the poor behavior of those who venerate them was not a complaint new to Luther. Many of the humanists who had promoted St. Anne as an appropriate model of pious lay behavior were also critical of excessive devotion to the cult of the saints. Erasmus, whose poem

39 “Primo propter temporalia et corporalia duntaxat,” Luther, WA 1, p. 411.
40 “Et hii false colunt sanctos, immo magis seipsum in illis, quia sua quae rerunt, non ea quae dei sunt,” Luther, WA 1, p. 411.
41 “cuius legenda, cum sit dubiosissima…” Luther, WA 1, p. 415.
42 “Sed multo gratior, quod non venit vacua sed divitiis plena, Nihil prorsus promotura si paupertatem adduceret,” Luther, WA 1, p. 415.

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praising Saint Anne was frequently reprinted up through 1522, regularly satirized contemporary practices concerning the saints and sought to encourage proper forms of veneration. The preacher Johannes Brenz, in his 1523 sermon on the saints, follows a similar line when he complains that the “good models” of the saints are “altered by perverse, foolish, indeed, godless people who no longer praise the faith of the saints, but the saints themselves. They hold them up as gods in whom we should place our faith, as helpers, as intercessors… In short, the veneration of the saints today is idolatry.”

IV. A Novel Saint

The absence of scriptural evidence for specific saints, including St. Anne, was a powerful Protestant argument against traditional Christianity, handily serving to demonstrate the extent to which Christianity under the Popes had fallen away from its origins. Unlike other non-Scriptural saints’ cults, St. Anne’s cult had only a short history to look back on as proof of its authenticity. The novelty of St. Anne’s cult provided a recurring theme for Luther and other Protestants to criticize those who venerated her. As Luther gives a detailed personal history of his own changing views towards St Anne, his experiences can fill in some of the motivation and context for other Protestant attacks on St Anne. By his own account, Luther’s involvement with Anne began early. St. George’s Church in Luther’s home city of Mansfeld had received a new altar dedicated to St. Anne in 1503. In the late 1530s, Luther claimed, “By my reckoning, the great significance of St. Anne started when I was a boy of fifteen years. Before then, nobody knew anything about her, but then a boy came and brought St. Anne; she was a great success, because everybody got involved. … and whoever wanted to become rich, they claimed St. Anne

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44 Brecht, *Luther*, p.11.
as their saint.”

His perception of Anne's novelty is echoed by Swiss Protestant Valerius Anshelm, who dated St. Anne’s cult to 1503, and compared its sudden rise to the signs marking the End of Days. Even within the late fifteenth-century *vitae* of St. Anne, a miracle story describes the unpleasant fate of a blasphemous bishop who attacks the cult of St. Anne as a “novel and unaccustomed veneration, never proven,” suggesting that condemning the novelty of Anne's cult was not a Protestant innovation. Luther continued to grapple with the problem of St. Anne’s absence from scripture. Considering the feast of St. Anne, Luther says in 1527 that he “finds not a single letter about her in scripture. I believe that God left this unwritten, so that we would not seek new saints, as we now do, running hither and thither and thereby losing the true savior, Jesus Christ.”

It is important to note that Luther here does not deny that St. Anne existed; he merely notes that she is not in scripture, a fact which he attributes to God’s desire to leave her identity unrevealed. The primary problem for Luther does not lie with the lack of scriptural evidence so much as it does with the human tendency to desire novelty, to ignore “the true savior” (*den rechten haylannd*) in favor of excessive devotion such as he himself had been guilty of.


47 “das soeliche nüwe und ungewonete eerbietung und ni t bewerte wysen,” Ain gar nutzlichs büchlin von dem gantzen geschlecht samt Anna vnd von sant Anna lobliche bruderschaft. Vnd von etlichen grossen wunderzaichen sant Anna. (Ulm: Johann Reger oder Hans Hochspringer, 1497).

The accusation that a devotion or belief was a new invention had always been a prime weapon in Christianity, both before the Reformation and after the confessional splits; the Protestants themselves were accused of it. St. Anne’s sudden rise to popularity made this accusation particularly potent. Protestant writers continued to attack the novelty of St. Anne, even through the nineteenth century. In return, Catholic writers began to focus on justifying the cult of St. Anne with copious references to Scripture and history.\textsuperscript{49}

Despite her cult being criticized early and often on the grounds of novelty, St. Anne and echoes of St. Anne appear in unexpected places in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestantism. The calendar written by Caspar Gottwurm, a student of Melanchthon who served as a court chaplain in Marburg and later pastor and \textit{Visitor} in Weilburg, published first in 1559 and then reprinted in 1561, 1576, 1583, and 1597, lists July 26\textsuperscript{th} as the day devoted to “Anne the mother of Mary [and] Anne Askew Martyr.”\textsuperscript{50} Anne Askew’s execution had been held on July 16\textsuperscript{th}. Her conflation with the mother of the Virgin Mary on the latter’s traditional feast day indicates how very strongly the name “Anne” still resonated with St. Anne-specific meaning within Protestantism. In sets of Dutch and German prints depicting Biblical women as models of specific female virtues, usually with accompanying text exhorting contemporary women to follow these models, the figure of Anne, mother of Samuel, and Anne, the elderly prophetess in the New

\textsuperscript{49} This approach was also discussed in the Introduction, as an aspect of Beda Kleinschmidt’s work.
Testament, not only appear regularly, but could be juxtaposed with texts traditionally associated with St. Anne.\textsuperscript{51}

**V. Heaven, Earth, and Patronage**

In his “Large Catechism,” of 1529, Luther listed devotional practices which “in our blindness, we have hitherto been practicing and doing under the Papacy.”

If any one had toothache, he fasted and honored St. Apollonia … if he was afraid of fire, he chose St. Lawrence as his helper in need; if he dreaded pestilence, he made a vow to St. Sebastian or Rochio, and a countless number of such abominations, where every one selected his own saint, worshiped him, and called for help to him in distress.\textsuperscript{52}

This is the negative side of the structure described in Chapter Three by Virginia Reinburg, the “patronage system” of devotion to saints, in which each saint is responsible for particular areas and favors, and the kingdom of Heaven is divided up in a manner equivalent to human society. What had been, a few decades earlier, a positive example of how saints could function as friends and family has now become a focal point of attack, because it fragments the attention and prayer that should be given to Christ and bestows it on “a countless number” of non-existent saints. Within this developing theological attack against the saints, St. Anne’s position as a powerful matriarch and “mother” to her devotees, and the idea that venerating her meant gaining the support of her extended family, no longer fits into the structure of belief.

In 1523, Luther attacked the belief that Anne and Joachim were wealthy and divided their income between the Temple, the poor, and themselves as “empty fables,”


\textsuperscript{52} Luther, “Large Catechism,” 1520 WA 30(1).
and pointed out that “Mary might have been a poor orphan.”

This declaration took place as part of a larger argument about Mary’s humility and lowliness, dramatizing her emotions when faced with the announcement that she is going to bear the Savior. Speculating that Mary might have been not only poor, but without parents, stands in sharp relief to the sixteenth-century belief in St. Anne and St. Joachim’s nobility and wealth. In the context of this sermon, Luther’s primary argument explains more about Protestant uses of the Virgin Mary as a model of humble obedience than it does about his own views on St. Anne. As Beth Kreitzer argues, sixteenth-century Protestantism reconfigured the Virgin Mary so that she could serve as a model for the proper behavior of the faithful, particularly women. Rather than the Queen of Heaven or the mater misericodiae, Mary was “held up and praised as a meek, pious, chaste, and obedient girl.”

The Annunciation in particular was taken as a display of the proper attitude on Mary’s behalf. When the angel Gabriel informs her of her selection to bear the Messiah, Mary replies with unquestioning faith and obedience, completely accepting of God’s will. The faith shown by Mary “was just the kind that Lutheran pastors wanted to instill in their own congregations. She is portrayed as humble and obedient, willing to concede her own inability to comprehend God’s plan and to lean on God’s goodness and grace.”

By focusing their attentions on a humble, devout Mary as a model for appropriate lay behavior, the Reformers removed possible space for St. Anne.

In a 1519 discussion on the intercession of the saints, Luther again emphasizes

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53 “Es sind eyttel fabeln was man von Joachim unnd Anna sagt, wie sie ir gütt ni drey teyl geteilt haben. Maria ist vielleicht ein arms waißlin geweßt, verac htet, dann sie von ir selbs sprich, 'Er hatt angesehen die nichtigkeit, verworffenheit seiner dienerin.” “Predigt am Tage der Verkündigung unser lieben Frauen (25. March, 1523),” Luther, WA 12, p. 458.
54 Kreitzer, Mary, p.43, 82.
55 Kreitzer, Mary, p. 82.
that, while he “says and holds fast with all of Christendom that one should honor and call upon the dear saints,” the reasons why contemporary Christians are asking for saintly intercession leave a great deal to be desired:

Where does one now find a saint who is called upon for patience, faith, love, chastity and other spiritual goods, the way St. Anne [is] for riches, St. Lawrence [to protect] from fire, that one for a bad pain, that one for this, the other for that. 56

The emotional tenor of Luther’s 1518 and 1519 reproaches to followers of St. Anne may reflect the frustration of a devout young man who had vowed himself to a life of monastic simplicity in her name, only to see her cult become the latest fashion among the upper class and the nobility.

A more decisive break with the cult of the saints came in 1522. In his “Letter or Lesson About the Saints to the Church in Erfurt,” Luther weighs in on the so-called “Pulpit War” (Kanzelkrieg) among preachers in Erfurt, which centered around the veneration of the saints. 57 Luther’s response reveals how much his position on the question of saints and intercession had shifted since 1519. While he recognizes that people still need to pray to the saints, the practice of doing so is a “weakness.” Luther is quick to state, however, that people who engage in it should be left alone rather than scorned, as long as they recognize “that they are not placing their confidence and trust in any saint, but rather alone in Christ.” 58 Here Luther also begins to articulate his belief that the medieval conception of a community incorporating both the living faithful and the

56 ‘Sag ich und halt fest mit der gantzen Christenheyt, das man die lieben heyligen eeren und anruffen sol,” “Wa fyndt man itzeyn heyligen, der umb gedult, glauben, liebe, keuscheyt und ander geystliche gutere wirt angeruffen, als Sant Anna umb reyecthub, Sant Lorentz vor das fewr, Der umb eyn boße peyn, Der umb dit, der ander umb das.” In “Doctor Martinus Luther Augustiners Unterricht auff etlich artickell, die im von seynen abgunnern auff gelegt und zu gemessen Vuerden,” Luther, WA 2, pp. 69-70.
57 “Epistel oder Unterricht von den Heiligen an die Kirche zu Erfurt, 1522,” Luther, WA 10.2, pp. 159-168.
58 “schwacheyt,” “fo fern das sie wiszen unnd sich hüten darf, das sie yhre tzuversicht unnd vertrawen auff keynen heyligen stellen dann alleyn auff Christum.” Luther, WA 10(II), p. 166.
dead saints is false. Luther would expand on this theme in his 1522 sermon on the Feast of All Saints, declaring clearly that there are saints among the living as well as among the dead, and that proper veneration involves attention and charity for the living rather than donations to the dead.\textsuperscript{59} This line of argument effectively transferred the locus of criticism from the degree or attitude during veneration to the entire spectrum of practice related to interaction with the saints. The assertion that the community of saints referred to the living, not the dead, played a crucial role in Protestant arguments of the 1520s against the traditional veneration of saints, removing any active role for the saints within Protestant belief.\textsuperscript{60}

By uncoupling the community of the dead from that of the living, Martin Luther necessarily shifted his position on St. Anne and her cult. From 1522 onwards, two strains of thought regarding St. Anne and her cult appeared in his writings. The first criticized devotional practices related to St. Anne- removing the framework of belief that supported the cult of the saints meant that all veneration of St. Anne or other saints was excessive and pointless. This included criticizing his own earlier personal devotion to St. Anne. In 1525, preaching on the second book of Moses, Luther again addressed the themes of the First Commandment and idolatry.\textsuperscript{61} He singles out the creation of pictures and statues depicting the saints, saying, “up until now, we have made images of Our Lady, St. Anne, the Crucifix, and so on, and had the opinion, that they were better than other wood and stone”\textsuperscript{62} St. Anne’s inclusion within the list of named examples along with the Virgin Mary and Jesus references the number of images of St. Anne, the Anna Selbdritt, and the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{59} Luther, WA 10(III), p. 408.
\textsuperscript{60} Heming, Protestants, pp. 26-29.
\textsuperscript{61} “Predigten über das 2. Buch Mose, 1524-1527,” Luther WA 16, p. 440.
\textsuperscript{62} “Denn wir haben bisher unser Frawen, Sant Annen, Crucifix und der gleichen bilder gemacht und die maynung darzu gehabt, das besser weren denn ander holtz und steyn…” Luther WA 16, p. 440.
\end{footnotesize}
Holy Kinship visible within sixteenth-century German devotional life. Speaking of his own personal experience, he describes how fear had led him to “flee to the dead, St. Barbara, St. Anne and other dead saints set up as intermediaries against Christ’s anger.”

In addition to this personalized rationalization for St Anne's popularity, Luther argued that the Pope’s “bulls and lies, calling on saints, indulgences, masses, [and] monkdom” drove Christians to fear Christ “even more than the Devil himself.”

VI. New Models for Women

While developing Protestant doctrines that removed the veneration of the saints took away the religious space for St. Anne, they were not the only reason for her cult’s exceptionally rapid decline within Protestant areas. At the same time as attacks on the veneration of the saints targeted her cult from a theological perspective, St. Anne was becoming obsolete because the socio-spiritual role she had filled in the late Middle Ages was no longer viable. For the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century laity, St. Anne provided a model of an exemplary wife and mother. By 1525, the “wise woman” depicted by Woensam represented a new model which was supplanting St. Anne as a standard for female behavior. The replacement of a powerful matriarchal saint with a silent, chaste, devout matron exemplifies a set of wider socio-cultural changes regarding marriage, gender roles, and social order during the first fifty years of the Reformation. One result of this shift was the loss of a cultural space for St. Anne within Protestant Europe.

At its core, this loss sprang from changes in the cultural and religious perception of marriage and the family. Proceeding from the view that the union of a man and a

63 „Und da fur meine zuflucht zu den todten, S. Barbara, Anna und andere todte Heiligen gestellet als Mittler gegen Christi zorn,” “Epistle am achtzehnten Sonntag nach Trinitatis. 1. Kor. 1, 4-9,” Luther, WA 22, p. 305
64 “Epistle,” Luther, WA 22, p. 305.
woman in Christian marriage formed the fundamental building block of society, Protestant theologians and authorities sought to ensure that it would fulfill its divinely-ordained function properly. While the development of the model family piety began in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Reformation marked a significant second major shift in the understanding of marriage, in which marriage, not celibacy, becomes the ideal Christian life. In pursuit of this goal, “Evangelical and Reformed pamphlets, tracts, poems, and plays all preached the marital fruits of love, fidelity, and procreation, with the most important product being ... personal and social stability.” Eileen Dugan’s work on early modern Nordlingen has demonstrated that a strong focus on promoting marital values existed even in funeral sermons, in which the dead were honored and the living inspired through descriptions of virtuous, properly Christian husbands and wives.

Sixteenth-century Northern Europe was awash in a flood of marital prescriptive literature. A new iconography of wifely virtue replaced the formerly ubiquitous image of St. Anne within Protestant areas of Northern Europe as the burgeoning print industry began to produce images depicting women within the new social mores. These prints contained both positive depictions of appropriate marital and household relationships, and negative, satirical prints. Images of the “world turned upside down,” through women literally wearing the pants in a relationship, or assuming authority over men, demonstrated what could happen if gender roles were transgressed against. Visually, the “favorite metaphor

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68 For examples and analysis of these woodcuts, see: Lène Dresen-Coenders and Petty Bange, eds., *Saints and She-Devils: Images of Women in the 15th and 16th Centuries*, (London: Rubicon Press, 1987).
for the virtuous wife was either the snail or the tortoise, both animals that never leave their “house” and are totally silent.”

In addition to the secular models of good wifeliness, such as that printed by Woensam and later redrawn and reprinted by the Dutch artist Cornelis Anthonisz, a range of religious and classical women appeared as “prints that were dedicated to women or reused as illustrations in an instructional text for women.”

Collections of pictures and texts about women who exemplified various female virtues aided in moral edification. These images presented the viewer with a series of women from the Old and New Testament “as ideal brides, wives or mothers,” along with descriptions of their particular virtue. These examples combined image and text to define female virtues, particularly for the “women from the well-to-do urban elite” who would have belonged to the social strata able to afford these works. In short, these new models were aimed at and purchased by the same group of people who would have previously formed the backbone of St. Anne’s cult.

Susan Karant-Nunn, adopting Lyndal Roper’s idea of the “holy household,” sees the Protestant goal as the creation of a household with a “properly regulated marital bond at its core,” a bond within which a husband’s authority would help to direct women’s energies towards domestic and maternal matters, while a wife’s modest piety would serve to tame man’s wilder tendencies. Communal peace and stability were tied to public morality as expressed through properly functioning Christian marriages. Protestant literature frequently made this connection, and “marriage and the family were

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69 Wiesner, Women and Gender, p. 25.
consistently treated as microcosms and barometers of society as a whole, with the health of the latter fully dependent on the maintenance of order and discipline in the former. In order for the marital bond to function properly, both partners had to perform their natural gender roles. Husbands were required to direct their wives appropriately and to maintain household order; wives were required to be virtuous, pious, and able to inspire proper marital behavior in their husbands. A marriage in which the wife held more authority and power than her husband inverted the divinely-ordained natural order, and threatened social stability. A wife who held more authority and power than three successive husbands had no place within Protestant moral exempla. The devotional traditions which had emphasized St. Anne’s matriarchal status within her extended family over the decades preceding the Reformation had rendered her unsuitable as a model within the new socio-cultural climate.

The replacement of St. Anne with the new household model is particularly evident in the cities, where her cult had enjoyed considerable popularity among the urban middle and upper-class. Her role as a model of active upper-class lay piety built around an extended family structure had contributed significantly to the growth of her cult, as shown by the spread of St. Anne confraternities in German and Dutch cities (see Chapter Two). During the 1520s, it was those same urban communities which embraced the new social and marital ethics of the Reformation. Thomas Brady argues that the “first decade of the urban reformation… fashioned a clean, comprehensive solution to the problem of

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74 The question of how images of the entire group of women—St. Anne and her daughters together—would have functioned within a post-1520 cultural environment that saw groups of women as full of the potential for disorder would be an interesting subject for further exploration.
The new place of marriage and the household as fundamental organizational structures within the city were important aspects of this “comprehensive solution.” A considerable body of historical research addresses this development and analyzes the aspects of the Reformation that made it attractive to the middle- and upper-class urban population, in particular the guilds and the ruling class. For the guilds, the greater emphasis on a well-ordered household, structured around a workshop run by a master, combined neatly with their own professional and economic concerns. Adopting a family structure that was increasingly restrictive of women’s economic roles outside of the house benefited guild interests.

The quiet, chaste wife who helps her husband by maintaining order within the household while he works outside of it presented early modern society with a very different ideal from that of an active matriarch who was in charge of an extended family. More importantly, the Reformation emphasis on the husband and wife as the foundation of society, and on women as wives and mothers, removed the possibility of a grandmother, such as St. Anne, serving as a model for women. The dominant rhetoric about women as wives and mothers placed them within their child-bearing years; there is very little material which discusses or depicts the early modern grandmother.

Women reached the status of “grandmotherhood,” that is, the age at which they were no longer able to have children, much earlier than men achieved a corresponding

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75 Brady, “In Search of the Godly Community,” in Communities, p. 177.
position. For men, reaching the age of fifty meant being at the prime of life; for women, it meant being at the start of a fast decline into old age.  

Where mothers and matrons had models to look to for guidance and reassurance, and a cultural role that was seen as vital, albeit restrictive in the modern sense, older women were viewed as marginal. Lyndal Roper, arguing for increased historical research into the social status of older women in the early modern period, suggests that “as each confession lauded the maternal, each found it more difficult to deal with women who could no longer be mothers; or to conceptualize femininity in women once it was not circumscribed by maternity.” The loss of St. Anne deprived society of a positive model for older women, and left behind texts and images that displayed older women as weak, decrepit, and often morally questionable.

In addition to her age, St. Anne’s status as a widow placed her within a social group which was often marginalized by the new insistence that women be defined vis-à-vis the marital bond. The new model brought by the Reformation “was most successful when it most insisted on a vision of women’s incorporation within the household under the leadership of their husbands.” The death of St. Joachim, and the cipher status of St. Anne’s other two husbands, forestalled any possibility that she could be fitted into this vision. Instead, St. Anne’s repeated marriages put her perilously close to a negative model of widowhood. Even in the pre-Reformation cult of St. Anne, there had been tension regarding the Trinubium. St. Anne’s repeated marriages needed to be very

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78 Wunder, *Sonn*, p. 51.
79 Lyndal Roper, “Gender and the Reformation,” in *Archive for Reformation History* 92, (2001), p. 294. Roper ponders how the negative perceptions of older women which began as a result of the Reformation’s re-structuring of women’s roles impacted the later witch hunts, which focused largely on older women. Likewise, it is interesting to note that the resurgence of St. Anne’s cult in Catholic territories began only after the age of the witch hunts had ended.
carefully described as occurring with the will of God, specifically for the purpose of having children, to forestall criticism of her actions as based on lust. In a social system where official rhetoric and conceptions of social order fitted widows into the categories of “rich and poor, pious and lusty,” the cultural meaning of St. Anne’s three marriages shifted. Rather than increasing her sanctity through multiple holy daughters, St. Anne’s three marriages could equate her with the lustful old women shown marrying young men in satirical images.

In his attacks on the cult of St. Anne, Martin Luther never raised the issue of Anne’s repeated marriages as inappropriate or lustful. His criticism of the Trinubium rested on grammatical, not moral, grounds, and re-evaluation of the cult of St. Anne has no connection to the development of his position on marriage and family life. However, the wider socio-cultural developments begun by the Protestant re-definition of marriage and family life did eventually have an impact on how St. Anne was perceived. A century after Luther sketched out his version of Jesus’ family tree, Catholic clergy seeking to revive the cult of St. Anne as a model for female behavior would condemn the Trinubium far more harshly than Luther ever did.

82 See, for example, Lucas Cranach’s “The Old Woman in Love and the Young Man,” shown in Wunder, Sonn’, p. 181.
Chapter Five:
Decline, Transformation, and Revival

For mid-sixteenth-century German Catholicism, St. Anne was both essential and highly problematic.\(^1\) Her role as the mother of the Virgin Mary made her an indispensible component of Christ’s lineage, particularly in relation to the Immaculate Conception and Mary’s physical and moral purity. However, the idea of a powerful, matriarchal saint

\(^1\)One of the difficulties in analyzing St. Anne’s cult during this time period is, quite simply, the appropriate terminology to use when describing Catholicism and its development from the 1520s onwards. In Hubert Jedin’s famous 1946 essay on the proper terms to use when discussing the complicated history of Catholicism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, he proposed using the term “Counter-Reformation” to refer to the period before the Council of Trent, when Catholicism was attempting to formulate a response to Protestantism, and the term “Catholic Reform” to describe the Catholic Church’s internal process of reform and its self-assertion in the face of Protestantism. This division does usefully represent different stages within the cult of St. Anne; Conrad Wimpina’s treatise is clearly part of a Catholic attempt to respond to Protestant attacks, while late sixteenth-century treatments of St. Anne are equally clearly promotions of new Catholic perspectives. However, this periodicization both obscures potential continuities, and creates a hierarchically-oriented perspective through its focus on the Catholic Church as an institution. John O’Malley proposes the term “Early Modern Catholicism,” for the entire period, which “suggests both change and continuity without pronouncing on which predominates….. seems more amenable to the results of “history from below,” … [and] allows for the negotiation that seems to have occurred at all levels—between bishops and Rome, between pastors and bishops on the one hand and pastors and their flock on the other, between accused and inquisitors – with even illiterate villagers emerging as effective negotiators when their interests were at stake.” The term Early Modern Catholicism also includes more space for the consideration of women and gender issues, vital aspects of any investigation into the cult of St. Anne. Hubert Jedin, “Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation?” in The Counter-Reformation: The Essential Readings, ed. David M. Luebke, Blackwell Essential Readings in History, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1999), pp. 19-46; John W. O’Malley, Trent and all That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 141.
with multiple husbands ran counter to developing ideals about gender and holiness within Early Modern Catholicism. The Council of Trent, while not discussing the Holy Kinship itself, did “put a premium on creating order in church and society through the control of women and gender relations.”

Recent work on early modern Catholic states has demonstrated that the regulation of marriage and sexuality was also a concern of secular governments, who sought to create morality and order through their use of Tridentine ideals to police their citizens, in particular women.

In this chapter, I examine how Catholic attempts to purify the cult of saints of superstition and popular practices so that it could serve as a bulwark against Protestantism, a new concern with female behavior and marriage, and new conceptions of gendered holiness affected the cult of St. Anne within Catholicism, transforming St. Anne from the matriarch of a large family to a pious, monogamous widow by the end of the sixteenth century. I then explore the importance of this re-imagined St. Anne for Early Modern Catholicism, tracing the renewal of her cult during the seventeenth century.

The history of St. Anne’s cult in Early Modern Catholicism is a saga of decline, transformation, and a revival which would reach its fullest bloom in the eighteenth century (See Chapter Six). Of these phases, only the decline has received attention from historians. Ton Brandenbarg, Angelika Dörfler-Dierken, Virginia Nixon, and Pamela Sheingorn all present the first decade of the Reformation as the last years of any significant veneration of St. Anne in Northern Europe. Even Beda Kleinschmidt’s exhaustive survey of devotion to St. Anne shifts focus from Germany to Italy and Spain.

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3 For examples, see Strasser’s *State of Virginity*, which examines seventeenth-century Bavaria, and Anne J. Cruz and Mary Elizabeth Perry, eds., *Culture and Control in Counter-Reformation Spain*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).
when it looks at the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, further contributing to the impression that nothing of significance was occurring in the former heartland of devotion to Mary’s mother. The reasons, nature, and importance of the reconstruction of St. Anne and the revival of her cult in Early Modern and Baroque Catholicism have not been previously explored.

I. Evaluating St. Anne’s Decline

The lack of attention paid to St. Anne’s post-Reformation cult by historians is at least partly due to a lack of source material. After Conrad Wimpina wrote his defense of the Holy Kinship in the early years of the Reformation, Catholic writers were remarkably silent on the subject. There were no further attempts to defend the Trinubium and St. Anne’s wider family; there were no treatises agreeing with Protestant criticisms (the latter being, admittedly, unlikely). The last re-printings of a pre-Reformation vita of St. Anne were two 1530 editions of Jan van Dememaken and Wouter Bor’s 1499 Di histori van die heilige moeder santa Anna en van haer olders, published in Delft and Antwerp. Following this, St. Anne and the extensive, well-known, highly venerated, extended family organized around her vanished from Catholic vitae, treatises and devotional texts for sixty years. This phenomenon is not unique to St. Anne; the period of her disappearance overlaps with the sixty five years during which no new saints were canonized by the Catholic Church, from 1523 until 1588.

In the first decades of the Reformation, prior to the Council of Trent, Catholicism was on the defensive and struggling to formulate coherent, wide-ranging responses to

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4 Dörfler-Dierken, Verehrung, Appendix 2, p. 326.
Protestantism. Across Europe, Protestant attacks on the cult of saints and associated practices such as relic veneration and pilgrimages struck at the heart of long-established worship practices (See Chapter Four). The consequences of the new Protestant doctrines were “nothing short of disastrous, producing decline and disaffection” even within those areas which remained Catholic. Protestant attacks came at a time when the Catholic Church was already highly critical of devotional practices located outside of the official church structure, and suspicious of uncontrolled expressions of lay piety. Faced with criticism of St. Anne’s cult as a novelty with no scriptural basis, composed purely of superstition and human greed, the official Catholic response for most of the sixteenth century appears to have been silence. Publication of the *vitae* and devotional texts which demonstrated the vast popularity of St. Anne ceased. It is this lack of textual evidence which has given rise to the interpretation that St. Anne vanished from Catholic belief and practice as a result of Protestantism.

The Reformation did cause a marked decline in the veneration of St. Anne, not least due to the redrawing of Europe’s religious geography which resulted. In those areas which became Protestant, the cult of the saints no longer formed part of recognized religious practice. This included locations that had previously served as centers of devotion or St. Anne-related text production. While the Catholic Rhineland was still a significant center of veneration, the cult’s overall center of gravity shifted southwards and eastwards. Territories ruled by the ultra-Catholic Wittelsbachs and the Habsburgs provided a host of sites for the production of texts and works of art, as well as shrines where St. Anne could be venerated. A map documenting confraternal activity from the

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Council of Trent through the late eighteenth century clearly shows these shifts.

Map 2: Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century St. Anne Confraternities

While the Rhineland remains a site of strong confraternal activity, the Netherlands and the middle, northern, and eastern areas of Germany show a noticeable decline. In Bavaria and Austria, however, there was a significant increase in St. Anne confraternities during the seventeenth and, even more noticeably, the eighteenth centuries. Habsburg acquisition of one of St. Anne’s hands in 1680 lead to increased interest in her cult; the

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8 The map was compiled by plotting the latitude and longitude of those confraternity locations listed by Angelika Dörfler-Dierken as having documented activity during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and then using Planiglobe’s online vector map creation software.
foundation of a St. Anne confraternity in Vienna in 1694 after an heir was born on her feast day also added to her popularity.\(^9\)

The evolution of Early Modern Catholicism before and after Trent resulted from a mix of official efforts by the ecclesiastical hierarchy to reform belief and practice, the actions of religious orders such as the Jesuits, state attempts to consolidate religion and use it to keep political and social order, and continuing or resurgent popular practices at the local and regional levels. German Catholicism’s complex and fragmented structure, which included religious orders, collegiate and cathedral chapters, ecclesiastical principalities, ducal foundations, and long-established local practices, made the imposition of reforms extremely difficult to carry out in practice. The immediate reception of the decrees of the Council of Trent north of the Alps was lukewarm.\(^{10}\) New standards of clerical education and behavior took several generations to truly take hold. The laity, at all levels of society, did not immediately reconfigure their religious practices to conform to Tridentine standards. Neither did the clergy. It took several generations of education and verbal and actual conflict with Protestantism for the ideological shift to new religious ideas and standards to achieve widespread acceptance. Local or personal veneration tends to leave fewer historical records behind, and is thus much harder to document. The lack of printed \textit{vitae} during this sixty-year period means that the best evidence is found by examining confraternities and pilgrimage sites.

The space between textual silence and actual practice presents us with an avenue to explore the “negotiations between religion as the church prescribed it and religion as

\(^9\)The hand acquired by the Habsburgs was, as far as I can determine, a different hand from the previously-mentioned hands of St. Anne.

\(^{10}\)For a discussion of the German reception of Tridentine reform ideas before the Thirty Years’ War, see: Marc R. Forster, \textit{Catholic Germany from the Reformation to the Enlightenment}, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
people practised it” during the decades immediately before and after the Council of Trent.\textsuperscript{11} Between the last reprinting of a medieval \textit{vita} in 1530 and the first treatise presenting the new, monogamous model of St. Anne in 1591, only glimpses of the picture are visible. The end of the \textit{Trinubium}’s acceptance as a vital aspect of St. Anne’s legend is impossible to pinpoint. In 1543, the St. Anne confraternity based at the Franciscan church in Bozen participated in a clerical play with procession (\textit{geistliches Spiel mit Umzug}), the directions for which described the confraternity members presenting a tableaux of the \textit{Anna Selbdritt} as well as “Anne in the company of her lineage” (\textit{Anna im Kreise ihres Geschlechts}).\textsuperscript{12} Holy Kinship altars remained in place, visible sites of devotion to not only St. Anne, but an entire grouping of saints accepted as a family.

Even during the mid-sixteenth century, when many confraternities fell into a decline or were disbanded upon introduction of the Reformation, there are still documented instances of activity or even revival within St. Anne confraternities. The confraternity of notaries and nuncios in Koblenz was revived in 1551, following complaints that it had fallen into disarray.\textsuperscript{13} Records from the city council in Hildesheim indicate that on October 18\textsuperscript{th}, 1563, the council declared that Cord Hottelem, notary, should have vicarship of the St. Anne confraternity at the Andreaskirche for his lifetime.\textsuperscript{14} In Münster, city merchants founded a new confraternity dedicated to the mother of the Virgin Mary in 1556, following the end of the Anabaptist regime.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{12} Dörfler-Dierken, \textit{Bruderschaften}, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{13} Dörfler-Dierken, \textit{Bruderschaften}, p. 119.
\textsuperscript{14} Dörfler-Dierken, \textit{Bruderschaften}, p. 107.
\textsuperscript{15} Dörfler-Dierken, \textit{Bruderschaften}, p. 141.
Although continued confraternal activity demonstrates that St. Anne did not vanish as a result of Protestant attacks, there were also clear signs of decline within her cult. The once-blossoming pilgrimage to the *Annenhaupt* in Düren was practically moribund by the beginning of the seventeenth century, in spite of its location within a Catholic territory. As part of the territory of Jülich, the city had a complicated religious and political history in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The War of Guelders Succession had devastated the city in 1543, and the uncertain religious and political situation in the Lower Rhineland had disrupted the pilgrimage cycles around Aachen and Maastricht. Petrus Stommrl, the priest in Düren from 1563-1567, not only dissolved processions to St. Anne’s shrine, he also “abolished the blessing of holy water, herbs, and palm branches, and removed many holy offerings [Weihgaben] from the St. Anne shrine.”\(^{16}\) Oddly, Stommrl ended pilgrimage-related practices in the same year that the new church replacing the one destroyed by the devastating fire during Charles V’s invasion of Jülich in the 1543 Guelders succession war was completed. His tenure as Düren’s priest had begun immediately following the conclusion of the Council of Trent. Taken as a whole, his actions speak less of Protestant incursion into a stronghold of St. Anne’s cult, and more of a concerned priest’s attempts to eradicate what he viewed as superstitious practices. Upon his death from plague, the city council petitioned his successor to re-establish the devotional practices Stommrl had banned. However, the complicated religious and political situation in and around Jülich prevented a widescale resumption of the earlier veneration. A true revival of the cult did not take place until the early seventeenth century, when the Jesuits in Düren made a concerted effort to re-

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\(^{16}\) “…die Prozessionen abschaffte, die Segnung von Weihwasser, Kräutern und Palmzweigen unterließ und manche Weihgaben vom Annaschrein entfernte…” Erwin Gatz, “Zur Dürener Kirchengeschichte,” in Gatz, *St. Anna in Düren*, p. 15
establish the cult of St. Anne as a keystone of reviving the Catholic faith in the Lower Rhineland.

The Council of Trent’s decrees reinforced the validity of the cult of the saints, and instructed clergy to “instruct the faithful diligently in matters relating to intercession and invocation of the saints, the veneration of relics, and the legitimate use of images.”17 Instructing the faithful included combating incorrect behavior, and “cleansing their faith and practice from superstition.”18 These two concepts of encouraging the faithful in venerating the saints and ensuring that this veneration was carried out in a correctly Catholic fashion assumed a fundamental importance in the cult of St. Anne once it began to revive. Catholic criticism of the Trinubium, for example, was aimed at purifying St. Anne’s legend, rather than abolishing it.

II. Pruning the Family Tree

This purification of the family which was constructed around St. Anne was the most significant shift between her late medieval and early modern cult. The Trinubium became just as problematic within Catholicism as it had been for Protestantism. A combination of religious reform and a growing social interest in regulating women and the family left no room for the Holy Kinship. However, unlike Egranus’ grammatical and Scriptural arguments (see Chapter Four), seventeenth-century Catholic authors saw the Trinubium as a moral and religious problem. A woman who married three times, twice at a very advanced age, was clearly of questionable morality. More significantly, the entire concept of a family structure where religious authority revolved around a matriarch rather

than running through normal ecclesiastical channels fit badly with the patterns of control being developed by the Catholic Church and the rulers of Catholic territories. Developing socio-religious mores moved away from a positive view of St. Anne’s three marriages and the concept of a wider family structure as a benefit for those faithful who could count on the intercession of the entire group of saints on their behalf if they venerated the matriarch. Tridentine decrees sought to bring the entire cult of saints under greater control, pruning devotional excess and the cults of unofficial saints. This included “subordinating family chapels, local saint cults, confraternities, and popular religious practices to the linear authority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy,” in order to “reinforce […] all forms of institutionalized central authority at the expense of informal social power—kin, family, voluntary and corporate associations, with their local, dispersed worldviews that had appropriated religion for their own uses.”

While much official (and scholarly) focus has been on the importance of celibacy as a defining marker of Catholicism, as opposed to a Protestant concern with family and household, “Catholic reconfigurations of marriage and sexuality differed from their Protestant counterparts in style rather than in substance.” Early Modern Catholicism also sought to improve and control marriage. The Tametsi decree of the Council of Trent dealt with marriage, re-affirming its sacramental state and seeking to “promote the spiritual and social character of marriage.” Although the strong association of family- and household-oriented piety with Lutheranism made Catholic authorities nervous, a model of appropriate, devout Catholic married life did develop. This included the

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19 Hsia, Renewal, p. 55-56.
20 Strasser, Virginity, p. 175.
21 Joel Harrington notes the similarities between Protestant and Catholic marriage reform goals. Harrington, Marriage and Society, pp. 93-100.
production of specifically Catholic “Mirrors for Marriage” (Ehespiegel), which promoted a gendered domestic piety for both husbands and wives.\textsuperscript{22} Aegidius Albertinus, Bavarian ducal secretary and court librarian in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, produced one such Ehespiegel in 1602 as part of his work on domestic life, the Haußpolecy.\textsuperscript{23} He declared that a wife “must serve [her] husband, rule the household, raise the children, and also additionally serve God the Lord and maintain a pure, unspotted conscience” as well as to “pray dutifully, confess and take communion frequently, and be properly humble and thankful in all things.”\textsuperscript{24}

This growing emphasis on defining religious and social order as intrinsically connected to properly performed gender roles strongly affected the cult of St. Anne. Parallel to the Protestant trends discussed in Chapter Four, a growing perception within Catholicism associated the ideal family with a patriarchal household where the wife and mother was subordinate to her husband, and would enter into a state of properly pious widowhood after his death. The two remarriages of St. Anne became open to interpretation as lustful behavior by a woman who was well past the age for child-bearing rather than a devout attempt to follow the word of God in order to produce holy daughters. In late sixteenth-century Germany, “the old woman with her sunken toothless face [was] both a fearful and comic figure,” sexually voracious, but too old to have

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\textsuperscript{24} “dienen muß dem Mann, regieren das Hauswesen, erziehen die Kinder und doch beynebens Gott dem Herrn dienen und behalten ein reines, unbeflecktes Gewissen,” “fleissig beten, oftermals beichten und communiciren, und in allen dingen fein demütig und dankbar sein,” Albertinus, quoted in Smolinsky, Zeichen, p. 320.
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children, the object of “ruthless” artistic and literary portrayals.\textsuperscript{25}

In Protestantism, St. Anne’s position as a matriarch surrounded by devoted daughters and grandsons could not fit with new conceptions of a properly-organized pious household. For Early Modern Catholicism, the problem with late medieval constructions of St. Anne went beyond domestic concerns. Over the course of the sixteenth century, the parameters of female holiness within Catholicism changed. A near-obsessive concern with female clausturation meant that for women, the “proper model of sanctity was now the obedient, and thoroughly cloistered, nun” rather than a maternal figure.\textsuperscript{26} An increased veneration of the Virgin Mary became a defining characteristic of Catholic identity and practice. However, the Virgin Mary herself was changing to accommodate new Catholic ideas about gender and appropriate female behavior. Faced with Protestant attacks on the cult of the saints and the excesses of late medieval Marian piety, Catholic preachers sought to establish “a more passive and spiritualized Virgin—humble, obedient, prayerful, silent, and devoted to good works while on earth; interceding, still humbly, for the faithful once she reached heaven.”\textsuperscript{27} Mary’s purity also became an increasingly important focus within the Catholic faith. As discussed in earlier chapters, one of the primary reasons St. Anne was accorded such a high status was the belief that the Virgin Mary reflected the qualities of her mother. A Mary defined by humility and obedience could not have a mother defined by active leadership of her family and household. More importantly, the purity of the Mother of


\textsuperscript{27} Ellington, \textit{Sacred Body}, p. 248.
God could not be impugned by a mother whose repeated marriages brought her perilously close to negative stereotypes about lustful older women.

When St. Anne reappeared in Catholic writings in the 1590s, her family had been radically reduced to include a single husband (Joachim) and a single daughter (the Virgin Mary). The new works clearly demonstrate the radical shift within Catholicism’s position on this family of saints since Wimpina’s treatise. Laurentius Cuperus, a Carmelite writing in Antwerp, wrote *Beatae Annae Christi Servatoris nostri aviae* in 1591, following his work a year later with a book on the Virgin Mary. Considering the historical links between the Carmelite order and the cult of St. Anne, it is unsurprising that a Carmelite would compose a text devoted to St. Anne, her life, and genealogy. However, Cuperus’ work marked a radical departure from pre-Tridentine conceptions of St. Anne. The *Trinubium* had been replaced by a new focus on St. Anne’s monogamy.

At this stage of Early Modern Catholicism, the new construction of St. Anne was not entirely settled. Franciscus Haraeus and Valentin Leucht, who would later write his own *Vita* of St. Anne, compiled a collection of saints’ lives in 1593. The entry on St. Anne herself does not refer to any husbands other than Joachim, and moves directly from the birth of the Virgin Mary to St. Anne’s own death and burial in Bethlehem. While St. Joachim does not yet merit an entry of his own, St. Joachim and St. Anne are presented together as the parents of the Virgin Mary in the section dealing with the life of Christ.

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28 Laurentius Cuperus, *Beatae Annae, Christi servatoris nostri aviae maternae, ex optimis et vetustissimis ecclesiae doctoribus studiose collectae genealogia et vita eatae Annae Christi Servatoris nostri aviae*, (Antwerp: 1591); ibid., *Sertum rosaceum piarum precum ad Deiparam Mariam*, (Antwerp: 1592).
29 Dörfler-Dierken, *Verehrung*, p. 15.
30 Franciscus Haraeus and Valentin Leucht, *Vitae SANCTORUM, Das ist, Leben der Fürnembsten Heiligen Gottes: Auff die zwölf Monat deß gantzen Jahrs ordentlich gerichtet*, (Cologne: Johannes Gymnicum im Einhorn, 1593). The text was originally composed in Latin by Haraeus, and then translated into German by Leucht.
There are also no direct references to either of St. Anne’s second and third husbands in this context; only St. Joachim appears. This fits with the trend from the late sixteenth century onwards to place an increasing emphasis on St. Joachim. During the 1620s and 1630s, the first three authors wrote *vitae* specifically dedicated to both saints.  

32 Jacob Polius and Paul Theodor Clisorius, writing in the late 1640s and early 1650s, also titled their works with the names of both St. Anne and St. Joachim, using the juxtaposition to emphasize the relationship between husband and wife rather than placing St. Anne in connection with her wider family. Clisorius uses Anne and Joachim as examples for his “good-hearted Catholic readers,” spending considerable time talking about their life as a married couple. He not only emphasizes that they married for good, godly reasons, but describes their “chastity” in marriage together, comparing it with famous examples of chaste couples in history and making it clear that the chastity between Anne and Joachim was not one of strict abstinence, but rather due to the lack of carnal lust in their relationship. Their charitable works and devotion to God are also presented as a model for readers to follow.

Haraeus and Leucht break between old and new perceptions of St. Anne and the Holy Kinship in the fourth section of the *Vita Christi*, entitled, “Concerning the Brothers of Our Lord Jesus Christ.”  

33 For the authors, the purpose of this section is to emphatically argue that Jesus had no “natural brothers, but was the only son of the Virgin Mary.” In order to prove their argument, they refer to several different sources of authority,

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32 Carolus Stengelius, *Vita et historia SS. Joachim et Annae*, (Vienna: 1621); C. Veron, *Le Triomphe de S. Joachim et de S. Anna* (Doornik: 1632); A. de Boeye, SJ, *Gloriorum magnorum patriarcharum Joachim et Annae Vita*, (Antwerp: 1634). Cited in Dörfler-Dierken, *Verehrung*, p. 15n. Unfortunately, it was impossible to analyze these texts for this study.

33 Hareus and Leucht, “Von den Brüdern unsens Herrn Jesus Christi,” *Vita Christi*, p. 6. The *Vita Christi* is the first section of the larger work containing the lives of the saints.

including Church fathers and Scripture. The Gospel passage they cite is John 19:25: “But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister Mary Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.”  

A hundred years previously, the reference to Mary Cleophas would have been clear. For these authors, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, the primary response seems to have been bafflement mixed with a determination not to lose sight of their main point; namely, that the “brothers of Jesus” referred to in scripture “may be whoever’s sons they might have been, but it is definite that they were not the children of the Virgin Mary.”

This attitude is strongly reminiscent of Martin Luther’s opinions in his final construction of the lineage of Christ. The traditional structure, placing St. Anne at the head of a large family of connected saints which draws together numerous scriptural passages, no longer works in the new religious context. However, larger arguments—that the Virgin Mary had no other children, or that Jesus’ lineage could be fully explained—result in a reliance on the former kinship structure in order to avoid lengthy and convoluted debates.

Writing at the end of the sixteenth century, Hareus and Leucht refused to make a definite statement regarding the Virgin Mary’s potential sibling. By the mid-seventeenth century, Catholic authors had no such hesitations. Two authors from the Rhineland, the Franciscan Jacob Polius and Paul Theodor Clisorius, chaplain at St. Lupus in Cologne, produced major works on St. Anne. These texts, two by Polius in Latin, and one in German by Clisorius, exemplify the fully-developed post-Tridentine view of St. Anne.

35 “Stabant autem iuxta crucem Iesu mater eius et soror mater eius Maria Cleopae et Maria Magdalene,” Vulgate, John 19:25.

36 “Sie seyen aber Söhnen gewest wessen sie gewölt/ so ist es einmal gewiß/ daß sie Marie der Jungfräwen Kinder nit seynd,” Hareus and Leucht, Vita Christi, p. 7.
and her marital status. At the same time, the authors’ detailed refutation of the *Trinubium* and the tenor of their arguments indicate that they were writing within an environment where previous beliefs had not become completely obsolete.

Jacob Polius lived within the epicenter of the revived veneration of St. Anne in the Rhineland. He wrote two extensive works in Latin on the history and cult of St. Anne. His *Historical Exegeticon of St. Anne, Grandmother of Christ, Noble Mother of the Bearer of God, and also how her sacred head was translated to Düren* was published in Cologne in 1640. As the title indicates, Polius provides his audience with two related histories. The general history of St. Anne is combined with a detailed review of St. Anne’s cult in his hometown of Düren a decade after the Jesuits began their intense campaign to revitalize Catholicism in and around Düren by bringing back the veneration of St. Anne. Twelve years later, Polius wrote a second three-hundred page Latin treatise about both St. Anne and St. Joachim. It was dedicated to the prince-archbishop of Fulda, and printed in Würzburg. Where Polius’ first work narrates local devotional history, his second centers on biblical exegesis as proof of St. Anne and St. Joachim’s legends. Polius also devotes significantly more time in the *Historia Sancotorum* to expounding Joachim’s life and lineage. Polius explains this by stating that he has already discussed St. Anne extensively in the *Exegeticon*; a more significant reason may lie in the fact that the prince-archbishop of Fulda at the time was Joachim, count of Gravenegg.

In both the *Exegeticon* and the *Historia Sanctorum*, Polius argues that St. Anne was

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37 Polius, *Exegeticon*.
married only once. He supports his position with references both to Scripture and to the arguments of earlier theologians.

Between Polius’ two treatises, another significant work on St. Anne was printed. In 1648, Paul Theodor Clisorius, chaplain at St. Lupus in Cologne wrote a six-hundred page work entitled Life and Praise of the Most Holy Anne and Joachim, Parents of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary the Mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and also the Miracles of St. Anne. Clisorius dedicated his work to Wolfgang Wilhelm von Pfalz-Neuburg, the Count Palatine of Neuberg and Duke of Jülich-Berg, his son Philipp Wilhelm, and Philipp Wilhelm’s wife Anna Catharina Constantia, a Polish princess who personally venerated St. Anne. As Duke of Jülich, Wolfgang Wilhelm was the ruler of Düren, and thus had a personal connection to the cult of St. Anne. He had secretly converted to Catholicism in 1613 as a condition of his marriage to Magdalena of Bavaria, Duke Maximilian I’s sister. Following his father’s death in 1614, Wolfgang Wilhelm began a program of intensive re-Catholicization within his territories, including Jülich. His invitation to the Jesuits to assume parish duties in Düren in 1627 paved the way for the renewal of the cult of St. Anne in the Rhineland.

In his preface, Clisorius addresses the “good-hearted Catholic reader,” (guthertzigen Catholischen Leser) as his audience and declares that this work is the logical follow-up to an earlier work of his on the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A palm-sized book, written in German and designed for personal use, the Life and Praise

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includes miracles and prayers to St. Anne as well as a retelling of her life. The second half of the *Life and Praise* contains miracle stories and prayers, and the critical discussion of the Trinubium is set within the wider context of “proper” veneration of St. Anne.

Clisorius angrily lambastes those who believe in the Trinubium, and hints darkly that the entire idea was invented by slanderous Protestants, who never miss a chance to insult the Virgin Mary, even through defaming her parents.\(^{42}\) His argument that attacking the Trinubium was, in reality, defending Anne, also appeared as a key point in other Counter-Reformation writings on the subject. After describing Joachim’s pious death, Clisorius engages in a lengthy discussion of how praiseworthy it is for a widow not to marry again, using examples from the Old Testament and even from non-Christian sources. Clearly, St. Anne, praiseworthy in every respect, would not have gone against common morals and married a second, let alone a third, time. Clisorius declares the fact that St. Anne remained a widow following Joachim’s death “A general opinion and statement of the holy Fathers and Church teachers.”\(^{43}\) This is a far cry from St. Colette’s vision of two centuries earlier! Rather than being a model for an active and holy married lay state, Anne has been fitted into the traditional female pattern of holy widowhood.

Instead of showing St. Anne as the venerable matriarch of a brood of holy progeny, Clisorius includes a chapter showing how Anne was lovingly incorporated into the nuclear family of her only daughter, living harmoniously and lovingly with her son-in-law and grandson. The idea of a patriarchal nuclear family also imbues the earlier chapters of the book: until Joachim’s death, Anne and Joachim are consistently referred

together as the “Blessed married couple.”\textsuperscript{44} The only sense in which they are responsible for a larger family is their status as “Spiritual mother and father of all people who love Christ.”\textsuperscript{45} This spiritual parentage is invoked to indicate why these two saints should be venerated, and defended against Protestant attacks which focus on the lack of information about Anne and Joachim in Holy Scripture.

Although Polius and Clisorius both excoriate the \textit{Trinubium} and the Holy Kinship, their tone and method differ in keeping with their audience. Polius, writing in Latin, constructs an argument that relies heavily on Scriptural and theological sources as proof. The intended audience for Polius’ work would, presumably, have been the Franciscans, Jesuits and other clergy of Düren, and the Prince-Archbishop of Fulda along with his court. Writing for a Latin-literate, educated, highly religious audience, Polius is as careful and as detailed in his use of Scripture as the medieval writers who used some of the same passages to prove the relationships between members of the Holy Kinship.

Clisorius’ address to the “good-hearted Catholic reader,” as well as his use of the vernacular, attest to his expected audience. His overall writing style, and his tendency to engage in chatty discourses on current events, help to further classify the \textit{Life and Praise} as a text aimed at a broader lay audience. The rhetorical strategies Clisorius employs to persuade this audience that the \textit{Trinubium} is—and always has been—a fallacy differ markedly from those chosen by Polius. Rather than quote extensively from Scripture, Clisorius accuses Protestants of poisoning the well of Catholicism in order to undermine its credibility and attack the purity of the Virgin Mary’s family. To prove to his audience that St. Anne remained a widow, he compares her with the examples of other virtuous

\textsuperscript{44} “hochgebenedeyten Eheleute,” Clisorius, \textit{Leben und Lob, passim}.

\textsuperscript{45} “aller Christ liebender Menschengeistliche Mutter und Vatter,” Clisorius, \textit{Leben und Lob}, p. 3.
women.  

Even though the *Trinubium*, and the late medieval Holy Kinship, were anathema to Polius and Clisorius, the scriptural issues behind its original creation remained. St. Anne herself was still not in the canonical Gospels, a fact of greater importance after the Council of Trent’s decrees on the cult of the saints. In order to solve these problems, both authors construct elaborate family trees around St. Anne, which they claim authority for on the basis of Scripture, much as Martin Luther had claimed authority for his own construction of Christ’s lineage.  

This includes the use of scriptural references which had previously served as proof of the Holy Kinship in order to debunk it. The two family trees overlap significantly; however, they are not identical to one another.

In Clisorius’ version of St. Anne’s *Geschlecht*, her father is named Mathan, and is referred to in the Gospel of Matthew (Figure 2). Her mother is named Mary. Mathan and Mary have four children: three daughters, named Mary, Soba, and Anne, and a son named James. The oldest daughter, Mary, is the mother of Salome, the midwife who attends the Virgin Mary. Soba, the middle daughter, is the mother of Elizabeth, and the grandmother of John the Baptist. St. Anne is still Elizabeth’s aunt, but Elizabeth’s mother has been given a different name. James becomes the father of Cleophas and Joseph, who later becomes the husband of the Virgin Mary. Some aspects of the structure Clisorius proposes echo pre-Reformation ideas. Cleophas and Joseph are still brothers, and Anne’s older sister is the mother of Elizabeth, albeit with a different name. However, the additional siblings ascribed to St. Anne, the new names for her parents, and the

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46 The selection of the vernacular, the dedication to Anna Catherine Constantia, the use of female examples as proof, and the explicit discussions of proper motherhood present within the text may indicate that Clisorius was writing a text about St. Anne specifically for women.

connection to the apocryphal midwife Salome are all new inventions, which he justifies through copious references to Scriptural and patristic authority. By creating this new network of saints, Clisorius achieves his goal of establishing a lineage for St. Anne which makes her an appropriately virtuous mother for the Virgin Mary. The establishment of an additional kinship link between the Virgin Mary and Joseph also underscores the chaste nature of their marriage, buttressing the perpetual virginity of Mary.

The family tree charted by Polius differs from that of Clisorius in several respects. First, he acknowledges that Anne’s parents are given different names in different sources. In the *Historia Sanctorum*, he even mentions Stollanus and Emerentiana as the other names.\(^48\) Citing sources from the Greek church and the early episcopal martyr St. Hippolytus as his authorities, Polius also argues that St. Anne’s parents were “Mathan, a priest, and Mary of the tribe of Judah.”\(^49\) They had three daughters, Mary, Soba, and Anne, but no sons. Cleophas enters into the family tree as the husband of Anne’s sister Mary. Their daughter is then named Mary Cleophas, after her parents. She marries Alphaeus, and they have five children: Mary Salome, Judas Thaddeus, Simon, Joseph the Just, and James the Lesser. The pairing of Mary Cleophas with Alphaeus is thus maintained in Polius’ interpretation of St. Anne’s lineage; however, Mary Cleophas is Anne’s niece rather than her daughter. The mother-daughter relationship instead is between Mary Cleophas and Mary Salome, both Scriptural figures. Mary Cleophas keeps her four sons, but James the Greater and John the Evangelist are no longer part of the *Geschlecht* constructed around St. Anne. Anne’s second sister, Soba, marries a priest, and bears one daughter, Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist. Anne, of course, marries

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48 Polius, *Historia Sanctorum*, p. 27.
Joachim, and they have “the Virgin Mary, who bore Jesus Christ, son of God and Savior of the world, through the Holy Spirit.” Unlike Clisorius’ attempts to make both Cleophas and Joseph blood relatives of the Virgin Mary through her mother, Polius makes Cleophas Anne’s brother-in-law, and does not mention Joseph at all.

Both Clisorius and Polius go to convoluted lengths to reconfigure the genealogy of St. Anne into an acceptable form for seventeenth-century Catholicism. The key aim of this reconfiguration is proving that St. Anne had one husband and one daughter. Mary was “singularly chosen to be the daughter of Anne, and Anne to be the mother of Mary.” Other aspects of her lineage, such as the number of siblings or nephews she had, can vary. However, St. Anne’s marital morality must demonstrate that she was worthy to bear the Mother of God. The idea of remarriage had become incompatible with the holiness needed for the Immaculate Conception.

Figure 3: St. Anne's Family Tree as Described by Clisiorius
Figure 4: St. Anne’s Family Tree as Described by Polius
III. Mothers and Daughters

Deprived of her official status as grandmother to a multiplicity of saints, Anne’s role as Mary’s mother became her strongest argument for sainthood. The seventeenth-century texts under discussion in this study use this role as an opportunity to demonstrate ideal motherhood to their audience. A longstanding belief that daughters grow up to emulate their mothers, and that mothers in particular are accordingly responsible for the moral education of their daughters, is carried across multiple generations. By emphasizing that St. Anne was raised properly by her own mother, and was thus pure enough to bear the Virgin Mary, who she in turn raised to be pure enough to bear Jesus, Polius and Clisorus create a powerful model of the importance of raising children properly. This is especially true for Clisorus, writing in the vernacular for an aristocratic and lay audience.

While St. Anne’s qualities are evident from birth, Clisorus also describes how her parents carefully work to cultivate their daughter’s qualities of holiness. Just as St. Anne is a model daughter, her parents exemplify the correct way to raise a child, in particular one who they believe to be holy. In order to ensure that this holiness is developed properly, they send Anne to be raised in the Temple, with the women who live there, devoting themselves to prayer, which Clisorus describes as a traditional practice “so that such daughters in this manner were away from the common danger of the world, and would increase in good habits and virtues more with age, [they] would thus stay there under the care and teaching of these women.”

The Virgin Mary’s childhood in the Temple had been part of her legend for centuries. Giving her mother a parallel childhood,

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52 “damit solche Toechtern auff diese Weiß auß der gemeinen Gefahr der Welt weren und moechten mit dem Alter desto besser zuhemen in gutten Sitten und Tugenden bliebe also daselbst unter Zucht und Lehr dieser Frawenpersonen” Clisorus, Leben und Lob, p. 24.
in a Temple environment described in language reminiscent of a Christian convent, was a new element.\textsuperscript{53} By imposing post-Tridentine Catholic perceptions about maintaining female virtue through claustration on a Biblical setting, Clisorius validates contemporary practices and adds legitimacy to his portrayal of the past for an audience who would expect specific behaviors from holy women.

The Benedictine abbot Johann Trithemius, scholar and early promoter of St. Anne’s cult (see Chapter One), provided more source material for both of these mid-seventeenth century writers’ discussions of St. Anne’s personal qualities. Trithemius’ late fifteenth-century work on St. Anne was useful to early modern Catholic promoters of her cult for several reasons; first, it dated to the earliest days of her veneration in German-speaking territory, giving it an aura of authority. Second, Trithemius makes no mention of the Trinubium in his work, rendering his praise of St. Anne free of anything that might make it objectionable in the new religious climate. Trithemius’ work on the saint continued to be a standard source for her cult. A German translation of Trithemius was published in 1700, “translated from the Latin for the greater encouragement and increase of Christian fervor.”\textsuperscript{54} Through this translation into the vernacular, one of the seminal texts in the late medieval cult of St. Anne could reach a wider audience.

Both Clisorius and Polius use the same quote from Trithemius to praise St. Anne as a model of proper behavior, describing her as

\begin{quote}
...serious in conduct, charming in appearance, sensible in
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{53} Clisorius claims that his source for this tradition was Jacob Polius; whether this was in fact the case is unclear.

tone, well-mannered in speech, holy in her deeds, observing God’s law day and night, she was constant in faith, strong in hope, filled with a double love of God and [her] neighbor. She actively practiced prayer, waited with great longing on the arrival of the LORD. She was honorable in all [her] works, seldom in society, humble in her heart. She never traipsed around through the streets and alleys, never engaged in useless gossip with her neighbors, did not let herself be found at dances and public shows, [but] learned from her childhood on to stay at home. Practiced working with her hands; kept good peace and unity with everybody; never did anybody wrong, insulted nobody with words or actions. She was seldom found out among people; [she] did not sit in alleys with chattering females, hating the speech of those who malfunctioned others, but rather with all of her effort she guarded her heart so that she might never sin through speech.55

This description makes the young St. Anne a model for young women to emulate. Clisorius makes clear that he is holding St. Anne up as a model for proper conduct by declaring that “holy Anne never inflicted the slightest speck of shame upon her lineage (the way that many daughters do nowadays), but rather much more greatly decorated and honored it with her divinely pleasing life and habits.”56 In his discussion of the Virgin Mary’s childhood, he draws direct parallels to the religious education of Catholic children.

56 “Die H. Anna hat neimalen ihrem Geschlecht (gleich als etliche Toechter heutiges Tags thun) den geringsten Schandfleck angethan sonder viel mehr dasselbig mit ihrem Gottseligen Leben und Wandelen hochgeziert und geehrt.” Clisorius, Leben und Lob, p. 29
After the birth of her daughter, St. Anne exemplifies the behavior of a Catholic mother. Clisorius’ *Life and Praise* gives the most detailed description of what such proper behavior entailed. This includes a seven-page discussion on why wet nurses are bad, and why women should nurse their own children, because “If the wet-nurse is a depraved female, then who knows what the child will suck into itself along with the depraved milk in terms of evil habits and unvirtuous inclinations.” Part of St. Anne’s behavior as an ideal mother is to nurse her own child:

This deeply loving mother let her daughter drink from her milk, and did not deny her the nutrition ordered to her by God and Nature, as many hard and unmerciful females do, solely so that they don’t have too much trouble with the children, interrupt their sleep, and have to restrain themselves from many things due to the milk; they also complain that because of it [nursing] they lose their tenderness, subtlety, and softness, and whatever else they use to make themselves beautiful.”

While St. Anne as a model mother is a recurring theme in Catholic devotion, the direct contrast of her behavior with less ideal parents was not present in pre-Reformation texts. Clisorius is very specifically addressing his contemporaries, and using St. Anne to promote ideal behavior in the real world. His descriptions neatly encapsulate the different stages of a woman’s life, as perceived in early modern Europe. St. Anne is an obedient and humble daughter, a chaste wife, a caring mother who personally ensures her child’s physical and spiritual well-being, and ends her days as a pious widow, dedicated to the

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57 “Ist dann die Seugammen ein lasterhafftiges Weib/ so sauget das Kind in sich hinein sampt der lasterhafften Milch/ weiß nicht was für ein böse Unarth/ vnd vntugendliche Neygungen.” Clisorius, *Leben und Lob*, pp. 202-203.

memory of her husband and to God. Her reward for this life of virtue is “the crown of old age,” the “honor and praise of all grandparents”; namely, seeing the holy lives of her descendants.\footnote{“Der alten Kron seynd fromme Kindskinder,” “…der Vorältern Ehr und Lob stehet in dem heyligen Leben ihrer Nachkommlingen.” Clisorius, \textit{Leben und Lob}, p. 30.}

\textbf{IV. Public Piety: The Revival of Düren}

The writings of Jacob Polyius and Theodor Clisorius became seminal texts for the further growth of the cult of St. Anne from the end of the Thirty Years’ War through the Baroque period. Both authors came from the Rhineland, one of the medieval heartlands of St. Anne devotion and a center of renewed veneration since the 1620s. This renewed culture of devotion to St. Anne would not have been possible without the work of Duke Wilhelm Wolfgang and the Jesuits he invited into his territories as part of his re-Catholicization campaign. The renewal of popular devotional practices at St. Anne’s shrine at Düren played a key role in local Jesuit strategy; tying their work to a pre-Reformation site of devotion leant gravitas and historical authority to their efforts towards reviving Catholicism in general.

The Jesuits were not alone in realizing that a medieval shrine could become a focal point for spreading post-Tridentine Catholicism. At the same time as Petrus Stommrl was acting to stamp out pilgrimage-related practices he viewed as superstitious, Ingolstadt theologian Martin Eisengrein began preaching and publishing on the values of shrines and pilgrimage within the Catholic faith.\footnote{Soergel, \textit{Wondrous}, p. 107.} He was inspired to do this after traveling to a shrine and seeing the continuing devotion of the faithful. In his 1564 sermon, \textit{A Christian Sermon Concerning the Reasons Shrines are Held in Such High Esteem in the Catholic Church}, Eisengrein enumerated the reasons why veneration of
saints was a good and useful practice, approved of by God through the presence of miracles and serving to inspire the faithful. He attacks Protestant criticism as inspired by Satan, who “uses these artifices [heresies] when he wants to sow contempt in the people for something in which they have put their trust.” Following this sermon, Eisengrein actively worked to promote the Marian shrine at Altötting, where a decline in the trust of the faithful had led to a corresponding decline in pilgrimages and shrine visits. His efforts were resoundingly successful.

The revival of Düren as an important center of St. Anne devotion played a similar role in the Rhineland. The Jesuits assumed responsibility for the Düren parish in 1629, after two years of successful work within the city. Their wide-ranging plans for reviving Catholicism in and around Düren exemplify a post-Tridentine style of establishing confessional identity through encouraging a well-controlled and active lay piety under official direction. This included catechism instruction, regular sermons, an emphasis on confession, and the establishment of lay religious organizations. However, the Jesuits also sought to encourage “customs of popular piety” (volksfrommen Brauchtums), through processions and pilgrimages to Düren’s St. Anne shrine from neighboring villages. By reviving the public cult of St. Anne, the Jesuits sought to create a public, Catholic identity, expressed through organized communal practices.

In other parts of Germany, new centers of devotion to St. Anne were beginning to develop. An early sign of this renewed devotion to St. Anne took place even before the Jesuits had begun their work in Düren. In 1610, following a miraculous healing, the St.

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64 Gatz, “Zur Dürener Kirchengeschichte” in Gatz, St. Anna in Düren, p. 16.
Anne chapel Zum Heiligen Brunn was founded near the Bavarian village of Neukirchen beim Heiligen Blut. Neunkirchen was an existing Marian pilgrimage site, famous for its Black Madonna. The combination of a Marian shrine with a St. Anne shrine was not unique; in fact, Rothkrug’s analysis of pilgrimage sites and religious change noted that Bavaria showed a tendency to develop clusters of shrines, as pilgrimage locations sprang up in the vicinity of previously-established holy sites in a kind of religious accretion, creating a “panoply of celestial protection.” In 1700, a new St. Anne chapel was built, a clear sign of the continuing active status of this site and its pilgrimage.

The new shrine at Zum Heiligen Brunn, and the regrowth of devotion to St. Anne in and around Düren, prefigured post-war developments within her cult in their mixture of popular devotion and officially-sponsored practices, newly-established shrines, and revived older sites. Pilgrimages, processions, and other public displays of religious fervor had been associated with uncontrolled popular excess during the decades prior to the Reformation. The decline of saints’ shrines in the face of Protestant criticism, as well as Tridentine proclamations against superstition and incorrect practices, seemed to establish a divide between official practices and the world of processions and pilgrimages. Such a dichotomy, however, is not only an oversimplification, but ignores the importance of religious orders (particularly the Jesuits) and member of the Church hierarchy to the rejuvenation of processions and pilgrimages in Catholic areas of Northern Europe.

Following the trauma of the Thirty Years’ War, German Catholicism entered into a time of growth and expansion as large numbers of new chapels and shrines were

founded, and astonishing, ornate constructions sprang up to express the spirit and piety of the Catholic faithful. It was during this time that the revived veneration of St. Anne reached its zenith. While the Baroque cult of St. Anne claimed historical continuity with her medieval cult, the mother of Mary as they perceived her was largely the creation of Early Modern Catholicism.
Chapter Six:
St. Anne’s Baroque Revival

From the end of the Thirty Years’ War to the mid-eighteenth century,

...German Catholics of all social classes participated in creating and sustaining Baroque Catholicism. This was a religious synthesis that incorporated the high culture of Baroque literature and architecture and the more popular aspects of a highly developed and diverse religious practice. Baroque Catholicism was a religion of pilgrimages and processions, confraternities and rural missions, frequent services, and a dense liturgical year: It was a dynamic synthesis, with a constantly shifting mix of devotional practices, and it was often highly regional and even local in its practice and institutions.¹

The cult of St. Anne provides an excellent example of the “dynamic synthesis” described by Forster. A resurgent Catholicism brought about a revival of the cult of St. Anne, with older elements continuing to echo through devotion to St. Anne. While post-Tridentine elements formed a base for her veneration, Baroque interpretations of St. Anne were much more fluid in their establishment of her legend’s parameters and definitions of her patronage than the seventeenth century had been. Even within a single collection of eighteenth-century sermons, St. Anne could be presented in vastly different, and sometimes contradictory, ways.

From a patron for middle- and upper-class urban residents, St. Anne had become a saint for rural families and the Catholic aristocracy. This dichotomy is most clearly

¹Forster, Catholic Germany, p. 4
visible in works of art. Ignaz Günther’s emotional, dramatically oversized St. Anne and St. Joachim statues gazed heavenwards in elaborate altars, while simplified, extremely stylized Anna Selbdritt figures were visible in churches, in votive pictures left by grateful pilgrims, and even painted on wardrobes or etched into beer mugs. In public processions and festivals, both the “elite” and “popular” levels of society participated in veneration St. Anne. The audience of the nine sermons delivered in 1728 by ecclesiastical luminaries at the anniversary festival of the St. Anne shrine at Gotteszell included high-ranking clergy and nobles from Bohemia, Bavaria, and Austria, as well as the inhabitants of the surrounding villages who made the pilgrimage to their local St. Anne shrine every year.

This chapter will examine the Baroque cult of St. Anne in German- and Dutch-speaking Catholic Europe through the mid-eighteenth century, using a range of vitae, devotional texts, works of art, and sources from pilgrimage sites. In order to illuminate continuities and changes within the cult of St. Anne, the main focus here will be on revisiting the primary aspects of St. Anne’s late medieval cult discussed in the first three chapters of this study: the Holy Kinship, St. Anne as a mother, and pilgrimage shrines and confraternities. The removal of the Holy Kinship from Catholic belief constitutes the most significant alteration in the cult of St. Anne, and demonstrates the impact of new ideas about marriage and women’s social roles. An increased focus on the eternal purity of Mary defined the importance of St. Anne’s physical motherhood in conjunction with the Immaculate Conception, while greater emphasis on a mother’s responsibility for her daughter’s moral education led to an emphasis on St. Anne’s spiritual motherhood and role in bringing her daughter up properly. Revived or newly-founded confraternities demonstrate continuities and social shifts evident in their membership records and
activities.

St. Anne shrines and pilgrimages formed the bedrock of her cult in the Baroque period. This was especially true in Bavaria, where popular piety combined with a strongly Catholic state to create a sacral landscape dominated by shrines and churches. Lionel Rothkrug, in his analysis of over 1,000 German pilgrimage sites in the late medieval and early modern period, found a distinct correlation between the density of sites and an area’s tendency to remain Catholic or become Protestant. In the north, where there were very few late medieval public sites of popular devotion, Lutheranism took hold. In the south, where a dense network of medieval shrines, pilgrimage sites, and other sacred locations existed, Catholicism remained the dominant faith. Although many points of Rothkrug’s analysis are open to criticism, his observations regarding the presence of popular devotional sites, many of which operated outside of the normal parish structure, and the strength of Catholic belief, are valuable tools for investigating the different strata of faith and practice across the early modern period.

Baroque Catholicism involved more than merely restoring an earlier set of beliefs. It was strongly marked by over a century of reform efforts, war, and hardening confessional boundaries. At the same time, the construction of a Catholic identity in the face of Protestantism necessitated an insistence on heritage and continuity within the Christian religion. Just as Protestants defended themselves against accusations of novelty (see Chapter Four), so Catholics stressed the unchanging nature of the true faith. Tridentine reforms and later changes were not altering Christianity, they were re-forming long-established structures that had degenerated. This perception also underlay Baroque

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conceptualizations of St. Anne. The Virgin Mary and her cult had become increasingly important as a hallmark of Catholic faith since the mid-sixteenth century; this included a greater focus on the Immaculate Conception. Through her role as Mary’s mother, St. Anne played an essential role as a guarantor of Catholicism’s truth. This included confirming the consistency of Catholic beliefs across the centuries. Aspects of St. Anne’s legend that no longer fit within Baroque Catholicism were not recognized as having represented widespread belief during an earlier era. This phenomenon is most evident in the Baroque treatment of the Holy Kinship and St. Anne’s wider family.

I. Blood-Friendship and Kinship

By the eighteenth century, the entire idea of the Trinubium and the Holy Kinship had faded. There is no sense in the texts from that period that post-Tridentine beliefs regarding St. Anne represent any kind of a change; unlike seventeenth-century attempts to defend St. Anne against the concept that she could have been married more than once, or had any children other than Mary, eighteenth-century Catholic texts simply avoid the issue altogether. St. Anne in the Baroque piety of the eighteenth century is a model of pious Catholic motherhood, her virtue proving the truth of the Immaculate Conception (and vice versa). Anne and Joachim were a happily married couple, and after his death, she lived in a state of pious widowhood, eventually being incorporated into a properly patriarchal household headed by her son-in-law. In at least one text, the author implies that Anne and Joachim died at the same time, in the presence of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.³

However, a set of devotional prayers from 1740 provide evidence regarding the tenacity of perceived connections between saints. A “Prayer to the most holy Blood-Friendship of Jesus Christ,” (“Gebeth zu der allerheiligsten Bluts-Freundschafft JEsu Christi”) begins with the Holy Trinity, followed by the Virgin Mary, Joseph, and then Anne and Joachim. The prayer then lists John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, both James the Greater and James the Lesser, Judaeus Thaddeus, Zacharias, Simeon, Cleophas, and Joseph the Just, calling them “glorious men and citizens of Heaven,” who are asked to carry “all my sighs, pleas, and longings with your hands which please God to the presence of God,” 4 After listing these men, there is a prayer to “you holy women” Elizabeth, Maria Cleopha, Maria Salome, and Maria Joannis.5 In short, practically the entire Holy Kinship is being presented, still connected as part of a “Bluts-Freundschaft.” The concept of a blood connection between Anne and this list of holy people is made even clearer in the next section of the prayer:

Oh all of you altogether holy branches of the great family tree (Stammen-baum) of Jesus! Let me experience the fruit of your intercession, and make me a participant in that grace which incorporates you into the relations (Verwandschaft) of the Son of God/ and thus has made [you] near participants in that God-worthiest blood.6

Although the “entire lineage (Geschlecht) of Christ” has been defined as the five title figures and prayed to as a group throughout the text, the former members of the Holy Kinship are still being defined in this text in terms of a connection to the “great family tree of Jesus,” part of the “relations of the Son of God.” The parameters of a

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6b “O ihr alle insgesamt heilige Zweigen des grossen Stammen-Baums JEsu! lasset mich erfahren die Früchten euerer Fürbitt/ und machet mich tehilhaftig jener Gnaden/ die euch in die Verwandschaft des Sohns Gottes einverleibet./ und dessen GOTT werthisten Bluts also nahend tehilhaftig gemacht hat.” Fitzky, Andacht, pp. B11v-B12r.
*Freundschafft* are not made clear; nor does the author engage in the elaborate genealogical re-construction Clisorius felt compelled to do. It is, in short, not clear who in this list is related to whom and exactly how. However, it is St. Anne who is addressed as the linchpin, with the words “Oh holiest Mother Anne, together with your all your friends and relations, so that what you by blood still now enjoy in the heavenly Fatherland, I may receive in spirit.” The centrality of Anne, rather than Mary or Joseph, as well as the specific range of both male and female figures presented as members of the *Freundschafft*, strongly argues in favor of this representing a continuation of Holy Kinship-related beliefs.⁷

Just as Fitzky’s *Prayers* contains a tantalizing reference to St. Anne’s *Blut-Freundschafft*, an intriguing comment within Franz Xaver Prestele’s “Praise Speech,” *(Lobrede)*, a sermon delivered in Schondorf in Bavaria and published in 1767, indicates that belief about the Holy Kinship had not vanished completely. Discussing St. Anne’s entry in the *Acta Sanctorum*, Prestele remarks that “soon the holy Eagle, soon the holy Apostle James, the holy John the Evangelist, soon other various saints, their foster children (andere verschiedene Heilige ihren Pflegkindern), appeared, and reminded them, that they should assiduously make themselves worthy of the powerful intercession of holy Anne through a fervent veneration”⁸ The “other saints, their foster children” themselves are not mentioned. However, the two names given were both grandchildren of St. Anne in earlier permutations of her family tree. This strongly indicates the continuing

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⁸ “*bald die heiligen Engel, bald der heilige Apostel Jacobus, der heilige Johannes der Evangelist, bald andere verschiedene Heilige ihren Pflegkindern erschienen, und solche angemahnet, daß sie sich durch eine eifrige Verehrung der mächtigen Fürbitte der heiligen Anna würdig zu machen beflissen seyn sollen.*” Prestele, *Lobrede*, p. 11-12.
presence of concepts of relationship and family revolving around St. Anne, even in a post-Tridentine sermon where Mary was emphatically defined as her only daughter and Joachim her only husband.

The second segment of Prestele’s sermon elucidates the power of St. Anne’s intercession in Heaven, and follows many of the lines of argument established during the Middle Ages. The source of St. Anne’s exceptional power in Heaven is tied to her blood relationship to both Christ and the Virgin Mary—just as Christ will not deny his mother anything, so the Virgin won’t deny her mother anything either, out of filial piety. At this point, Prestele engages in another Marian digression, comparing Mary to Esther in the Old Testament, and God to Ahsericus, to show the astonishing mercy of God towards Mary and humanity. As in the earlier discussion of the Song of Solomon, St. Anne is not mentioned in this section of the sermon. However, this time Prestele discusses his Marian digression as a necessary explanation for the astonishing power of St. Anne in Heaven. Put plainly, Prestele explains, “the intercession of the holy Anne can do anything in Heaven; for the holy Anne can do anything with Mary, Mary can do anything with her holy son, [and] this one desires nothing in vain from the Heavenly Father, in whose power is the whole of Creation,” all due to the fact that children are taught to hold to the commandment to honor their parents. St. Anne is at the base of this elaborate pyramid of supplication.

While Baroque Catholicism is primarily associated with public expressions of faith, and communal activities, there was also a growing emphasis on the household as a site of piety and devotion. This included an increased interest in the Holy Family as a

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9 “die Fürbitte der heiligen Anna vermag alles in dem Himmel: dann die heilige ANna vermag alles bey Maria, Maria vermag alles bey ihrem göttlichen Sohn, dieser begehret nichts vergeblich von dem himmlischen Vatter, in dessen Gewalt die ganze Allmacht stehet” Prestele, Lobrede, p. 11.
model. For investigations into the cult of St. Anne, the eighteenth century definition of
the “Holy Family” is of particular interest, as it marks a point of transition between the
sixteenth century conception of the Holy Kinship and the nineteenth century restriction of
the Holy Family to a group consisting solely of the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, and Jesus,
without the presence of St. Anne. The redefinition of the Holy Family became so
complete that contemporary historians automatically assume that references to this term
encompass only the nuclear family of Jesus, even though “this term was not used in this
definitive sense until the end of the eighteenth century.”

For eighteenth-century Catholics, the Holy Family as a model of domestic piety
could also include St. Anne. Johann Norbert Fitzky’s “Prayers to the holiest persons
Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Joachim, and Anna, through which very often great miraculous
mercy and help in all situations and emergencies has been granted,” presents St. Anne as
part of a well-regulated married household, full of “heartfelt love and all joy and love
which [the family members] had with each other on earth.” This harmonious familial
unit also contains very specific roles for each of its members, and devotees should
recognize and address them each accordingly. Beginning with Jesus as the highest ruler
and Mary as “an adult woman,” the familial components are elucidated with Joseph as a
father, Joachim as “an adult” and then St. Anne. Since Mary has not been defined as a
mother, one might expect to find St. Anne fulfilling that role within the family. While
motherhood is presented as one of St. Anne’s defining qualities, she is further defined as

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10 “…obwohl diese Bezeichnung bis zum ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert nicht in dieser eindeutigen Weise
gebraucht wurde.” Hildegard Erlemann, Die Heilige Familie: Ein Tugendvorbild der Gegenreformation im
Wandel der Zeit: Kult und Ideologie, Schriftenreihe zur religiösen Kultur, (Münster: Ardey-Verlag, 1993),
p. 15.
11 “euren süssen Nahmen/ und ... euere hertzliche Liebe/ und ... alle Freude und Liebe/ so ihr mit einander
“a protector of household cares and business,” a theme repeated in the later prayer

And to you, holy Anne, mother of the Bearer of God, with humble heart, in great trust, as a protector, I give all of my household cares, arrange things for the best, and request God’s blessing.  

An echo of earlier beliefs that St. Anne is responsible for material wealth is visible in her responsibility for business, but the overwhelming focus is on a role within the household, and her ability to protect against domestic misfortune. This more household-oriented St. Anne fit with eighteenth-century perceptions of the appropriate division of gender roles; in a sermon preached in 1745, Bavarian preacher Jordan von Wasserburg explained,

To the man belongs the work on the land and in the fields outside; the woman, however, must carefully carry out her housework at home, and this is certainly as important as the other; therefore, they are wrong who criticize or mock women’s work, saying, it is nothing but idle frivolity and a waste of time. Indeed! What would the men have to wear, what would they have to eat, when the women didn’t do their spinning and sewing, washing and laundry, cooking and baking and other things?

The domestic role of women is not perceived negatively here; nor was St. Anne’s role as a household saint seen as a negative aspect— quite the reverse. However, it demonstrates how perceptions and applications of St. Anne within Baroque Catholicism reflect societal gender norms.

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II. St. Anne, Mother of Mary

The elevated status of the Virgin Mary in Baroque Catholicism meant that St. Anne’s physical and moral motherhood achieved increasing importance. Prestele’s “praise speech” (*Lobrede*) starts by establishing Anne as a woman and mother, two categories which he presents as practically overlapping. This focus on Anne as the bearer of Mary dovetailed with early modern beliefs about women’s identities as determined by their biological function as bearers of children, and their moral function as nurturers. Continuing his argument that St. Anne is similar to, albeit better than, previous mothers, Prestele uses examples to show that everything good in various Old Testament mothers is to be found in St. Anne. Unlike the Protestant preacher Goetze, who uses the similarities between the stories of St. Anne and Hanna to criticize St. Anne as fictional, Prestele uses them to support his arguments, declaring that God has always given his true servants a holy mother. How much truer must it be, then, that the Virgin Mary must have been given an exceptionally holy mother? In fact, according to Prestele, St. Anne combines all the best qualities of everything praiseworthy or admirable about Old Testament mothers, examples of which he then lists. Once again, we see St. Anne serves as a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. She surpasses all of the previous mothers, and is in turn surpassed only by her daughter. As Alphonso Reisner declares in his sermon at Gotteszell, “Mary the mother of God surpasses all mothers; the grandmother of God

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15 Soergel discusses a similar argument in his work on Altötting, looking at pilgrimage books and the Protestant/Catholic debates about saints and miracles, tracing how Protestants claimed similarities detracted from believability while Catholics claimed they served as proof of holiness. Soergel, *Wondrous*, passim.

16 “Und wir sollten zweifeln, ob GOtt Marie eine mit aller Heiligkeit reichlichst gezierte Mutter werde gegeben haben?” Prestele, *Lobrede*, p. 7 (B3)
surpasses all grandmothers.”\textsuperscript{17} Prestele compares Anne’s womb to the Garden of Eden, declaring that, if God decorated Paradise so beautifully for the unfortunate Eve, how much more beautiful was Anne’s womb, which held Mary, “the incomparably better Eve,” who received life there and lived there for nine months.\textsuperscript{18} Anne’s womb is the ultimate location of her holiness, not only blessed and “decorated” by God, but also protected:

The entire Holy Trinity closed this garden of paradise; the power of the Father strengthened it against the attack of the enemy, the wisdom of the Son against his guile, the goodness of the Holy Ghost against his assiduous evil.\textsuperscript{19}

St. Anne thus becomes a \textit{hortus conclusus} for the nine months of her pregnancy, closed off to evil influences by the very same power which had originally enabled Mary’s conception. Mary herself is subsequently described using the metaphor of the Ark of the Covenant, her body holding Jesus the way the Ark contained the Ten Commandments. Drawing on the example of Obededom, whose house was blessed because the Ark rested there for three months, Prestele extrapolates that Anne was even more blessed, because Mary, “the living and most holy Ark of the new Law,” rested within her for three times that amount, and lived in her house for three years.\textsuperscript{20} This is similar to the Fitky \textit{Andacht}’s reference to Anne as a “vessel of good graces,” immediately after addressing her as the mother of the Bearer of God. The role of both women is essentially passive—they are vessels rather than agents. They contain that which is holy within their bodies,

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  \textsuperscript{17} “Maria die Mutter GOttes übertriffet alle Mütter: die Groß-Mutter GOTtes Anna übertriffet alle Groß-
  Mutter,” Alphonso Reisner, “Bis Tertium Felix Monasterium,” in \textit{Lob- und Ehren-Predig bey 8tägiger
  Fest-Begängnus in d. 1. Saeculo, nachdem die höltz. Bildnuß der seel. Mutter Annae in Gotteszell mitten
  unter den wütenden Flammen unverletzt verblieben}, (Straubing: 1730), p. 277. \\
  \textsuperscript{18} “die unvergleichlich beßre Eva,” Prestele, \textit{Lobrede}, p. 4 \\
  \textsuperscript{19} “Disen Paradeißgarten hat verschlossen die ganze heiligste Dreyfaltigkeit, die Macht des Vaters hat ihn
  bevestigt wider den Anfall des Feindes, die Weisheit des Sohnes wider dessen Arglist, die Güte des
  heiligen Geistes wider dessen beflißene Bosheit,” Prestele, \textit{Lobrede}, p. 4. \\
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but both Mary and Jesus are seen as whole and complete within their respective mothers. St. Anne’s physical motherhood is no longer defined as having contributed the material from which the Virgin Mary’s body was created. Instead, the emphasis is on the moral and spiritual qualities which made her worthy of the Immaculate Conception.

This spiritual and moral motherhood of St. Anne became one of the most commonly-used iconographic themes in works of art featuring St. Anne and the Virgin Mary during the Baroque period, replacing the Anna Selbdritt as the most frequent depiction of St. Anne. This image, commonly called “The Education of the Virgin,” depicts an adult St. Anne standing next to or sitting with the Virgin Mary, shown as a young girl, as both of them hold or look at a book. The motif of the book had also been a prominent element of pre-Reformation images of the Anna Selbdritt, indicating St. Anne’s role in educating her daughter and grandson, as well as the importance of piety achieved through learning.

By showing the two women together, the iconographic focus is also placed on St. Anne’s role as the Erzieherin of the Virgin Mary. More than simply “educator” or “teacher,” the word Erzieherin includes a strong moral component, and bore a particular importance for women, who were “unambiguously assigned” the education of their daughters as a crucial aspect of their gender-based function as mothers. In “The Education of the Virgin,” the absence of Jesus places the focus more clearly on the relationship between mother and daughter, as well as removing St. Anne’s function as

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21Richard T. Vann, “Toward a New Lifestyle: Women in Preindustrial Capitalism,” in Becoming Visible: Women in European History, 208. Vann also elaborates that “Adults have always inculcated the ideals of the culture in their children and passed on to them the skills needed for work and for adaptation to the existing political and social structure. In all societies, some of this conscious and unconscious teaching has been done distinctively by women. But no culture has considered this acculturation such a monumental task, nor entrusted it so completely to women, as our own,” Becoming, p. 205.
matriarch responsible for the education of a wider kingroup which includes male grandchildren as well as daughters. These images also shift the ages of the women shown. While the Virgin Mary has become “more girlish,” in keeping with post-Tridentine iconography, St. Anne is shown as older, clearly a woman past the age of child-bearing.\(^{22}\) In contrast to sixteenth century works of art, which showed St. Anne as a matron and the Virgin Mary as a young woman, this new style of depiction makes one woman too old to hold authority and the other too young. A statue from the parish church of Waldkirchen, dating from 1720, clearly shows this new relationship (Illustration 27). The Virgin Mary stands next to her mother, reaching up to read from the book St. Anne holds. The lines and wrinkles on St. Anne’s face are echoed in the wrinkled headdress she wears. Jacob Polius’ *Exegeticon* contains a mid-seventeenth-century illustration of the Virgin Mary, Jesus, and St. Anne that clearly demonstrates St. Anne’s changed status (Illustration 28). Not only is Anne shown as elderly, she is seated lower than her gloriously-crowned daughter, and rather than reaching out to hold her grandson, she folds her hands in reverent prayer, a model of pious devotion.

Even in sites known for other depictions of St. Anne, the “Education of the Virgin” was commonly used in new works of art, even becoming the defining image for particular locations. The new Baroque altarpiece in Düren, sponsored by the Jesuits, depicted the Education of the Virgin as its central motif.\(^{23}\) München-Harching, home of an *Anna Selbdritt* dating back to ca. 1500, became a well-known St. Anne pilgrimage site in the mid-eighteenth century. Votive art from the pilgrimage chapel depicts not the


\(^{23}\) In 1901, this altar was destroyed as part of an attempt to return the church to its original Gothic interior. Karlheinz Küpper, “Die Annakirche von ihren Anfängen bis 1944,” in Gatz, p. 76.
sixteenth century Anna Selbdritt, but an image of the “Education of the Virgin” from a side altar, sponsored in 1751 by the St. Anne confraternity (Illustrations 29-30). The growth in popularity of this motif demonstrates Baroque Catholicism’s focus on St. Anne’s responsibility as Mary’s mother to educate her daughter in religion and morality, while simultaneously underscoring St. Anne’s shift from matron to elderly widowed grandmother.

Gender historians looking at the eighteenth century have noted the development of new ideas about women’s education during this time period. By the last third of the century, there was a lively production of treatises on this topic within Germany. However, there was an “almost total absence of tracts by Catholic writers,” even while “the frequent appeals in this literature to nature or history for justification of woman’s place in society suggest that for educated Protestants older religious prescriptions were losing their effectiveness.”24 James Albisetti concludes that “Catholic Germans in this era do not appear to have felt the need to redefine or reinforce their views of women.”25 I suggest that the Catholics already had such models for women present in the saints, particularly St. Anne and the Virgin Mary. Through texts, prayers, and devotional activities undertaken in a household environment or as part of a confraternity, Catholic girls and women could learn appropriate gender roles while they enact their faith.

III. St. Anne Pilgrimages

The revitalization and development of pilgrimage-oriented piety was one of the hallmarks of Baroque Catholicism. Philipp Soergel’s study of the Marian shrine at Altötting has shown how a period of decline in the first decades of the Reformation could

25 Albisetti, Schooling, p. 9
be turned around through written propaganda emphasizing the value of pilgrimage as a Catholic practice. The Jesuits in Düren sought to restore the medieval pilgrimage to St. Anne as part of their overall work in reforming Christianity in the area. These official attempts at reforming and promoting a pilgrimage site combined with popular belief in shrines and pilgrimages as efficacious religious practices. During the Thirty Years’ War, pilgrimages and processions could serve as a marker of confessional identity, or as a way to seek comfort and aid in the midst of the ravages of war.²⁶

Following the end of the war, the number and importance of pilgrimages increased dramatically, until pilgrimages “became the dominant style or mode of Baroque Catholicism after 1650. The expansion, even explosion, of pilgrimage piety was the result of both clerical promotion of new shrines and popular discovery and support of both new and older sites.”²⁷ St. Anne’s cult followed this pattern of clerical and popular involvement at historic and newly-established shrines. Düren, the largest and most active of the medieval shrines, continued to be an active site of St. Anne’s cult through the Baroque period. The development of new shrines often focused around miraculous images of St. Anne rather than physical relics.

Pilgrimages to these sites were both personal and communal, and represented one of the central tenants of Catholicism as it was believed and experienced in eighteenth century Germany. Geographically, the majority of active shrines to St. Anne lay in Bavaria and the Habsburg lands, areas in which an aggressive official Catholicism combined with active popular devotion. This included a re-Catholicized Bohemia, where

²⁶ Forster, Catholic Germany, p. 100.
²⁷ Forster, Catholic Germany, p. 166.
ninety churches were dedicated to St. Anne.\(^{28}\) St. Anna auf dem Tannaberg, one Bohemian site, chronicles many examples of miraculous healings from the early eighteenth century. The town of Kreuzberg was also a significant St. Anne pilgrimage destination in the eighteenth century, with roughly 60,000 visitors each year.\(^{29}\)

Fastner provides several examples of St. Anne votive pictures at pilgrimage sites where the saint is thanked for protecting animals. A particularly detailed example from Upper Bavaria shows a family with their children (living and dead) and a large group of animals in front of a mountain landscape with the text: “All praise to the H[oly] Mother S. Anne by the Honorable Georg Seill and Elisabetha Seill his beloved wife, farmer in Stökhen, for protecting all of their animals which were affected by falling sickness and other dangerous circumstances. Amen. 1700.”\(^{30}\) Votives from Rittsteig depict St. Anne saving a farmer after a tree-transporting accident and two livestock-protection scenes (one in which St. Anne is flanked by two other saints who are more often associated with protecting the herds). Other images show St. Anne protecting a man who had cut his leg with a scythe while in the fields (1801), protecting another man who had been kicked in the head by a bull (1797), and protecting a couple’s pig herds from illness (1807).\(^{31}\)

The association of St. Anne with family protection is long-standing; however, St. Anne’s new patronage of farm animals marks a very interesting geographical shift within the cult of St. Anne. Before the Reformation, in the heyday of St. Anne’s veneration in Northern Europe, she was perceived as primarily an urban saint, associated with the

\(^{28}\) Kleinschmidt, *Heilige Anna*, p. 398.

\(^{29}\) Fastner, *Vergessene Heilige*, p. 41.


\(^{31}\) Fastner, *Vergessene Heilige*, pp. 211, 213.
merchant classes in particular. Her protection of farm animals is indicative of the extent to which the eighteenth-century St. Anne had moved out of the city. The areas where the cult of St. Anne was the strongest, and where new pilgrimage sites were regularly developing, were in Bavaria and the Austrian territories of the Habsburgs. These were largely rural areas. The household protection and domestic well-being associated with devotion to St. Anne extended to include the animals and activities vital to the livelihood of the faithful around her shrines.

There are also numerous cases of the traditional pilgrimage shrine function of miraculous healing. St. Anna auf dem Tannberg’s pilgrimage chronicles have detailed entries concerning miraculous cures from various ailments throughout the early eighteenth century. St. Anne, who was never associated with a single specific disease or bodily organ, is responsible for curing a wide variety of ailments. Barbara Los of Hirschenberg was healed on January 22, 1708 from “painful evil, the so-called Rose,” an illness which began improving while she was on the vowed pilgrimage and which vanished utterly once she was at St. Anne’s shrine; H. Sigmund Gruber, the organist from Neukirchen zum hl. Blut, had been lame in one foot “according to written medical proof” for three years until his cure in August of 1708. In all of these accounts, as many details as possible are given—names, hometowns, medical confirmation of the illness, etc. — the better to establish the truth of the miracles being described. Unlike the Düren miracles recounted in the late fifteenth-century broadsheet, which were much more generic (“a boy,” “a woman,” etc.), these post-Tridentine miracle accounts emphasize details. They are closer in style to the Altötting Marian pilgrimage documents studied by

32Chronicle quoted in Fastner, *Vergessene Heilige*, pp. 75-77.
Philip Soergel, who noted that post-Tridentine pilgrimage records focused on specific
details, the better to prove the veracity of the story in the face of Protestant criticism.

Where individual pilgrimages to St. Anne shrines were generally based around
specific requests or events, communal pilgrimages often revolved around the seasons or a
particular request with implications for the wider area. The inhabitants of Aiterhofen
made a yearly communal pilgrimage to Gotteszell up through at least the end of the
nineteenth century; those of Osterhofen made the same pilgrimage every three years.
Pilgrims from Rimbach heading to the St. Anne shrine at Rittsteig to pray for rain during
a long drought were suddenly engulfed in a snowstorm, and cried out, “Oh my, Mother
Anne, you didn’t understand us; we prayed for rain, and you’ve sent us snow.”34 Not only
was this anecdote applied to at least two different pilgrimages, it was the sort of story that
could have been told about any number of saints, just as the inclusion of St. Anne among
a roster of other saints who are believed to protect livestock, and the general ascription to
her of a generically-defined domestic protection is not Anne-specific.

IV. The Gotteszell Sermons: Pilgrimage, Preaching, and Theater

In the final section of this chapter, I will analyze a series of nine sermons given at
the monastery of Gotteszell in 1729. These texts, delivered on the centenary of a
devastating fire, were intended to commemorate the pilgrimage to an Anna Selbdritt
which had miraculously survived the blaze. The varying presentations of St. Anne by the
preachers of these sermons demonstrates her changed and changeable status within
Baroque German piety. Gotteszell was founded in 1285 with a donation of land by
Heinrich von Pfölling to the Cistercian monastery of Aldersbach, with instructions that

34."Oh mei, Muatta anna, du host uns net recht vostahna. Mir hamma di um Reg’n bitt und du host uns an
Schnee gschickt.” Fastner, Vergessene Heilige, p. 65. Fastner notes, however, that this story was also told
about the Aiterhofen pilgrims.
they use his donation to found another Cistercian establishment. Bishop Heinrich von Rotteneck of Regensburg confirmed the foundation, and gave it the name Gotteszelle (cella Dei). Until its secularization in 1803, it was an important Cistercian monastery. The association with St. Anne for which Gotteszell became famous did not actually date back to the original foundation; originally, the church was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Fastner suggests that St. Anne became an important presence in the fifteenth century, when her cult was generally on the rise. She was definitely associated with Gotteszell by the early sixteenth century, when Abbot Michael I (1501-1532) reported that he did much to increase the popularity of the pilgrimage to St. Anne at Gotteszell after miracles were reported in front of a wooden Anna Selbdritt. The pilgrimage to Gotteszell flourished during the highpoint of general devotion to St. Anne, but had declined by the time a ruinous fire destroyed the second-oldest church in the monastery, the Annamünster, in 1629. Further damage was done by Swedish soldiers in 1633; in fact, the entire population may have died off due to war and plague, necessitating resettlement from the original Aldersdach monastery.

The second Blütezeit of the Gotteszell pilgrimage, like the first, resulted from assiduous promotion by the current Abbot. Given the tumultuous history of Gotteszell in the seventeenth century, it is not surprising that the abbots sought ways of increasing revenue and encouraging pilgrimage. Contemporaries not only recognized the promotional efforts of the Gotteszell abbots, there were rumors in 1724 that Abbot Wilhelm had allowed a small pilgrimage church at Osterbrünnl near Ruhmannsfelden to burn down, in order to get rid of the competition.35

35Source quoted in Vergessene Heilige, p. 51.
The revival of Gotteszell as a St. Anne pilgrimage site received a substantial boost from a nine-day festival in 1729. The festival celebrated the survival of the monastery a hundred years earlier, specifically focusing on the miraculous survival of the *Anna Selbdritt* itself. As part of the festivities, Gotteszell also acquired new relics from St. Anne and three martyrs. For this celebration, special indulgences were granted; a confraternity was founded; and a series of nine sermons was delivered by nine preachers, selected from notable monastic foundations and high Church offices to speak on the theme of St. Anne and Gotteszell, each using a passage from Scripture. The sermon collection, including a description of a play about the history of Gotteszell and its tribulations and triumphs performed at the conclusion of the celebration, was published in Straubing in 1730. In a similar fashion to the seventeenth-century pilgrimage books from Altötting studied by Philip Soergel, the sermon collection from Gotteszell served to promote the monastery as a pilgrimage destination and increase the luster of its reputation at a time when Gotteszell was seeking the economic and prestige-related benefits of greater pilgrimage traffic.

The Nine-Day Festival was an occasion of great pomp and circumstance, drawing “almost three hundred high and noble priests,” thirty-four parish priests with processions of children from their parishes, and “16,000 Catholic Christians of both sexes, who .. cleaned their conscience through completing remorseful confession, and [who] were fed with the most worthy goods.” In addition to this, numerous nobles from Saxony, Bohemia, Austria, and Bavaria attended, including the Archduchesses Maria Amalia of

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36 The three martyrs were listed as St. Martinus, St. Dulcissimus, and St. Hilarius. *Gotteszell*, p. 294.
37 Soergel *Wondrous, passim*.
Austria and Princess Maria Josepha of Saxony. These nobles had also made substantial donations, including relics—a fact which is made particular note of in several places in the introductory sermon. The eight other preachers had all selected scriptural passages to build their sermons around. The closing speech refers to the preachers having chosen their topics. Nothing is said regarding what guidance or instructions they had been given, if any.

Although the entire set of biblically-based sermons praises St. Anne for her virtues and noble qualities, including repeated mention of her role as the Erzieherin of the Virgin Mary, none of the preachers chose any section of Proverbs 31:10-31, the praise for a good wife. This includes those passages which speak specifically to the theme of a woman educating her children. Instead, the preachers favored more metaphorical passages, which give them quite a bit of room for creative interpretation. All of the preachers display their own erudition, in both German and Latin, showing a fondness for rhetorical flourishes (which do not always succeed) even as they spend the first section of their own sermons declaring their unworthiness to be preaching to such an august company. Alphonso Reisner builds several sections of his sermon around a series of anagrams. Overall, these are texts written for maximum impact in delivery, full of flourishes and dramatic moments, such as Joseph Silberman’s extravagant, emotional description of the 1629 fire. This style of preaching painted dramatic pictures in the listeners’ minds, drawing them with the speaker through the passages and interpretations so that all present are inspired with faith. 39

Within the sermons, there is a constant awareness of both the location and the reason for the festival; unsurprisingly, the idea of fire or burning appears frequently, both

as metaphor and recollection. Felice Vogl begins the second sermon with a comparison between the joyful fireworks of the current celebration and the destructive fires of a hundred years previously. In the middle of the fifth sermon’s discussion of Gotteszell’s history and the constant love between the cloister and St. Anne, Joseph Silberman breaks out with an impassioned:

But venerable listeners! I find myself betrayed; Oh, what abominable, cruel, shocking, unexpected, sudden change! What unfortunate, bitter, lament-worthy, contrary event! No flames of love are burning, but rather a destructive heat devours everything, no cries of joy are shining, but rather one hears a screaming call, a calling howl, a howling lament, a lamenting sigh, a sighing cry, a crying groan: Fire, fire! It burns! It burns! Gotteszell is in flames! Gotteszell, that ornament of virtue, that never-overcome warrior in the fight of love, Gotteszell, that venerator of holy Anne, Gotteszell, that Mt. Silo prophesized in the Holy Scripture, Gotteszell, that pilgrimage city, where always love and counter-love neither overcame nor were overcome, is completely on fire, the smoke darkens everything which [was] light, the flames breaking out light everything which [was] dark, the fire devours everything which [was] splendid, the heat melts everything which [was] solid, violence topples everything which [was] imposing, the heat grips everything which [was] precious, the roof comes apart, the glowing tiles fall down, the walls perish completely, and-- so that I don’t hold you up any longer-- the praiseworthy monastery Gotteszell soon lay completely buried under the ashes, hidden under glowing
coals, made into a pile of stones under such a misfortune happening, burned to the ground under such a vile fate.”

While this is the most extreme depiction of the fire, the history of Gotteszell’s calamities is a constant refrain throughout these sermons; the fire predominates, but the sacking of the cloister by the Swedes during the Thirty Years’ War is also mentioned on several occasions. Nicolaus Wancker lists fire, war, and plague among the catastrophes, but argues that the fact that none of these actually succeeded in destroying Gotteszell altogether is evidence of the care which St. Anne has for the foundation.

Whatever instructions the preachers might have received from the Abbot, there does not seem to have been any coordination in the interpretation of St. Anne herself. The Scriptural passages at the heart of each sermon provide a starting point, but do not seem to have restricted the preachers’ creativity. Some sermons take up descriptions and symbols that had been connected with St. Anne in the past, and some invent entirely new reference points. Benedict Waldaderer takes Psalm 51: 10, “I, however, am like a fruitful olive tree in the house of God,” and builds up an elaborate comparison between St. Anne and all the individual parts of an olive tree, from the bitter roots of her long barrenness, to

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40 “Aber hochansehnliche Zuhörer! ich finde mich betroffen/ O was entsetzliche/ grausame/ schreckliche/ unverhoffte/ gählliche Veränderung! was ungückseelige/ elende/ beweinens-würdige/ widerige Begebenheit! keine Liebs-Flammen brinnet nit/ sondern eine verderbliche Brunst verzehret alles/ es erhellet kein Jubel-Geschrey/ sondern ein schreyendes Ruffen/ ruffendes Heylen/ heyendes Klagen/ klagendes Seufftzen/ seufftzendes Weinen/ weinendes Achtzen vernimmet man; Feuer/ Feuer! es brennet/ es brennet! Gotteszell steht in Brand! Gotteszell jene Zierde der Tugenden/ Gotteszell jene nit überwundene Kämpferin in den Liebs-Streit/ Gotteszell jene Verehrerin der heiligen Annae/ Gotteszell jener in der heiligen Schrift vorbedeutete Berg Silo, Gotteszell jene Wallstatt/ allwo die Liebe und Gegen-Lieb weder überwunden hat/ weder überwunden worden/ ist in völligem Feuer/ der Rauch verfinstert alles/ was hell/ die ausbrechende Flammen erleichtnet alles/ was dunkel/ das Feuer verzehret alles/ was herrlich/ die Hitz zerschmetzetz alles/ was verhartet/ der Gewalt stützet alles/ was ansehnlich/ die Brunst ergreifetz alles/ was kostbahr/ das Dach leset sich von einander/ die glühenden Tramen fallen hinunter/ die Mauren gehen allbereit ein/ und damit ich sie nit länger aufhalte/ das Löbl. Stift Gotteszell ist schon gänzlich unter den Aschen vergraben/ unter denen glüenden Kollen verborgen/ unter solch ereigneten Unglück zu einen Steinhauffen gemacht/ unter solchen so widervärtigen Schicksal in Boden verbrennt.” Joseph von Silbermann, “Fünfte Predig: Die in dem alten Testament vorgezeigete in dem neuen erfolgte, Nit überwindende weder überwundene Liebe und Gegen-Liebe Zwischen Der Heiligen ANNA Und dem Löbl. Stift und Closter Gotteszell” in Gotteszell, p. 164. Silberman’s language makes clever use of the word “Brunst,” meaning “fire,” but carrying a connotation of sexual lust, which he contrasts with “Liebes-Feuer.”
the green twigs as a sign of hope in the flood of troubles besetting mankind and
Gotteszell, to the olives as a representation of Mary, which produce the holy and useful oil symbolizing Christ. The house (“Celle”) of God is of course the monastery itself. Bernhard Strehlin defines St. Anne as “a true cloister- and Easter-lamb,” as well as “a true mother-lamb” who recognized Mary’s status even before she was born. The reason for Strehlin’s scriptural selection (Song of Solomon 2:16-17, “He pastures his flock among the lilies, until the day breaks.”) is unclear, as is his decision to take the theme of St. Anne as a new Easter lamb, whose “wool” (“Woll”) means “good deeds” (“Wohltaten,”) which Strehlin translates as “Gratia,” ie, the Latin meaning of Anne’s name. While a lamb is a common Christian metaphor for Christ, this is the only example which I found of its use to describe St. Anne. Strehlin’s reason for this strained metaphorical construction appears to have been his desire to relate the scriptural passage to St. Anne’s name and the Gotteszell context. Even the fire which destroyed Gotteszell is interpreted by Strehlin as similar to the fires which roast the Easter lamb, so that St. Anne becomes the “Easter and cloister sacrifice,” not destroyed, but prepared for the countless blind, crippled, lame, and ill so that they all have “enjoyed this blessed Easter and cloister lamb Anne until full.” The comparison between a roasted lamb, to be divided into parts for the world and Gotteszell to feast on, and the mother of the Virgin Mary is, again, unique to this particular sermon. As the penultimate speaker, before the celebration was concluded and the sermons were summarized by Alphonso Reisner, it is

42 Strehlin, “Ostern,” in Gotteszell, p. 243-244.
possible that Strehlin had a more limited choice of topic, or felt that he could not take any of the themes taken by the previous seven speakers. It is even possible that he wanted to demonstrate his ability to stretch the theme as far as he could, even though the directions in which he was going were outside the purview of all previous Anne-related texts.

The extent to which St. Anne’s legend had become more malleable and more subordinated to her daughter in the eighteenth century is made quite clear within this collection. This flexibility becomes particularly evident in Sermons One and Three, which provide the audience with vastly differing interpretations of St. Anne’s status during her lifetime. Sebastian Maville, the first preacher, refers to St. Anne as “of royal blood,” while Nicolaus Wancker builds a large part of the third sermon around the idea of St. Anne’s poverty and humble station. The two interpretations are both consistent with the inner structure of each sermon and the particular Scriptural passage being used. Maville is speaking to the theme of St. Anne as a good tree, which produced Mary as its good fruit (a very popular metaphor), and thus wants to exalt St. Anne. Wancker is using the idea of the unconsumed burning bush, comparing the Anna Selbdritt of Gotteszell to that bush and conflating it with St. Anne herself, who he calls “The Unburned Thornbush.”

God’s choice of a thornbush to deliver a message to Moses was specifically due to the humility and low station of the thornbush when compared to all other plants. Similarly, even though for the selection of a woman worthy to bear the Virgin Mary “God would have required a noble lady,” God chose “the housewife of poor Joachim” who, according to the Holy Fathers, was merely a shepherd. Wancker continues to ask why God selected “poor Anne and not rather a high noble rich royal

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44 Gotteszell itself, of course, then serves as the holy location in which the Burning Bush stood.

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Since the sermon two days earlier had described Anna as noble, Wancker’s choice of description for St. Anne was clearly based on the points he wanted to make within his own sermon, rather than decided upon in conjunction with other preachers as part of a unified presentation of the cloister’s patron saint.

The individuality of Wancker’s interpretation is even more noticeable when one considers that all St. Anne texts, dating back to the *Protoevangelium*, noted St. Anne’s royal status, and that Anne and Joachim’s position as well-off members of the community who had given generous alms as well as donations to the Temple had long been a staple of St. Anne’s story. While Prestele’s sermon had mentioned that Anne had made do with very little, this was in the context of St. Anne’s willingness to give away two thirds of her income, not because Prestele was presenting her as poor or of a low social station. By subordinating longstanding beliefs about St. Anne to his own rhetorical structure, Wancker demonstrates the extent to which St. Anne’s legend had become changeable, even on such a public occasion and in front of such a large audience, by the eighteenth century.

The main point Wancker seeks to make through the use of this comparison is the extreme humility (*Demuth*) of St. Anne, and the value of that humility to God. Instead of the high status which previous texts (including the first sermon at Gotteszell) had used as evidence for why St. Anne was worthy to bear the Mother of God, it is her similarity to a “lowly thornbush” which is given as a reason. This humility runs parallel to that of her

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daughter, the quality that made Mary worthy to bear the Son of God, but Wancker
doesn’t dwell on the comparison. Instead, his sermon rambles through a variety of
topics, from the metaphor of the thorn bush to Mary and Anne’s shared humility to
Anne’s status as a throne of mercy (Gnadenthron) who can be approached as a mother, to
the many catastrophes of Gotteszell, to the idea that St. Anne is powerful due to Jesus’
filial piety towards his grandmother, to praise of the abbot. It is no wonder Wancker
simply says, “Now however I direct myself towards a conclusion,” before a final praise
of Gotteszell as a blessed location and St. Anne as the unburning thornbush located
within it.47

The relationship between St. Anne and the Virgin Mary runs through the
Gotteszell sermons as a thematic element. Reisner, the final speaker, defines mother and
daughter as, “one sense and one will, and what the daughter loves, the mother loves
also.”48 This absolute overlap gives precedence to Mary, who “loves,” while St. Anne
merely follows her daughter by “loving also,” reversing the filial piety praised in
medieval texts as one of the Virgin Mary’s virtues. While Wancker and Reisner touch
briefly upon the similarities of character between Anne and Mary, Aemilian Hemauer’s
sermon is only tangentially about St. Anne at all. He uses Exodus 9:14, “And see, that
my equal is not in the whole world,” as the foundation for his sermon. However, the saint
it describes for virtually all of the sermon is the Virgin Mary. Mary’s qualities and virtues
are enumerated at length, and St. Anne’s possession of the same qualities is taken as a
given. This includes the “snow of her brow, which shamed oriental pearls, the hyacinth-
blue veins under her lily-white skin, such that it declared war on the blue of the heavens,

48 „eines Sinns und Willens/ und was liebet die Tochter/ das liebet auch die Mutter...” Reisner, “Bis
Tertium,” in Gotteszell, p. 267.
the purple-red of her cheeks, which made the roses blush twice,” which her daughter then inherited. Hemauer’s focus on the Virgin Mary, even within the context of a festival devoted to St. Anne, is so complete that he provides his listeners with a highly romanticized description of St. Anne emphasizing her physical beauty, an image in stark contrast to the idea of St. Anne as a grandmother who had born her daughter after twenty years of marriage.

Like Reisner, Hemauer sees no significant distinction between the Virgin Mary and St. Anne. Whatever physical or moral attributes the Virgin Mary possesses were inherited from her mother, who is therefore worthy of praise. The Virgin Mary’s greatly increased prominent position within seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Catholicism is in clear evidence here. While other sermons also use various metaphors to draw comparisons between Anne and Mary—the aforementioned good tree which produces good fruit reappears in several places, Wancker’s thornbush produces beautiful roses, Anne is the gold ring in which a beautiful jewel is set, she is a silver incense container and Mary is sweet-smelling incense, etc., no other sermon is this focused on the Virgin. Hemauer even calls the audience, “my present Marian-Anne-venerating listeners.”

Here, in the eighteenth century, we finally encounter the desire to honor the Virgin Mary through St. Anne which was posited by Kleinschmidt as the main impetus behind St. Anne’s explosive late medieval popularity.


50 “meinen Anwesenden Mariano-Annaeischen Zuhörern,” Hemauer, “Unvergleichliche,” in Gotteszell, p.106. It is not clear if this was due to the audience or an expression of his own personal beliefs.
Several of the sermons focus on the specific relationship between Gotteszell and St. Anne, a relationship defined as one of mutual love and St. Anne giving special blessings and grace to the favored monastery. This is the second major recurring thematic element across the collection of sermons. Often, the speakers draw no substantive distinction between the Anna Selbdritt of Gotteszell and St. Anne herself. The second sermon, on the theme of “He brought me into the wine cellar,” (Songs 2:4) sets up Gotteszell as the winecellar, and St. Anne as both the wine and as the source of the wine of grace (“Gnaden-Wein,”) which appeared as soon as she (i.e., the Anna Selbdritt statue) was brought into Gotteszell. Various speakers place St. Anne within a metaphorical fire, such as the burning bush image used by Wancker, or Strehlin’s roasted lamb, representing the true meaning of the way her image was preserved within a real fire.

The Gotteszell sermons, delivered as a group in the context of celebrating a particular occasion in a particular place, juxtapose an incredible variety of interpretations of St. Anne. The texts praise both the saint and Gotteszell itself, and are looking not only back to a past miracle and past tragedies, but also unabashedly forward to a bright future in which the grace of St. Anne will continue to shine upon the monastery with ever-greater radiance.

Even after secularization closed the monastery in 1803, Gotteszell continued to be a pilgrimage destination. As late as the 1960s, houses in the vicinity of the former cloister

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52 While the Anna Selbdritt and St. Anne overlap within the text of the sermons, the play printed at the end of the text which details the history of Gotteszell does not include St. Anne as a character, although various priests and monks and students take roles ranging from Pluto to the Virtues to Gotteszell itself within the all-male production.
53 Johann Huizinga remarked that “when the Counter-Reformation cultivated anew a purified veneration of saints, it had to work on the mind with the gardner’s knife of a more strict discipline so as to prune the all too luxuriant growth of the popular imagination.” It would have been interesting to hear his opinion on this collection of early modern Catholic sermons. Huizinga, Autumn, p. 202.
and pilgrimage shrine of Gotteszell contained copies of the famed *Anna Selbdritt* which was the pilgrim’s goal.54 These figures ranged from mass-produced simple copies to impressive replicas, often outfitted with detailed costumes. During the eighteenth-century, the highpoint of the Gotteszell pilgrimage, local workshops provided pilgrims with reproductions they could carry with them, similar to the clay *Anna Selbdritt* figures available to the Düren pilgrims in the sixteenth century. Votive paintings also bear the recognizable image of the Gotteszell *Anna Selbdritt*.

By the Baroque period, clear changes had taken place; not only the vanishing of the Holy Kinship as an official devotional theme, but a shift in the way St. Anne was portrayed in relation to the Virgin Mary, who herself had been greatly elevated within Catholic devotion. The increasing emphasis on the Immaculate Conception also led to increasing interest in a St. Anne who was a mirror of her daughter’s exceptional virtues. It was this maternal connection which was emphasized as the source of Anne’s holiness and power, especially since St. Anne’s earlier leading status within her own marriage was subordinated to a patriarchal family structure oriented around Joachim as *Hauß-Vatter*, with her son-in-law serving as the next source of authority. As Reisner summarizes in his sermon:

> Exactly this or something similar is what I understand myself to say about the Holy Mother Anne: because she was selected by God to be the mother of the His mother/that is, other than the Mother of God he could never have created a greater and more exalted grandmother: the motherhood of God surpasses all motherhoods; even so the grandmotherhood of God surpasses all grandmothers.

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54 Fastner, *Vergessene Heilige*, p. 178.
Mary, the Mother of God surpasses all mothers; the grandmother of God, Anne, surpasses all grandmothers.\textsuperscript{55}
Epilogue

“Anne was especially dear to her parents. I saw her as a child. She was not strikingly beautiful, though prettier than some others. Her beauty was not to be compared with Mary’s, but she was extraordinarily pious, childlike, and innocent. She was the same at every age, as I have seen, as a maiden, as a mother, and as a little old grandmother. Whenever I happened to see a very childlike old peasant woman, I always thought, “She is like Anne.”

Carlos Eire describes the state of religion immediately prior to the Reformation as an “impressive city perched on a quivering fault line,” where “[b]eneath a deceptively calm and firm exterior, a complex series of imperceptible movements were building up pressure, mounting strain to the breaking point. Though some contemporaries may have felt minor tremors, or suspected that a major quake was long overdue, no one could predict when and where disaster would strike, or how much damage would be done.”

Where most earthquakes happen quickly, the earthquake that was the Protestant and Catholic Reformations took place over decades. But these, too, created new religious and cultural topographies in Europe. This process involved not only shifts in belief and practice, but a loss of cultural memory about earlier beliefs, even as older ideas could prove remarkably durable. The fate of St. Anne serves as an excellent example. In both

Protestant and Catholic areas, the changes in how the mother of the Virgin Mary was perceived and presented to the faithful provide us with a lens through which we can view shifts in religion, gender roles, the construction of the family, and the relationship between the living faithful and the saints.

In Protestant territories, the elimination of the Holy Kinship was not accomplished overnight, and the shift from viewing St. Anne as a positive example to seeing only the negative side of her cult and the lack of scriptural basis for her cult took over a generation. By the eighteenth century, however, not only was St. Anne no longer a viable figure within Protestantism, the entire cult surrounding her had been reduced to an example of late medieval superstition. Georg Heinrich Goetze’s 1702 dissertation on the cult of St. Anne is a blistering attack on the “untrustworthy fables and traditions, which have been commonly circulated about [the saint].”3 The future Superintendent of Lübeck had spent time living in Annaberg prior to his years of study in Leipzig.4 His personal connection with Annaberg, which had continued to be a site of pilgrimage for Catholics, is evident in the text of his dissertation, and may have been the main impetus behind his choice of St. Anne as a research theme at a time when Protestantism as a whole had fallen completely silent on the subject and seemed content to ignore Catholicism’s resurgent attention to St. Anne.

“Fabulosa” and “incerta” are favorite invectives used by Goetze, who believes that the entire cult and history of St. Anne were nothing but idolatry and error; a cult in

the most negative sense of the word rather than anything connected to true religion. Goetze focuses on Anne as an imported or constructed saint with no genuine history. He classifies her origin story as a mere copy of the legend of Hanna, mother of Samuel, used to provide the Virgin Mary with appropriately miraculous origins, and emphasizes the “novelty” of her cult’s explosive spread around the time of Luther’s childhood. While Goetze draws from and quotes a large variety of sources, the fundamental supports of all of his arguments are copious criticisms of St. Anne drawn from “our Luther” (*noster Lutherus*). Indeed, as far as Goetze is concerned, invoking the words of Luther automatically serves as incontrovertible proof of St. Anne’s invention, rapid rise due to ignorance, greed, and fear, and her sudden decline in the face of Protestant attacks.

His perspective on Martin Luther removes the complexity from the Reformer’s position on the cult of the saints in general and on St. Anne specifically. The shift from criticizing those who venerated St. Anne excessively or for the wrong reasons, to criticizing the entire cult of a “novel” saint is ignored in favor of a Luther who instantly grasps the fallacy of venerating a fictional saint. Luther’s lifelong attempts to understand the configuration of Jesus’ lineage, and his eventual conclusion that St. Anne is necessary, are never even hinted at. Later historians of St. Anne’s cult have followed a similar pattern of simplification, describing Martin Luther’s relationship to St. Anne by contrasting the memorable story of his 1503 vow to her with his self-critical declarations later in life that he had been more devoted to her than to Christ.⁵ Between these two points, St. Anne might appear in quotes showing Luther’s attacks on the cult of the saints. Luther becomes the “chief witness” for the fate of St. Anne in the Protestant Reformation; he is the model for every Protestant who looked back with horror at an

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⁵ Lutheran, *WA* 36, p. 388; *WA* 41, pp. 653, 697.
earlier devotion. The complex interactions between constructions of faith and conceptions of gender within sixteenth-century Protestantism are obscured behind the spectre of a saint in decline.

While the decline of St. Anne’s cult in Protestant areas did not occur as rapidly as previous historians have suggested, the religious and social changes brought about by the Reformation did eventually end veneration of Mary’s mother within Protestantism, in conjunction with the overall rejection of the cult of the saints and the development of new ideas regarding gender. The fate of St. Anne’s cult in Catholic regions of Europe was a good deal more complicated. The overlapping disappearance of the Holy Kinship from both Catholicism and Protestantism demonstrates similarities between the two confessions in their attitudes towards women and marriage; however, the continued importance of the cult of the saints and the increasing attention paid to the cult of the Virgin Mary as a defining aspect of Catholic identity meant that St. Anne herself remained a key figure. Her resurgent Baroque cult focused on a new vision of St. Anne, one which transformed the Holy Kinship’s matriarch into a “pious, childlike, and innocent” figure, exemplified by the image of a “very childlike old peasant woman.” Describing her visions of St. Anne, Blessed Anna Katherina Emmerick, a nineteenth-century Augustinian nun from Westphalia, presents her as the archetypal grandmother. This image of St. Anne once again locates her at the intersection of religion and gender within Catholicism. Rather than providing a model of an active woman in the prime of her life, she is defined by a simple piety which makes her both childlike and elderly, connecting feminine religiosity to simplicity and emotion.

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6 “Kronzeuge,” Angelika Dörfler-Dierken uses Luther as her proof that “Nach Einführung der Reformation erinnerte man sich mit Abscheu an den früheren Annenkult.” Dörfler-Dierken, Verehrung, p. 21.
In the transformation of a powerful saint who stood at the head of a large family into an elderly grandmother who stood behind her immaculately-conceived daughter, we can trace socio-cultural and religious shifts within Catholicism across the early modern period. However, just as a detailed exploration of sixteenth-century Protestantism reveals unexpected continuities, so the visions of Anna Katharina Emmerick demonstrate the persistence of previous familial structures.

A key component of Emmerick’s account of *The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary* was published in 1852; *The Life of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* is an elaborately detailed portrayal of the lineage, family, and life of St. Anne. In her account, extending back to Anne’s descent from the line of priests responsible for carrying the Ark of the Covenant, Emmerick describes scenes ranging from the mundane to the miraculous. Transcribed by the poet Clemens Brentano between 1819 and 1824, the visions were compiled into several distinct works and published later in the century. was published in three volumes between 1858 and 1880.

During these same years, on December 8, 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary to be dogma. In the years since the Council of Trent, the Immaculate Conception had been strongly linked to the nature and worthiness of St. Anne. As Clisorius argued in 1648, a woman who was worthy to bear the Mother of God would have to be a woman who would maintain moral and physical purity. The *Trinubium*, and the earlier constellation of relatives arranged around St. Anne, went from a necessary aspect of her pre-Reformation cult, to a deplorable superstition, to a mere echo in Baroque devotional texts. Her cult was linked ever more strongly to the Immaculate Conception and proper rearing of her only daughter, described in devotional
texts and shown in the many images focusing on the Education of the Virgin as an
iconographic theme.

The devout visions of a stigmatic nun, related in exceptional detail in order to
share with the faithful the true account of the lives of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, St. Anne,
and their wider family, approved for publication by the Church censors, and published
during the decades when the Immaculate Conception was became official Church dogma,
are an unexpected location to find a reconfiguration of St. Anne’s family tree.
Emmerick’s descriptions, presented in both the Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the
Life of Our Lord, combine elements of previous beliefs with new elements of uncertain
provenance. Their inclusion, and the lack of controversy surrounding them, demonstrates
how the cult of St. Anne defies easy classification, even after several centuries of
determined confessionalization and an official Church position which had completely
eliminated the pre-Reformation Holy Kinship.

The visions of Anna Katherina Emmerick are both an appropriate end for this
study, and a gateway to further exploration. Once again, we see a family structure built
up around St. Anne which combines a need to elucidate otherwise confusing Scriptural
references with contemporary cultural and religious beliefs about gender and holiness, in
particular the Immaculate Conception. The continued flexibility of this kingroup, even
within Catholicism, is a fascinating indication of how deeply-held beliefs could echo
through the following centuries. Emmerick’s origins near Münster place her near one of
the oldest and most significant sites of devotion to St. Anne. While some aspects of the
family she portrays in her visions are unique to her, the connections between the Holy
Kinship as she describes it and the late medieval Holy Kinship indicate a survival within
popular religion of a set of beliefs which “official” religion had long since ceased paying any attention to.
Illustration 3: Anna Selbdritt, Schloßmuseum Gotha, ca. 1500.
Illustration 4: Memorial painting, St. Lorenzkirche, Nürnberg, 1514.
Illustration 6: The Holy Kinship, from the *Schedelsche Welchronik*, 1493. The vine for the Virgin Mary extends from Joachim across to the left-hand page, where a series of miniatures shows St. Joseph and the life story of the Virgin Mary through to the Annunciation.
Illustration 8: Reliquary, *Hallesche Heiltumsbuch*, p. iii–v. Used by permission of the University of Erfurt Library.
Illustration 9: Reliquary, *Hallesche Heiltumsbuch*, p. Xv-v. Used by permission of the University of Erfurt Library.
Illustration 11: Anna Selbdritt, Anger Museum, Erfurt, ca. 1520.
Illustration 12: Center of painting of Markgraf Christoph I. von Baden and his family around the Anna Selbdritt, Hans Baldung Grien, ca. 1510. Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe.
Ein lied von sant Anna von den grossen zaichen die sy zu Teüren thut.

Illustration 16: Torgauer Fürstenaltar, Central Panel. Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1509. Oil on panel. Städelisches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt a.M.
Illustration 17: Torgauer Fürstenaltar, Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1509. Oil on panel. Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt a.M.

Illustration 23: Side panel from Holy Kinship altar (featuring Frederick the Wise and John the Constant), Saxony, 1520s. Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne. Used by permission of the Rheinisches Bildarchiv, Cologne.
Illustration 27: *Education of the Virgin* from Wolframs-Eschenbach Church of Our Lady, 1720.
Illustration 29: Votive Picture from München-Harlaching, 1770.
Illustration 29: Votive Picture from München-Harlaching, 1751.
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Ain gar nutzlichs büchlin von dem gantzen geschlecht sant Anna vnd von sant Anna lobliche bruderschaft. Vnd von etlichen grossen wunderzaichen sant Anna. [Ulm]: [Johann Reger oder Hans Hochspringer], 1497.


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Biography

Jennifer Lynn Welsh was born in Rochester, New York. Her interest in medieval and early modern history was sparked when she participated in the Congress-Bundestag exchange program as a high school student, spending a year in Upper Bavaria. She attended the University of Richmond as an undergraduate, majoring in History, German, and International Studies. After receiving an M.A. in Medieval Studies from Cornell University, she decided that she wanted to study early modern history, with a focus on cultural and religious shifts between the two historical periods. For her PhD, she studied at Duke University, under Prof. Thomas Robisheaux.