

The ‘witch-cleric’ stereotype in a seventeenth-century Lutheran context

Johann Mauck and Johann Craft were Lutheran pastors in the rural hinterland of the Franconian imperial city of Rothenburg ob der Tauber who shared the dubious honour of being the only clerics of this territory to be accused of witchcraft. This happened to Mauck in 1639 and Craft in 1692; both men were alleged to have dedicated children to the devil instead of God through baptism. In this article I analyse their cases, identifying the printed texts and channels of communication by means of which ideas about witch-clerics and false baptism were introduced into discourse about witchcraft in seventeenth-century Rothenburg. I also use their cases as the basis for a comparative analysis of the witch-cleric stereotype and the vulnerability of clerics to prosecution for witchcraft across confessional divides in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Germany. I argue that, while this stereotype was better developed in relation to Catholic clerics, with correspondingly higher numbers of Catholic clerics executed for witchcraft than their Protestant counterparts, overall relatively few men of the cloth suffered this fate in the early modern period. Despite the existence of a witch-cleric stereotype and occasional sensational trials involving clerics, patriarchy worked in Lutheran Rothenburg and beyond to protect clerics as a group of professional men from the worst excesses of witch-persecution.

This article also contributes to historians’ understanding of witch-stereotypes and the ways in which they spread across regions and changed over time. Erik Midelfort hinted at the dynamism of witch-stereotypes in his 1972 study of witch-hunting in southwestern Germany, concluding that the ‘typical stereotype of the old woman’ broke down in the early-seventeenth century, creating a ‘progress toward anarchy’ in which just about anyone

(regardless of age, gender, or social status) could be denounced plausibly as a witch.¹ More recently Johannes Dillinger argued that the stereotype of the witch as a lower-class woman disintegrated earlier, during the mass persecution in Electoral Trier between 1586 and 1596; like Midelfort, Dillinger also stressed the flexibility of the concept of the witch as an ‘evil person’ which could be applied to anyone perceived as behaving malevolently.² In this article, I use the example of the witch-cleric stereotype to suggest that, rather than thinking in terms of the disintegration of one witch-stereotype, followed by a relatively random pattern of accusation, it is more fruitful to think about a proliferation of several co-existing stereotypes, which developed over time as trials occurred and were discussed in oral and print culture. Stereotypes such as those of the witch-cleric, witch-midwife, witch-teacher, and witch-parent, which mirrored actual cultural roles that had significant influence over children and their induction into Christian society, had particular resonance for early modern ruling elites, who were anxious about raising godly subjects for their territorial churches in opposition to the threat of heresy. This was why there was also significant cross-confessional concern with witch-children (another stereotype) from the late-sixteenth century onwards. However, as Willem de Blécourt points out:

The power of stereotypes, witch stereotypes included, lies chiefly in their application. As part of people’s repertoires they only make sense when they are made manifest, when they are situated in particular circumstances.³

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¹ H. C. Erik Midelfort, *Witch Hunting in Southwestern Germany, 1562-1684* (Stanford, California, 1972), p. 194.

² Johannes Dillinger, ‘Böse Leute’. *Hexenverfolgungen in Schwäbisch-Österreich und Kurtrier im Vergleich* (Trier, 1999), pp. 229-33.

³ Willem de Blécourt, ‘The Making of the Female Witch: Reflections on Witchcraft and Gender in the Early Modern Period’, *Gender & History*, 12 (2000), pp. 287-309, p. 290.

We need therefore to think about when, where and why the idea that a particular cleric might be a witch was deemed plausible enough to justify his accusation, possible prosecution and (even) execution. The fact that relatively few clerics were made into witches in practice in early modern Europe reminds us that the process of persecution was a profoundly gendered one, within which court officials were generally willing and able to take the imaginative leap from witch-stereotype to individual person more easily in the case of women than men.

I

Johann Mauck and Johann Craft were implicated in stories of witchcraft in different ways by different people, although in both cases a key aspect of their alleged witchcraft centred on their dedication of children to the devil instead of God by means of baptism. Mauck's alleged identity as a witch was brought to the attention of the sixteen city councillors, who ruled Rothenburg and its rural hinterland, in the summer of 1639, when a girl called Brigitta Hörner began to tell stories about him on the city streets.⁴ Brigitta had been born to poor parents in the hinterland village of Spielbach and baptised there by Mauck, the Spielbach pastor, on 20 September 1631; Mauck's wife, Brigitta, had stood godmother to the girl.⁵ Orphaned by 1638, Brigitta had left Spielbach to seek help from relatives in Rothenburg. They seem to have treated her badly, however, as she began to roam the streets saying she had been baptised into witchcraft, offering to do magic in exchange for hand-outs of food, and claiming she could identify people from Rothenburg and Spielbach she had seen at witches' dances. To curb the social discord her stories risked causing, the councillors called Brigitta and her two cousins, innkeepers Michel and Georg Krauss, to the town hall for

⁴ Rothenburg ob der Tauber was an imperial city with c. 7, 000 inhabitants. The sixteen (secular) city councillors also ruled a 400km² rural hinterland containing c. 11, 000 inhabitants in 118 villages. The territory became Lutheran in 1544.

⁵ Stadtarchiv Rothenburg (hereafter StAR) A895 fols. 174r-174v.

questioning on 6 July and then - after Brigitta refused to retract her tale – arrested her.⁶ She was interrogated on 10 July on the basis of twenty-five questions drawn up by the municipal jurist, Georg Christoph Walther.⁷ Although this official questioning encouraged Brigitta to repeat (and perhaps embroider) the tale she had been telling for weeks in the city, it is important to emphasize that no names or specific ideas were suggested to her when she was asked what she knew of witchcraft. Moreover, the introduction of a cleric into a narrative of witchcraft was unprecedented in Rothenburg. The novel and idiosyncratic responses given by Brigitta in 1639 thus show that she was not simply parroting information fed to her by her interrogators; she was instead drawing on a repertoire of new ideas about witch-clerics and baptism which had become particularly current in Rothenburg by the 1630s.⁸

Brigitta denied in custody that she had been ‘otherwise’ (*anders*) baptised, meaning that she had not undergone a second demonic baptismal ritual at some stage after her initial Christian baptism.⁹ However, when asked what she knew of witchcraft, Brigitta replied that she had been baptised into it by the pastor of Spielbach, implying that her infant baptism had dedicated her to the devil.¹⁰ She said that she had then been taught witchcraft by the pastor’s wife, her godmother, Brigitte Mauck, who had told her to curse instead of pray, to raise storms and steal milk by magic, to fly to witches’ dances, and to harm people by pressing them while they slept.¹¹ Brigitta returned to the concept of baptism on being asked whether she thought she could extricate herself from her present predicament. She said yes, but only if

⁶ Ibid., fols. 165r-165v (statements by Brigitta and her cousins, 6 July 1639); Staatsarchiv Nürnberg Rothenburg Repertorium (hereafter StAN Ro. Rep.) 2092 fols. 53r-54r (Church Council record of the impact of her story). See also Alison Rowlands, ‘The “Little Witch Girl” of Rothenburg: a child-witch in Germany during the Thirty Years’ War’, *History Review*, 42 (March, 2002), pp. 27–32.

⁷ StAR A895 fols. 166r-166v (list of questions); 167r-170v (Brigitta’s interrogation).

⁸ Discussed in Section II.

⁹ StAR A895 fol. 167r.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., fol. 168v. This was in contrast to her birth mother, Ursula, who had taught Brigitta various prayers, which she recited in custody (fol. 168r). The only act of harmful magic Brigitta claimed to have committed that was investigated by the councillors was the killing of a foal, *ibid.* 174r-174v; its owner did not blame the animal’s death on witchcraft.

she could be 'baptised again'.¹² She went on (unprompted) to clarify her response by telling a story of a man who had six daughters who could work witchcraft. On seeing a field of grain one day, the girls told their father that they could raise a storm to destroy the crop. Their father bade them do it, so they razed the grain to the ground. Then the girls asked to be rebaptised, as this would deprive them of their storm-raising powers. After their rebaptism their father asked them to raise another storm, but they could not do so, even when they were beaten.¹³ Brigitta concluded that she should also be rebaptised, otherwise she feared she would have to learn weather magic.¹⁴

The allegations made against Johann Craft, pastor of the rural hinterland parish of Tauberscheckenbach, took the idea of the witch-cleric a stage further. In March 1692 Craft was accused of having baptised children at a gathering of witches by Barbar Ehneß, a woman who had been arrested in Rothenburg in January 1692 on charges of attempted murder by poisoning. In custody Ehneß was pressured into confessing that she was a witch as well as a poisoner, and that she had attended witches' gatherings led by Craft which had taken place in the city hospital. According to Ehneß, Craft had appeared at the gatherings wearing a black cap but no surplice and had eaten and drunk but not danced with the women there. He had also preached in Latin and baptised two children of a woman called Anna Schöppler in the devil's name.¹⁵ This was the first (and only) time that the idea of a cleric officiating at a witches' gathering emerged in Rothenburg; more shockingly, it soon became clear to the councillors that the source of these allegations was the leading ecclesiastical official of the Rothenburg territory, Church Superintendent Sebastian Kirchmeier, who had acted as father

¹² StAR A895 fol. 169v: '... sie vermein davon zukom[m]en, wann man sie wid[er] möge tauffen'.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Brigitta's tale was similar to a story from Swabia (about a witch-girl's redemption through rebaptism) recorded by Heinrich Kramer in his 1486 demonology, *Malleus Maleficarum*, see Christopher S. Mackay (trans.), *The Hammer of Witches. A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 374-5. This suggests that the story was still part of the oral culture of Swabia/Franconia in the seventeenth century, when it was (probably) reinvigorated by new ideas about witch-clerics (see Section II).

¹⁵ StAR A925 fols. 79r-90v, especially 85v-87r.

confessor to Ehneß while she was in gaol. Ehneß subsequently retracted the story about the witches' gathering and explained to the councillors that Kirchmeier had not only put pressure on her into making her confession but had also suggested Craft – and the names of other supposed witches – to her when he came to the gaol to offer her spiritual solace.¹⁶

II

Where had these ideas about witch-clerics come from, and why did they resonate in Lutheran Rothenburg at particular moments in the seventeenth century? In this section I show how the witch-cleric stereotype developed in early modern Germany and argue that, while it was articulated more often in demonologies and print culture in relation to Catholic clerics, there were two key periods when it came to influence Rothenburg and wider networks of Lutheran and Protestant communication about witchcraft. In the first of these periods, from around 1615 to the 1630s, witch-clerics who baptised in the devil's name were an especially hot topic of news in the politically and confessionally fragmented area of southern Germany within which Rothenburg was situated. In the second period, from the 1670s to 1690s, the idea that a Protestant cleric might officiate at a witches' gathering was disseminated more widely, along international as well as regional communication channels.

The possibility that clerics could fall into the heresy of witchcraft was long established amongst Catholic demonologists by the seventeenth century. Dominican Inquisitor Heinrich Kramer had referred to the degradation that such clerics were to suffer before being handed over to secular courts for punishment in the *Malleus Maleficarum* (the

¹⁶ For a full account of the Ehneß trial and Kirchmeier's pivotal role in shaping her confession, see Alison Rowlands, 'Father Confessors and Clerical Intervention in Witch-Trials in Seventeenth-Century Lutheran Germany: The Case of Rothenburg, 1692', *English Historical Review* 131 (2016), pp. 1010-42. Kirchmeier was the Church Superintendent of Rothenburg from 1681-1700, see Wilhelm Dannheimer, *Verzeichnis der im Gebiete der freien Reichsstadt Rothenburg o. T. von 1544 bis 1803 wirkenden ev.-luth. Geistlichen* (Nuremberg, 1952), p. 80.

first demonology to appear in print) in 1486;¹⁷ subsequent pro-witch-persecution demonologists like Paolo Grillando, Jean Bodin, and Martín Del Rio took up and developed the idea of clerics as members (and leaders) of witches' sects in their publications of 1524, 1580 and 1599-1600 respectively.¹⁸ The ease with which these demonologists adopted this idea was due in no small measure to the fact that the late-medieval papacy had tried to redefine certain aspects of the ritual magic actually practiced by some clerics as heresy, and prosecuted certain churchmen on this basis.¹⁹ Kramer was also critical in the *Malleus* of priests who preached against the existence of witches or who protected laymen who practiced sorcery by means of magical archery.²⁰ Kramer did not label either of these types of priest as witches, but his criticism of these modes of priestly behaviour helped later generations develop the idea that priests who opposed witch-hunting, condoned popular superstition, or were otherwise lax shepherds of their flocks might be in league with the devil themselves.²¹ Protestant writers also took up the witch-cleric stereotype, usually in anti-Catholic polemical publications. In his 1593 text, for example, Thomas Sigfrid likened various Catholic sacramental practices to witchcraft and asserted that priests had always been the greatest sorcerers, 'because they could corrupt their flocks through sorcery with the illusion of holiness'.²² Sigfrid's tract was accompanied by a complex image of the so-called Trier

¹⁷ Mackay, *Hammer of Witches*, p. 612.

¹⁸ Dries Vanysacker, 'Grillando (Grillandus), Paolo (Paulus)', in Richard M. Golden (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft. The Western Tradition* (4 vols; vol. II, Santa Barbara, 2006), pp. 459-460; Jean Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, abridged, trans. and ed. by Randy A. Scott and Jonathan L. Pearl (Toronto, 1995), pp. 37-8, 132-3, 136-7, 138, 215-6; P. G. Maxwell-Stuart (ed. and trans.), *Martín Del Rio. Investigations into Magic* (Manchester and New York, 2000), pp. 235-6.

¹⁹ Detailed discussion of late-medieval ritual magic is beyond the scope of this article. However, the fact that Pope John XXII empowered the inquisition to act against practitioners of ritual magic as heretics in the early 14th century, and the fact that most of those subsequently prosecuted were clerics was an important stage in the bringing together of ideas about clerics, magic and heresy, see Norma Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, (1975; third edition, London, 2005), pp. 102-43.

²⁰ Mackay, *Hammer of Witches*, pp. 75-6, 389, 397.

²¹ Kramer also linked priests with the devil by suggesting that priests could be demonically possessed and that the devil could preach in the guise of a priest (*ibid.*, pp. 342-3, 351-2).

²² Rita Voltmer, "'Hört an neu schrecklich abentheuer / von den unholden ungeheuer'" – Zur multimedialen Vermittlung des Fahndungsbildes "Hexerei" im Kontext konfessioneller Polemik', in Karl Härter et al (eds), *Repräsentationen von Kriminalität und öffentlicher Sicherheit* (Frankfurt am Main, 2010), pp. 89-163, see pp. 155-7, especially footnote 164.

Witches' Dance which was aimed at learned readers; it included three Catholic clerics shown practising forbidden magical arts, thus aligning pictorially the late-medieval tradition of ritual clerical magic with the heresy of witchcraft and connoting it negatively as Catholic.²³

The theoretical possibility of the witch-cleric was realised in various territories of the Holy Roman Empire from 1575 onwards in the executions of Catholic men of the cloth; because of their sensational nature, these executions were often reported in pamphlets or news-sheets. The first such account was printed in Vienna in 1575 and described the case of Ruprecht Rambsauer, parish priest of Bramberg in the Archbishopric of Salzburg. He was burned at the stake with his concubine, Eva Neidegger, for having allegedly raised storms by magic; the pamphlet includes a striking image of the couple at the stake, with the devil at Rambsauer's side. Neidegger had been accused of witchcraft first and then implicated Rambsauer under torture, a dynamic which was repeated in many subsequent trials against Catholic priests and their concubines elsewhere in Germany. The pamphlet also contained the idea, which cropped up again in some later trials, that clerics were unusually powerful witches; supposedly, the executioner had been unable to light the pyre until Rambsauer had foresworn the devil. The pamphlet also contained the first reference in popular print culture to demonic baptism by a named witch-cleric. The devil had promised Rambsauer money if he would swear an oath to baptise children in the devil's name; Rambsauer had refused to do this, however, agreeing to work weather magic instead.²⁴

From 1586 priests also began to be denounced for witchcraft in the mass trials that occurred in the Rhine-Meuse-Moselle region on the western side of the Holy Roman Empire,

²³ Ibid., pp. 135, 139, 144.

²⁴ *Warhafftige neue Zeytung, so den 18. Martii, in diesem 75. Jar zu Bramberg im Pintzkaw, ein Meilwegs von Mittersel im Bisthumb Satzburg, mit einem Pfarrer und seiner Köchin zugetragen hat und wie sie auch hernach umb ihre Missethat hingericht worden sind* (Vienna, 1575), Zentralbibliothek Zürich: <https://www.e-manuscripta.ch/zuz/content/pageview/872739>, pp. 45-56. On the Rambsauer trial, see Harald Schwillus, *Kleriker im Hexenprozeß. Geistliche als Opfer der Hexenprozesse des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland* (Würzburg, 1992), pp. 288-337. Legends also arose about other witch-clerics like Michael Campensis (see footnote 25) and George Burroughs (see footnote 74).

in Electoral Trier, the Imperial Abbey of St Maximin, and the Eifel region. At least three parish priests (Michael Campensis of Auw, Petrus Hildenbrandt of Esch, and Matthias Hennes of Wiesbaum) were executed in 1630, with local legends rapidly growing about the ‘super-powers’ of Campensis.²⁵ The link between clerics and witchcraft was also strengthened in this region in 1597 as a result of the execution of a Benedictine monk named Jean del Vaux from the Abbey of Stablo, whose sensational trial for witchcraft stimulated Catholic demonologist Martín Del Rio’s interest in the subject.²⁶

The Lutheran inhabitants of Rothenburg and its hinterland probably gained most exposure to ideas about witch-clerics in the early decades of the seventeenth century, however. This was because several Catholic ecclesiastical territories that were geographically close to Rothenburg experienced exceptionally severe witch-persecutions in which clerics were executed; their executions were also foregrounded in related publications. Around 430 people were executed for witchcraft in Ellwangen between 1611 and 1618, for example;²⁷ a pamphlet account of the three *Hexen-Pfaffen* (witch-priests) amongst their number was published in 1615 in Lutheran Nuremberg, the largest and most important Franconian imperial city. The pamphlet’s (unknown) author focused on the priests’ trials to make the point that Catholics spared no-one in their fanatical witch burning, and dwelt with prurient interest on the brutal ceremony of degradation to which the men were subjected before execution. The author added that the *Hexen-Pfaffen* were the main reason why there were so many witches in Ellwangen; one priest had baptised all the children brought to him over a

²⁵ Adolf Kettel, ‘Kleriker im Hexenprozess. Beispiele aus den Manderscheider Territorien und dem Trierer Land’, in Gunther Franz and Franz Irsigler (eds), *Methoden und Konzepte der historischen Hexenforschung* (Trier, 1998), pp. 169-191; Rita Voltmer, ‘Witch-finders, witch-hunters or kings of the Sabbath? The prominent role of men in the mass persecutions of the Rhine-Meuse area (16th-17th centuries)’, in Alison Rowlands (ed.), *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 74-99, especially pp. 88-90; Hans-Josef Schad, *Michael Campensis. Ein Pfarrer auf dem Scheiterhaufen* (St. Vith, 1978).

²⁶ Maxwell-Stuart, *Martín Del Rio*, pp. 5-7.

²⁷ Wolfgang Mährle, ‘“O wehe der armen seelen”. Hexenverfolgungen in der Fürstpropstei Ellwangen (1588-1694)’, in Johannes Dillinger, Thomas Fritz and Wolfgang Mährle, *Zum Feuer verdammt. Die Hexenverfolgungen in der Grafschaft Hohenberg, der Reichsstadt Reutlingen und der Fürstpropstei Ellwangen* (Stuttgart, 1998), pp. 325-491.

four-year period in the devil's name. The pamphlet was clearly an anti-Catholic polemic, but one which helped disseminate the idea of witch-clerics who baptised in the devil's name to Lutherans in Franconia and beyond.²⁸

This idea gathered cumulative impact in events that occurred in other Catholic towns close to Rothenburg between 1624 and 1630. In 1624, the preacher of Eichstätt, Johann Reichard, was implicated in the city's severe witch-hunts by his concubine; his refusal to confess to witchcraft and administering false baptisms saved his life, but his presence in Eichstätt under house arrest doubtless acted as a focus for continued talk about witch-clerics until his death in 1644.²⁹ From 1627 to 1629 the unprecedented number of forty-three clerics were executed in Würzburg in the course of the witch-hunts that claimed a total of around 900 lives in the Prince-Bishopric of Würzburg between 1626 and 1630.³⁰ Around 600 people were executed for witchcraft during these same four years in the Prince-Bishopric of Bamberg; in contrast to Würzburg only two clerics (Georg Gredel and Michael Kötzer) were tried there and sentenced to lifelong imprisonment rather than death.³¹ However, all the children who had been christened by Gredel were rebaptised at some point after his degradation on 18 May 1628.³² We know little about such rebaptism campaigns, which also occurred in 1630 after the executions of priests in the Eifel region,³³ but they were carried out by Jesuits and may have functioned (like exorcisms and devotional processions) as dramatic expressions of Counter-Reformation piety and generated broader public discussion. Catholic

²⁸ This text was one of two witch-newspapers printed together as *Zwo Hexenzeitung, die Erste, Von dreyen Hexen-Pfaffen, unnd einem Organisten zu Ellwang....die ander: Von einer Unholdin oder Hexen...* (Nuremberg, 1615), see *Zwo Hexenzeitung*, #4620, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University. Its anti-Catholic tone echoed the 1593 publication by Thomas Sigfrid, see footnote 22.

²⁹ Schwillus, *Kleriker im Hexenprozeß*, pp. 122-86. On the Eichstätt trials, see Jonathan B. Durrant, *Witchcraft, Gender and Society in Early Modern Germany* (Leiden and Boston, 2007).

³⁰ Elmar Weiß, 'Würzburger Kleriker als Angeklagte in Hexenprozessen in den Jahren 1626-1630', *Mainfränkisches Jahrbuch für Geschichte und Kunst* 40 (1988), pp. 70-94; Harald Schwillus, *Die Hexenprozesse gegen Würzburger Geistliche unter Fürstbischof Philipp Adolf von Ehrenberg (1623-1631)* (Würzburg, 1989), especially pp. 111-39.

³¹ Britta Gehm, *Die Hexenverfolgung im Hochstift Bamberg und das Eingreifen des Reichshofrates zu ihrer Beendigung* (Hildesheim, Zurich and New York, 2000); Schwillus, *Kleriker im Hexenprozeß*, pp. 204-17.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 208-14.

³³ See footnote 25.

concern about witch-clerics reached its apogee in the news-sheet published in Bamberg (in 1629) and Würzburg (in 1630) to try to justify the savage persecutions experienced in these two territories. The news-sheet reported the executions of priests who had confessed to baptising many children in the devil's name and quoted the words they had supposedly used in Würzburg: 'Ego baptizo te non in nomine Patris & Filii & Spiritus Sancti, sed in nomine Diaboli'.³⁴ By the time of Brigitta Hörner's childhood in the 1630s, then, the old stereotype of the witch-cleric had been reinvigorated to incorporate new ideas about witch-clerics baptising children in the devil's name and the possibility of such children being saved through rebaptism. These ideas seem to have had particular resonance in the print and oral culture of Franconia, influencing even young inhabitants of Lutheran territories like Rothenburg.

The major novelty in 1692, when Johann Craft was likewise accused of baptising children in the devil's name, was that he was imagined as having done so at a witches' gathering. This idea - like most of what Barbara Ehneß was coerced into saying about witchcraft during her time in custody - can be traced to Church Superintendent Sebastian Kirchmeier and his influence in shaping Ehneß' confession. But where had Kirchmeier drawn it from? We know from responses Kirchmeier made to the Rothenburg city council, when he was asked to justify his interference in the Ehneß trial, that he had read at least two demonologies by Catholic, pro-witch-hunt authors, Nicolas Rémy and Heinrich von Schultheiss.³⁵ Although obsessed with the reality of the witches' sabbath, Rémy had not discussed the possibility of witch-clerics officiating at it when he published his *Demonolatri*

³⁴ Kurtzer und wahrhafter Bericht und erschreckliche Neue Zeitung, reproduced in Wolfgang Behringer (ed.), *Hexen und Hexenprozesse* (Munich, 1988), pp. 260-63; Elmar Weiss, 'Die Hexenprozesse im Hochstift Würzburg', in Peter Kolb and Ernst G. Krenig (eds), *Unterfränkische Geschichte. Vol. 3: Vom Beginn des konfessionellen Zeitalters bis zum Ende des Dreißigjährigen Krieges* (Würzburg, 1995), pp. 327-61, p. 339; Harald Schwillus, "'Neue Zeitung: Von sechshundert Hexen, Zauberern und Teuffels-Bannern". Eine Flugschrift über die Bamberger und Würzburger Hexenprozesse des frühen 17. Jahrhunderts', *Würzburger Diözesangeschichtsblätter* 53 (1991), pp. 231-7.

³⁵ Rowlands, 'Father confessors', pp. 1032-4.

in 1595.³⁶ Schultheiss, on the other hand, published his *Außführliche Instruction, wie in Inquisition Sachen des gewlichen Laster der Zauberey ... zu procediren* in 1634 and explicitly discussed the recent executions of witch-clerics in Würzburg. Schultheiss defended what had happened there; he argued that the existence of an occasional bad Catholic priest who was worthy of execution was inevitable, using the example of Judas amongst the disciples to support this idea.³⁷ By 1692, moreover, a Lutheran pastor who had (supposedly) officiated at witches' gatherings had been executed in Germany: Andreas Koch, preacher at the church of St Nicolai in the Lutheran city of Lemgo, on 2 June 1666. Koch was prosecuted because he criticised publicly the savage witch-persecution undertaken by the Lemgo city council; he was accused of acts of harmful magic and officiating at witches' gatherings, where he had (allegedly) preached, celebrated devilish rites of marriage and communion, and crowned the witches' leader (a local merchant called Johann Rottmann). No pamphlet was published about Koch's trial, but it is likely that Kirchmeier heard of it along the grapevine of supra-regional Lutheran communication, as it was so exceptional by Lutheran standards and had also involved opinions from two Lutheran universities (Giessen and Helmstedt).³⁸

Another means by which clerics were associated with witches' gatherings in a Protestant context was the news about the mass witch-trials experienced in Lutheran Sweden between 1668 and 1675, which centred on the parish of Mora and were dominated by self-incriminating child-witches who claimed to have been taken to witches' gatherings at the site

³⁶ Nicolas Rémy, *Demonolatriy*, trans. E.A. Ashwin, ed. Montague Summers (London, 1930).

³⁷ Heinrich von Schultheiss, *Eine Außführliche Instruction, wie in Inquisition Sachen des gewlichen Laster der Zauberey ... ohn gefahr der Unschuldigen zu procediren* (*Detailed Instruction, on How to Proceed against the Dreadful Crime of Witchcraft*) (Cologne, 1634), digital copy available from the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen: <https://gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/id/PPN505628600>, pp. 491-2.

³⁸ Gisela Wilbertz, "...es ist kein Erretter da gewesen....". *Pfarrer Andreas Koch, als Hexenmeister hingerichtet am 2. Juni 1666* (2nd edn, Bielefeld, 2008; 1st edn 1999); Gisela Wilbertz, "'Bekehrer' oder 'Mahner'? Die Rolle von Geistlichen in den Hexenprozessen des 17. Jahrhunderts am Beispiel der Stadt Lemgo", *Jahrbuch für Westfälische Kirchengeschichte* 102 (2006), pp. 51-87, especially pp. 68-72. I am grateful to Dr Wilbertz for the following references to statements made against Koch about his alleged preaching and officiating at weddings and communion at witches' gatherings: Stadtarchiv Lemgo A3661 (by Magdalena Lüdeking, 14 and 16.2.1666); A3660 (by Ilsche Niemann, 28.3.1666); A3665 (by Lineke Voht, 7.4.1666).

known as Blåkulla.³⁹ The original Swedish report of the trials was translated and published in Dutch in 1670, in German in 1670 and 1677, and in English in 1683; it was taken up again in the early 1690s by Protestant authors (such as Balthasar Bekker and Cotton Mather) engaged in Europe-wide debates about the reality of witchcraft.⁴⁰ Women were the main victims of the Swedish witch-hunts and they dominated the stories of Blåkulla told by the children; however, the Mora pamphlet also stated that the devil had had the children baptised by his priests at Blåkulla.⁴¹ This was the only time that clerics appeared in an officiating role in a Protestant account of a witches' meeting in popular print culture; the novelty and wide dissemination of the Mora material helps explain why there was a late-seventeenth-century moment when this idea emerged in trials in some areas. It is striking that the allegations against Johann Craft in Rothenburg in 1692 were made a few weeks before Puritan minister George Burroughs was arrested on suspicion of witchcraft in New England; he was accused subsequently of 'being an head Actor' at the 'Hellish Randezvouzes' of the Salem witches and of recruiting them into the devil's service through demonic re-baptisms.⁴² Unlike Craft, and despite protesting his innocence, Burroughs was found guilty and executed on 19 August 1692, thus becoming the last of just four Protestant ministers to suffer this fate in early modern Europe and its colonies.⁴³

³⁹ Bengt Ankarloo, 'Sweden: The Mass Burnings (1668-76)', in Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (eds.), *Early Modern European Witchcraft. Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 285-317.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 317. Bekker was a sceptic, but Mather reproduced the Mora pamphlet in his book about the Salem witch-trials to prove that places beyond New England had also been attacked by the devil, see Cotton Mather, *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (Boston, 1693), Dorset Press facsimile edition (New York, 1991), pp. 135-9.

⁴¹ *Außführlicher Bericht Von Der entdeckten grausamen Zauberey In dem Dorffe Mohra und umbliegenden Plätzen in Schweden* (German translation from the Dutch pamphlet, 1677), digital copy available from the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek: http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb11216285_00012.html

⁴² Mather, *Wonders*, pp. 99-106, especially p. 99. On the importance and novelty of the idea of demonic rebaptism in the Burroughs case, see Bernard Rosenthal, *Salem Story. Reading the Witch Trials of 1692* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 129-50, especially pp. 130-5. Rosenthal and other scholars of New England witchcraft seem unaware of the European background to ideas about witch-clerics.

⁴³ Burroughs features to some extent in all accounts of the Salem witch-trials, but the best analyses of his life and trial are by Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare. The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* (2nd edn, New York, 2003; 1st edn 2002), pp. 112-55, 232-65 and Rosenthal, *Salem Story*, pp. 129-50. The other three

III

What predisposed at least some people in seventeenth-century Rothenburg to link the reinvigorated witch-cleric stereotype with Johann Mauck and Johann Craft? At first glance, the two men appear to have been very different. The son of a pastor, Mauck was far more erudite, ambitious, and mobile. Born in Schüpf (near Nuremberg) in 1589, he studied at the universities of Strasbourg, Erfurt and Jena and held seven livings during his career, spending only three years in the Rothenburg territory as pastor of Spielbach from 1629-1632, and attaining the relatively prestigious position of Court Preacher to the Counts of Erbach (in Hesse) from 1638-42.⁴⁴ Mauck also went into print with his theological opinions, publishing two sermons about godparenthood in 1625.⁴⁵ Craft, by contrast, was born in Rothenburg in 1642 and spent his entire life in the territory, apart from his years of study at the University of Wittenberg. A flour-dealer's son, Craft stayed firmly at the bottom of the clerical career ladder as the pastor of two, relatively poor, rural parishes: Tauberscheckenbach, from 1669 to 1685 and again from 1690 until his death by suicide in 1720, and Spielbach, from 1685 to 1690.⁴⁶ Craft's standards of learning and behaviour left much to be desired; he was called regularly before the Rothenburg *Consistorium* (Church Council) from 1689 onwards to be

Protestant ministers executed for witchcraft were John Lowes from Suffolk in 1645 (see footnote 72); Kaspar Dulichius from Saxony in 1655 (see footnote 73); and Andreas Koch from Lemgo in 1666 (see footnote 38).

⁴⁴ Dannheimer, *Verzeichnis*, p. 91; Otto Haug, Max-Adolf Cramer and Marlene Holtzman (eds), *Baden-Württembergisches Pfarrerbuch*, vol. II, part 2 (Stuttgart, 1981), p. 287. The last living Mauck held was from 1647-8; thereafter we lose track of him.

⁴⁵ Johann Mauck, *Conciones duae Apologeticae Oder Zwo Abgenötigte vnd abgetrungenene Verantwortungs Predigten von der Gevatterschafft* (Rothenburg, 1625); copy held in the Bibliothek des Evangelischen Predigerseminars, Wittenberg.

⁴⁶ Dannheimer, *Verzeichnis*, p. 83; StAR B68 fols. 251r, 252v. On the poverty of the two livings, see C. B. (Christian Best), 'Aus Rothenburgs Landhege. Tauberscheckenbach', *Die Linde* 3 (1911), pp. 39, 42-3, 47-8, especially pp. 43, 47; *Kirchenchronik Spielbach* (no author; published by the Pfarramt Spielbach, Spielbach, 2004), pp. 31-2, 59-60. The Rothenburg councillors tended to give the Tauberscheckenbach living to the newest pastoral recruit and move the incumbent elsewhere (see Dannheimer, *Verzeichnis*, pp. 45, 57, 89), suggesting that it was seen as a lowly rung on the pastoral career ladder. The fact that Craft was sent back to Tauberscheckenbach in 1690 after his unsuccessful spell in Spielbach indicated the low opinion the authorities had of his abilities.

reprimanded by Church Superintendent Sebastian Kirchmeier about various serious pastoral shortcomings (laxness in catechising children; failure to study, write new sermons or visit the sick; excessive drinking, his wild domestic life; and maltreatment of his wife).⁴⁷

Despite their differences, however, Mauck and Craft shared two behavioural tendencies that were often regarded as witch-like by contemporaries: quarrelsomeness and verbal aggression. Mauck had a habit of antagonising his patrons and parishioners, a fact which explains why he had such a mobile career. He was dismissed in 1628 from the living of Rinderfeld for publishing two (vehemently anti-Calvinist) sermons about godparenthood without official permission,⁴⁸ for example, and damaged his prospects in Rothenburg in 1631 by slandering Johann Bezold, the city mayor who chaired the Rothenburg *Consistorium*.⁴⁹ Mauck insulted Bezold because of his dissatisfaction with the manner in which Bezold had resolved a dispute over grazing rights that had erupted in Spielbach between the pastor and his flock in 1630. Mauck's parishioners claimed that he had called them old dogs and perjurers from the pulpit in the course of the dispute, and had further abused his spiritual power by excommunicating the church-warden who opposed him; Mauck countered these allegations by blaming the Spielbach innkeeper (to whom apparently all his parishioners were in debt) for fomenting the discord.⁵⁰ Craft also quarrelled with his Tauberscheckenbach flock over access to resources (in his case, trees), saying publicly that he wished all the trees in the village could be made into switches with which he could flog its inhabitants.⁵¹ A much more serious incident occurred in 1690 while Craft was pastor of Spielbach, however, when he assaulted a churchwarden named Hans Schön after becoming drunk at a gathering held to mark the end of the village school inspection. Craft also cursed Schön as a rogue and beastly

⁴⁷ StAN Ro. Rep. 2094 fols. 169r-170r, 175r, 177r, 180r, 182r, 187r, 189r, 195r-196r; StAR B48 fols. 49v, 51v-52r; StAR AA349 fols. 67r-68v, 70r-76v, 79r-81r; StAR A925 fols. 93v-98r.

⁴⁸ Landesarchiv Baden-Württemberg, Hohenlohe-Zentralarchiv Neuenstein (hereafter HZAN) Ni 5 Bü 282, Bündel 3.

⁴⁹ StAN Ro. Rep. 2091 fols. 318r-319r.

⁵⁰ Ibid., fols. 311r-312r

⁵¹ StAR B48 fols. 49v, 51v-52r.

dog, and shouted out that he called not on God, but on the devil (to take Schön).⁵² These examples of explicitly unchristian verbal aggression could all too easily be construed as witch-like by those who heard them; their utterance by an ordained minister would have made them particularly disturbing.

Factors specific to each of the two cases also shaped the witchcraft allegations against Mauck and Craft. The unusual emphasis on godparenthood in Brigitta Hörner's story was probably linked to the central role that Mauck's controversial sermons about godparenthood had played in his arrival in Spielbach in 1629. He had published them without official permission while the pastor of Rinderfeld in 1625 and had been dismissed from the living as a result by its patrons, Georg Sigmund von Rosenberg and the Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach.⁵³ In the sermons Mauck argued that baptism was the most holy compact with God, entered into on an infant's behalf by its godparents, and that therefore no papists, Calvinists or other sinners worthy of excommunication should be allowed to stand as godparents to Lutheran children. The main focus of his ire was, however, reserved for Calvinists rather than Catholics. How, Mauck asked, could such people claim to believe in the Lutheran faith on the child's behalf without perjuring themselves, or renounce the devil on the child's behalf when they were in his service themselves?⁵⁴ Some familiarity with Mauck's text would almost certainly have existed in Rothenburg and Spielbach in the late 1620s and early 1630s; the sermons had been published in Rothenburg with the support of leading Rothenburg clerics and would doubtless have been discussed locally as the cause of Mauck's ignominious dismissal from Rinderfeld.⁵⁵ Moreover, Mauck's wife had actually acquired a familial association with Calvinism shortly after their marriage in 1615. Her father, pastor Johannes II

⁵² StAN Ro. Rep. 2094 fols. 169r-170r, 175r, 177r, 180r, 182r, 187r, 189r, 195r-196r; StAR AA349 fols. 67r-68v, 70r-76v, 79r-81r.

⁵³ See footnotes 45 and 48.

⁵⁴ Mauck, *Conciones duae Apologeticae*.

⁵⁵ Three of the five supporting eulogies appended to Mauck's text were from leading Rothenburg clerics, including Church Superintendent Georg Zyrlein. This support of Mauck in 1625 helps explain why he was offered the Spielbach living after his dismissal from Rinderfeld.

Hartung, had accepted the introduction of a Calvinist order of church service in the (formerly Lutheran) town of Ullstadt in 1616 while holding the living there from 1607-1623.⁵⁶ This meant that by 1626 Mauck was being ridiculed in print for criticising Calvinist godparents despite having married the daughter of a Calvinist himself.⁵⁷ Ironically, therefore, Mauck himself was probably responsible for introducing into local discourse (novel) ideas about godparents who were in league with the devil that was re-worked in 1639 in Brigitta Hörner's claim that his wife was her witch-godmother.

A final factor which counted against Mauck was that his immediate predecessor in Spielbach, Johann Georg Hopf, who had held the living from 1626, had been executed in sensational circumstances while in post; he was beheaded for adultery in Rothenburg on 17 June 1629, with one of his (three) paramours and another man who had also committed adultery with her.⁵⁸ Apart from three radical preachers who were executed during the Peasants' War in 1525, Hopf was the only cleric to be executed in early modern Rothenburg.⁵⁹ The unusual triple execution of 1629, the scale of the sexual sin it represented, and the fact that Hopf was a pastor, generated significant contemporary comment and became the subject of much local talk thereafter.⁶⁰ Knowledge of Hopf would have been especially fresh in Spielbach, where the memory of his ungodly behaviour would have stuck with most tenacity to the buildings and spaces associated with his short-lived presence there: the pastor's house, where he had committed adultery with two of his lovers; the parish church,

⁵⁶ Haug et al, *Baden-Württembergisches Pfarrerbuch*, p. 287; Wilhelm Dannheimer, Wilhelm Zahn and Georg Kuhr (eds), *Ritterschaftliches Pfarrerbuch Franken* (Neustadt an der Aisch, 1979), pp. 124, 492.

⁵⁷ *Eines Liebhabers der waarheit Einfeltiges Bedencken* (anonymous, 1626, no place of publication), p. 3; copy held in the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel.

⁵⁸ StAR B665 fols. 25r-30r.

⁵⁹ Roy L. Vice, 'The politics of blame in the aftermath of the Peasants' War in Franconia: Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt and Rothenburg ob der Tauber', in Karl Borchardt and Ekkehart Tittmann (eds), *Städte, Regionen, Vergangenheiten. Beiträge für Ludwig Schnurrer zum 75. Geburtstag* (Würzburg, 2003), pp. 243-62, see p. 249.

⁶⁰ See the space devoted to Hopf's execution in the chronicle by Sebastian Dehner: Karl Heller (ed.), *Rothenburg ob der Tauber im Jahrhundert des großen Krieges. Aus der Chronik des Sebastian Dehner* (Ansbach, 1913), p. 45.

and village tavern.⁶¹ Mauck may thus have had the misfortune to acquire a negative reputation fairly rapidly in Spielbach, simply by occupying the same physical spaces as his sinful predecessor. In 1639 Brigitta Hörner even conflated Mauck and Hopf, calling Mauck the pastor of Spielbach who was executed in Rothenburg; this points to a heightened sense of Mauck's ungodliness, as much as it suggests childish confusion on Brigitta's part about which pastor was which.⁶²

Craft may also have acquired some negative reputation by association with the Spielbach living; it is striking that the first major crisis of his pastoral career erupted while he was there between 1685 and 1690, rather than while he was in Tauberscheckenbach between 1669 and 1685. He also had the misfortune to be in post in the later seventeenth century, when the Rothenburg authorities placed particular emphasis on raising the standards of the rural clergy as part of their programme of rebuilding the territory's infrastructure after the Thirty Years War. Sebastian Kirch's immediate predecessor as Rothenburg Church Superintendent from 1666-1680, Johann Ludwig Hartmann, introduced an annual synod and more frequent sermons to improve the rural pastors, as well as many other measures aimed at getting the inhabitants of Rothenburg back into godly shape (he renewed the territory's Church Ordinance; introduced church penance as a sanction against sin; attempted to eradicate popular magic; and published books of instruction for pastors and laypeople).⁶³ Kirchmeier tried to continue Hartmann's work while Church Superintendent from 1681-1700; his pursuit of Craft was thus part of the ongoing attempt to raise standards by making an example of under-performing pastors. Kirchmeier may have seized the opportunity to implicate Craft in the Ehneß trial because he could see no other way to get rid of him. By

⁶¹ On the materiality of early modern memory and the way it stuck to places and things, see Matthew Lundin, Hans Medick, Mitchell Merback, Judith Pollmann and Susanne Rau, 'Memory before Modernity: Cultures and Practices in Early Modern Germany', *German History* 33 (2015), pp. 100-122, especially p. 107.

⁶² StAR A895 fol. 167r.

⁶³ On Hartmann's career, see Alison Rowlands, "'Superstition', magic and clerical polemic in seventeenth-century Germany', in S. A. Smith and Alan Knight (eds), *The Religion of Fools? Superstition Past and Present* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 157-177.

1692 Craft had been repeatedly reprimanded, threatened with prison, and fined to force him to improve his behaviour; the *Consistorium* had few disciplinary options left, other than demotion to the post of rural schoolmaster or dismissal.⁶⁴ However, Craft's particularly dismal pastoral performance probably convinced Kirchmeier that he really was in league with the devil. After learning of Craft's brawl in Spielbach in 1690, for instance, Kirchmeier called Craft a *Saufteufel* (drinking devil) and *Schlagteufel* (brawling devil), linking Craft to the Lutheran genre of devil-books which personified and demonised everyday sins.⁶⁵ Kirchmeier was doubtless encouraged to view Craft's failures through the lens of witchcraft by the role Kirchmeier played in the dramatic case of Hans Adam Knöspel, a self-confessed boy-witch who was incarcerated in the Rothenburg hospital from 1689 to 1698. During this time, Kirchmeier oversaw the boy's spiritual rehabilitation, which involved a ceremony in which Knöspel renounced the devil in the city's parish church of St James in November 1690.⁶⁶ In the context of his personal experience of battling the forces of evil in the cases of Knöspel and Ehneß it would have become easier for Kirchmeier to imagine Craft as his polar opposite – a cleric on the devil's side rather than God's.

IV

What insights can be drawn by comparing the cases of Mauck and Craft to those of other clerics accused of witchcraft in early modern Europe? Were Protestant pastors vulnerable to suspicions of witchcraft for the same reasons as Catholic priests or were there confessional differences? Work on the Catholic territories of Germany where priests were tried and executed for witchcraft concludes that, in some regions, the Counter Reformation constituted

⁶⁴ StAN Ro. Rep. 2094 fols. 169r-170r, 189r, 195r-196r, 298r.

⁶⁵ StAN Ro. Rep. 2094 fol. 169r. Kirchmeier's predecessor Hartmann published several 'devil-books', including one entitled *Sauff-Teuffel* (1679), see Rowlands, "'Superstition", magic, and clerical polemic', pp. 158-9.

⁶⁶ See Alison Rowlands, 'Gender, ungodly parents and a witch family in seventeenth-century Germany', *Past and Present* 232 (2016), pp. 45-86, especially pp. 78-84.

a key framing context for such trials. In the Rhine-Meuse-Moselle area, for example, these trials were part of a campaign led by the Jesuits to impose new, post-Tridentine standards of clerical celibacy and piety on old-fashioned (and usually rural) parish priests. Priests who kept concubines were at higher risk of being implicated in witch-trials; many of these women were accused of witchcraft in the first instance and then forced through torture to denounce as witches the priests who were their masters/lovers. In the context of this Counter-Reformation activity, priests who practiced magical healing and blessing rituals also ran a heightened risk of being denounced and tried as witches. Catholic clerics who became embroiled in disputes with their parishioners or who expressed opposition to witch-trials also rendered themselves vulnerable to denunciation; for his opponents, such a denunciation was a means by which to silence or get rid of a cleric who had become unpopular or politically problematic.⁶⁷ The uniquely severe persecution of witch-clerics in Würzburg between 1627 and 1629, which targeted urban canons rather than rural parish priests, is best understood in this latter context. It seems to have been triggered by the opposition expressed by the canons of the cathedral chapter against a mandate, promulgated in 1627 by the witch-hunting Prince-Bishop, Philipp Adolf von Ehrenberg (1583-1631), which regulated the confiscation of condemned witches' goods in his favour.⁶⁸ Von Ehrenberg and his advisors also saw the persecution of the canons as a way of limiting the power of the cathedral chapter. The canons' relatively comfortable and secure lifestyle also aroused the envy of ordinary Würzburgers, who were suffering in the late 1620s in the wake of harvest failures and high food prices; once arrested, some of the accused clerics implicated significant numbers of fellow canons as supposed sabbath-attenders through forced denunciations.⁶⁹ The events in Würzburg were thus shaped by the

⁶⁷ Kettel, 'Kleriker im Hexenprozess'; Voltmer, 'Witch-finders, witch-hunters or kings of the Sabbath?', pp. 74-99, especially pp. 88-90.

⁶⁸ Weiß, 'Würzburger Kleriker', p. 72 (for reference to the mandate). Weiß argues that the main reason for the prosecution of the canons (beyond the general contemporary fear of witchcraft) was the particularly strong association between clerics and the devil, which went back to the *Malleus*, *ibid.*, p. 78.

⁶⁹ Schwillus, *Hexenprozesse gegen Würzburger Geistliche*, pp. 17, 28, 38, 42-6, 109-10.

vulnerable socio-political position of the canons and by the dynamics of persecution, rather than the Counter-Reformation, which had largely been completed by the time Ehrenberg became Prince-Bishop in 1622.⁷⁰

To what extent did Protestant witch-clerics fit into these explanatory models? Like some priests, some pastors were targeted because they - like Mauck and Craft - were unpopular with their parishioners, colleagues, or superiors. Disputes with members of their flocks lay behind the witchcraft charges levelled against Johannes Stephani, the Calvinist pastor of Hillentrup in the County of Lippe, in 1654,⁷¹ and John Lowes, the Anglican minister of Brandeston, Suffolk, who was first accused of witchcraft in 1615 and finally tried and hanged as a witch in 1645 after being forced to confess to raising storms at sea by magic.⁷² The execution of Kaspar Dulichius, a Lutheran pastor from Electoral Saxony, also resulted from a series of disputes – in his case, with his clerical colleagues, his wife and her father - which culminated in Dulichius's divorce and dismissal from office in Kamenz in 1643. Dulichius returned to Kamenz in 1654 and was accused of witchcraft by his former father-in-law, a Kamenz city councillor; he was arrested, forced to confess and executed in 1655.⁷³ George Burroughs likewise had a history of disputes with parishioners during his mobile

⁷⁰ The Counter-Reformation had been largely completed in Würzburg by Prince-Bishop Julius Echter von Mespelbrunn between 1573 and 1617. Large-scale witch-persecution had also taken place there in 1616-17, although this did not target clerics. In *Hexenbrenner, Seelenretter. Fürstbischof Julius Echter von Mespelbrunn (1573-1617) und die Hexenverfolgungen im Hochstift Würzburg* (Bielefeld, 2017), Andreas Flurschütz da Cruz argues that the initiative for this persecution came from local officials and communities rather than Mespelbrunn, whose involvement was at the end of trials to confirm sentences. The main difference in Würzburg in the late 1620s was the much stronger pro-active witch-hunting stance of Prince-Bishop von Ehrenberg and his personal willingness to condone the trials and executions of the canons (perhaps he wanted to outdo von Mespelbrunn)? The Würzburg example shows that we need to test whether there was a specific link between the persecution of clerics and counter-reforming zeal in individual Catholic territories (although even if no direct link can be made, general post-Tridentine disciplining of lay-people and clerics helped create a milieu within which witch-priests appeared more plausible).

⁷¹ Rainer Walz, *Hexenglaube und magische Kommunikation im Dorf der Frühen Neuzeit* (Paderborn, 1993), pp. 196-8. Suspended from office, Stephani was still defending himself against the allegations in 1659, when the case-documentation ends.

⁷² See C. L'Estrange Ewen, *The Trials of John Lowes, Clerk* (London, 1937). At the time of their trials Stephani and Lowes had been in their parishes for decades; Lowes had been at loggerheads with some members of his flock since 1614, Stephani since 1630.

⁷³ Manfred Wilde, *Die Zauberei- und Hexenprozesse in Kursachsen* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna, 2003), pp. 140-1, 378, 518.

career as a Puritan minister in New England, although the witchcraft suspicions against him coalesced particularly around his mistreatment of his wives and his apparently preternatural physical strength and ability to escape unscathed from Native American attacks on settler communities.⁷⁴ Like some priests, some pastors also rendered themselves vulnerable to suspicion by implicitly or explicitly criticising the witch-trials that were ongoing in their locality. The sheltering of a woman accused of witchcraft in his own house strengthened suspicion against Stephani (in 1654) and Lowes (in 1615), while Heimrad Grape, Lutheran minister of the church of the Holy Ghost in Güstrow, Mecklenburg, was prosecuted in 1683 for having helped people accused of witchcraft flee the authorities in the 1660s.⁷⁵ The most notable Protestant case in this context was that of Andreas Koch (discussed above), the Lutheran pastor executed in 1666 for his outspoken opposition to the Lemgo witch-trials.⁷⁶

Illicit use of forbidden magical rituals, which was policed more strictly in the post-Reformation era, also figured in some allegations of witchcraft made against Protestant as well as Catholic clerics. A few pastors from the Lutheran Duchy of Saxony were disciplined for acts of sorcery or superstition, for example, while twenty-two clerics or their close relatives were accused of witchcraft in the Lutheran Duchy of Mecklenburg in the context of a state campaign to eradicate popular superstition in the second half of the seventeenth century.⁷⁷ Such cases, and those involving Lowes (who was accused of being a ‘scandalous minister’ as well as a witch), Burroughs (who was also suspected of theological irregularity and even of being a Baptist) and Craft, implicated pastors who were perceived to fall short of the standards expected of godly ministers in life, learning and doctrine; they were faint

⁷⁴ Norton, *In the Devil's Snare*, pp. 112-55, especially pp. 123-32. On clerics as ‘super-witches’, see footnote 24.

⁷⁵ Walz, *Hexenglaube*, pp. 197-8 (Stephani); L'Estrange Ewen, *The Trials of John Lowes*, pp. 2-3 (Lowes); Katrin Moeller, *Dass Willkür über Recht ginge. Hexenverfolgung in Mecklenburg im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Bielefeld, 2007), pp. 141-2 (Grape).

⁷⁶ See footnote 38.

⁷⁷ Wilde, *Die Zauberei- und Hexenprozesse in Kursachsen*, pp. 139-40 (Saxony); Moeller, *Dass Willkür über Recht ginge*, pp. 239-40 (Mecklenburg).

echoes of the far more systematic – often Jesuit-driven - campaigns to discipline priests who failed to meet post-Tridentine standards of clerical behaviour.⁷⁸ These areas of overlap between Protestant and Catholic clerics are unsurprising, given their common occupational status and the fact that ideas about witch-clerics were spread across confessional boundaries by demonological texts, channels of oral communication, and a print culture which began in Catholic regions and spread to have an impact in some Protestant areas by the seventeenth century. As a result of these shared ideas, Catholic and Protestant witch-clerics alike could be imagined as working for the devil instead of God, committing - or encouraging others to commit - acts of harmful magic, and officiating at witches' gatherings.

V

Despite these similarities, however, and as the stark contrast between the numbers of Protestant and Catholic clerics who lost their lives in witch-trials in early modern Europe demonstrates (four, as opposed to c. 150), pastors were made into witches much less often than priests.⁷⁹ There were several inter-linked reasons for this. First, because of the differently gendered meanings of the word for 'witch' in Catholic and Lutheran translations of the Bible, German Protestants connoted witchcraft more strongly as female than Catholics. Likewise, the idea of the dual-gendered witches' sabbath, attended by male as well as female

⁷⁸ More clerics might have been accused of witchcraft in Essex and Suffolk in 1645 had the trials not been preceded by the campaign against scandalous ministers in 1643-4; backed by Parliament, this gave local Puritans the chance to effect the dismissal of ministers deemed scandalous in behaviour or doctrine. Many communities thus rid themselves of unpopular clerics before the witch-trials started in 1645. On Burroughs, see Rosenthal, *Salem Story*, pp. 129-50.

⁷⁹ See footnote 43 for the four Protestant clerics who were executed; for the number of Catholic clerics who died (by execution or in custody), see Rita Voltmer, 'Geistliche im Hexenprozess – Versuch eines Überblicks', paper given at the Arbeitskreis Interdisziplinäre Hexenforschung (AKIH) conference *Männer, Magie und Hexenverfolgung*, 26–28 February 2009, Stuttgart-Hohenheim. I am very grateful to Dr. Voltmer for allowing me to draw on this unpublished paper. To some extent, this contrast also reflects the fact that there were more large-scale witch-trial episodes in Catholic areas; 14 of the 23 largest post-Reformation European witch-hunts took place in Catholic territories, see Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts. A Global History* (Cambridge and Malden, MA, 2004), p. 130.

witches, was more likely to be prominent in Catholic than Protestant territories. Both of these gendering processes made witch-clerics as a sub-set of male witches more plausible to Catholics.⁸⁰ Another key difference in the dynamics of suspicion and accusation against Catholic priests related to their sexual conduct. Keeping a concubine was an obvious breach of clerical celibacy for a priest; moreover, the arrest and torture of the unfortunate women in this position was an important mechanism by means of which denunciations against priests were elicited and trials against them initiated in some Catholic regions.⁸¹ By contrast, sexual misconduct hardly ever featured in allegations against Protestant witch-clerics and, as the case of Johann Georg Hopf from Rothenburg shows, it was possible for a Protestant cleric to be prosecuted for serious sexual sin without being labelled a witch.⁸² Finally, the type of large-scale persecution driven by a belief in the reality of the witches' sabbath and the excessive use of torture to force suspects to confess and denounce others also occurred more often in Catholic areas; once caught up in this process, it was hard even for men of the cloth to escape.⁸³ More clerics were therefore made into witches in Catholic areas; their executions, and the news disseminated about them, helped strengthen the witch-cleric stereotype which, as discussed above, was anyway associated most often in demonologies and print culture with Catholic priests.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Rolf Schulte, 'Men as accused witches in the Holy Roman Empire', in Rowlands (ed.), *Witchcraft and Masculinities*, pp. 52-73, especially pp. 65-8. Catholics were also more likely than Protestants to believe that such sabbaths took place in reality rather than the imagination.

⁸¹ Voltmer, 'Geistliche im Hexenprozess'; see also above, for discussion of the pamphlet dealing with the trial of Ruprecht Ramsbauer from 1575 (footnote 24). Sexual misconduct was one of the charges levelled against Calvinist minister Johannes Stephani, see Walz, *Hexenglaube*, pp. 197-8. Otherwise it was conspicuous by its absence from witch-trials of pastors.

⁸² See footnotes 58 and 60.

⁸³ This was exemplified in the Würzburg trials, see footnote 69.

⁸⁴ The only Protestant cleric whose trial for witchcraft made it into popular print was John Lowes, who was listed first in *A True Relation of the Araignment of eightene Witches* (London, 1645), see Malcolm Gaskill (ed.), *English Witchcraft 1560-1736. Volume 3: The Matthew Hopkins Trials* (London, 2003), pp. 47-56. The pamphlet made no reference to Lowes having baptised or performed any other ceremonies in the devil's name, but did express anxiety that he had 'preached about threescore sermons after he had made his Covenant with the Devill', *ibid.*, p. 51. The Burroughs trial was discussed by Cotton Mather in his 1693 demonology, *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (see footnote 40).

Judicial authorities in Protestant territories were, on the whole, very reluctant to try, let alone execute, pastors for witchcraft. The Rothenburg councillors showed no interest in pursuing or further publicising the allegations against Johann Mauck in 1639, opting instead to close the case by sending Brigitta Hörner to the city hospital for spiritual rehabilitation.⁸⁵ In 1692 the councillors also dropped their investigation of the witchcraft allegations against Johann Craft (who vehemently protested his innocence) once the inappropriate interference of Superintendent Kirchmeier in the trial of Barbara Ehneß became clear.⁸⁶ The picture was similar elsewhere. The handful of pastors caught up in trials in Lutheran Saxony and Mecklenburg were a tiny fraction of the overall totals of accused in these territories, with Wilde describing the execution of pastor Dulichius in Saxony in 1655 as ‘exceptional’ in the duchy’s legal history.⁸⁷ Dulichius was, moreover, largely the architect of his own downfall; his excessively antagonistic behaviour (which was possibly linked to mental instability) caused his divorce and lost him two clerical posts before he ran his neck into a noose by returning to Kamenz and courting his ex-father-in-law’s wrath in 1654. Andreas Koch also brought about his own demise in Lemgo in 1666, albeit for far nobler reasons. Koch

⁸⁵ This was on the advice of municipal jurist Georg Christoph Walther, StAR A895 fols.171r-173v. This way of treating child-witches was first used in Rothenburg in 1627 (see Rowlands, *Witchcraft Narratives*, pp. 114-17) and was part of what Johannes Dillinger has called the ‘pastoralisation’ of child-witch-trials, see Johannes Dillinger, *Kinder im Hexenprozess. Magie und Kindheit in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Stuttgart, 2013) .pp. 206-11. Brigitta was rejected by her relatives on her release from the hospital and died in the Rothenburg hinterland in 1640, see StAR A895 fols. 408r-420v. Mauck’s wife had died in Wertheim on 27.2.1638 (see Haug et al, *Baden-Württembergisches Pfarrerbuch*, p. 287), so there was no scope for pursuing her either.

⁸⁶ Rowlands, ‘Father confessors’, especially pp. 1022-23 (discussion of letter by Craft to the councillors in March 1692, protesting his innocence and explaining that Kirchmeier wanted to make him into witch). This attempt by Kirchmeier to make Craft into a witch was similar to (although much less successful than) the destruction in New England in 1692 of George Burroughs, which Clive Holmes argues plausibly was spearheaded by Puritan minister Cotton Mather, see Clive Holmes, ‘The Opinion of the Cambridge Association, 1 August 1692: A Neglected Text of the Salem Witch Trials’, *New England Quarterly*, 89 (2016), pp. 643-67, especially pp. 652-5.

⁸⁷ Twenty-two clerics or their close relatives were accused in Mecklenburg out of a total of 4,000 trials against 3,704 individuals; pastors or their family members constituted eight of the 905 individuals accused of witchcraft in Saxony, with Dulichius the only pastor amongst the 284 known death sentences, see Moeller, *Dass Willkür über Recht ginge*, pp. 46, 239-40 (Mecklenburg); Wilde, *Die Zauberei- und Hexenprozesse in Kursachsen*, pp. 139-40, 295 (Saxony). On the exceptionality of the Dulichius execution, see *ibid.*, p. 141. Gerd Schwerhoff is critical of Wilde’s statistics, arguing that Wilde has miscategorised some trials; Schwerhoff concludes that there were 614 cases in Saxony, rather than the 905 Wilde counted, see Gerd Schwerhoff, ‘Zentren und treibende Kräfte der frühneuzeitlichen Hexenverfolgung – Sachsen im regionalen Vergleich’, *Neues Archiv für sächsische Geschichte* 79 (2008), pp.61-100, especially pp. 66-71. Even the lower figure does not detract from the exceptionality of the Dulichius case, however.

demonstrated heroic compassion and courage in speaking out against the Lemgo witch-hunts, although his vulnerability to prosecution was increased by his criticism of the Lemgo city councillors and the fact that he was suspected of involvement in the writing and public display of an anonymous slanderous letter in Lemgo in December 1665. Addressed to the Count of Lippe, it was highly critical of the Lemgo witch-hunters and their supporters at county level and helped ensure that Koch received no protection from the Count once the Lemgo councillors moved against him. Even then, the councillors felt uneasy about condemning Koch; they had him beheaded and his remains burned early in the morning close to his prison cell (rather than in the usual time and place for execution) to avoid public scrutiny of their actions.⁸⁸ Koch also had the misfortune to be caught up in the most severe phase of Lemgo's witch-trials.⁸⁹ John Lowes and George Burroughs found themselves in very similar situations; they were executed during the largest episodes of witch-persecution ever to occur in England (East Anglia, 1645-7) and New England (Salem, 1692) respectively. In both cases, exceptional legal procedures (use of torture by witch-finder Matthew Hopkins against Lowes and of spectral evidence against Burroughs) ensured their convictions.⁹⁰

Protestant pastors were more usually protected from prosecution as witches by three inter-related factors. To begin with, the witch-cleric stereotype was linked much more strongly and frequently to Catholic priests in contemporary demonological texts, popular print culture and images – indeed, this negative link was made deliberately by Protestant polemicists. It is striking, for instance, that the German translation of the account of the witch-meetings that had allegedly taken place in Lutheran Sweden used the Catholic term

⁸⁸ On Koch, see foot note 38.

⁸⁹ In Lemgo, there were 86 executions for witchcraft between 1628 and 1637 (81 women and 5 men), and around 150 between 1653 and 1676 (including at least 33 men, one of whom was Koch), see Wilbertz, “‘Bekehrer’ oder ‘Mahner’?”, p. 59. Koch's critical perspective was gained as a result of his experiences as father confessor to many of those executed in 1653. The Lemgo figures show the rarity of the execution of a pastor, but also suggest that such an execution could be more easily contemplated once the overall number of men prosecuted in a locality increased.

⁹⁰ See footnotes 43 and 72. Both men died protesting their innocence, but English law allowed for a jury to convict them anyway.

‘priests’ to refer to the clerics who had baptised children into the devil’s service there.⁹¹

Georg Christoph Walther, the jurist who advised the Rothenburg councillors on the case of Brigitta Hörner, also made the point that the witch-priest who dedicated children to the devil through baptism was a theologically unsound idea peculiar to Catholics, in the opinion he wrote on Hörner’s case in 1639. Walther argued that this idea rested on the erroneous Catholic belief that the sacramental efficacy of baptism derived from its celebration by a priest whose status as godly or demonic fundamentally affected the outcome of the rite itself. According to Lutheran teaching, which denied that priests had superior spiritual status over ordinary Christians and therefore elevated the sacrament itself over the person performing it, baptism could be efficaciously carried out even by a cleric of evil life.⁹² The implication of Walther’s opinion was thus that Brigitta Hörner had been properly baptised, whatever she might say to the contrary; it gave no encouragement to the Rothenburg councillors to pursue Mauck at law.

The second reason why Lutherans were loath to take the idea of the witch-cleric seriously was because they could not adopt the tactic of mass rebaptism which was employed occasionally in Catholic territories in the wake of witch-priests’ trials. Canon law allowed for the possibility that an individual whose first baptism had not been performed properly could be baptised again ‘on condition’;⁹³ Luther rejected this idea in the early years of the Reformation, however, and most Lutheran parts of Germany had stopped the practice by

⁹¹ ‘Er tauffet sie auch durch seinen Priester welchen die Zauberinnen darzu bestellt haben und befestigen solche Tauffe mit vielen greulichen Eyden und Beschwerden’, *Außführlicher Bericht*. The English version also uses the term ‘priest’, Mather, *Wonders*, p. 137.

⁹² StAR A895 fols.171r-173v; Walther noted that he had discussed these ideas with a Würzburg jurist who believed that children baptised by witch-priests had not been properly baptised and were thereby dedicated to the devil. Walther was exposed to Catholic ideas about witchcraft on his extensive travels on council business; he visited Bamberg twice in 1638 and Würzburg six times between 1633 and 1636, see Ludwig Schnurrer, *Spätlese. Neue Beiträge zur Geschichte der Reichsstadt Rothenburg o.d.T.* (Rothenburg ob der Tauber, 2010), pp. 19-46, especially pp. 29-30; StAR Familienarchiv Walther, I/12.

⁹³ Richard. H. Helmholz, *The Spirit of Classical Canon Law* (3rd ed.; University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia, 2010), pp. 218-220.

1540.⁹⁴ Claims by child-witches that they had been baptised into witchcraft opened the issue up for discussion again in the seventeenth century, however. In Rothenburg in 1673 one of the municipal physicians, Johann Georg Sauber, even advised the city councillors to rebaptise a twenty-two-year-old woman called Anna Margaretha Rohn, who had been claiming for nine years that she was a witch in the service of the devil.⁹⁵ The councillors were, however, careful to avoid this or any other practices which smacked either of Catholicism or (even worse) Anabaptism. Instead they adopted a practice first suggested by jurist Walther in Brigitta Hörner's case in 1639 – that such individuals undergo a formal ceremony of renouncing the devil in order to help their spiritual recovery.⁹⁶ Such renunciation ceremonies took place in Rothenburg and other parts of Lutheran Germany in the later seventeenth century; while they can be regarded as standing as symbolic proxy for a rebaptism, they were on theologically safe ground for Lutherans as they contained no explicit or implicit criticism of a first infant baptism administered by a Lutheran pastor.⁹⁷

The final factor which protected Protestant pastors against persecution for witchcraft was that they were married. This worked to their advantage on a practical and symbolic level. Practically, clerical marriage created a web of familial links between clerical and secular elites which almost certainly dampened the latter's enthusiasm for fostering witch-trials against pastors. This was because suspicions of witchcraft against a pastor risked tarring the rest of his consanguinal and affinal kin with the same brush, while dismissing or executing a pastor had financial consequences for his dependants, for whom the local secular elites then bore some responsibility. Johann Craft's connection to his wife's family worked to his advantage during his chequered career, for example, and doubtless helped stop him from

⁹⁴ Kat Hill, *Baptism, Brotherhood, and Belief in Reformation Germany: Anabaptism and Lutheranism, 1525-1585* (Oxford, 2015), p. 19; Gottfried Seebaß, 'Das Problem der Konditionaltaufe in der Zeit der Reformation', *Zeitschrift für bayerische Kirchengeschichte*, 35 (1966), pp. 138-68.

⁹⁵ StAR A909 fols. 228r-229r.

⁹⁶ StAR A895 fols. 171r-173v. This does not seem to have happened in Brigitta's case, however.

⁹⁷ Rowlands, 'Gender, ungodly parents', pp.78-84.

being dismissed or demoted, despite the fact that Craft had acquired a reputation for mistreating his wife by 1692.⁹⁸ Excessive mistreatment of their wives could occasionally count against a Protestant cleric; Kaspar Dulichius's mistreatment of his wife caused her family to obtain her divorce from him, before they accused him of witchcraft, while George Burroughs 'had been Infamous for the barbarous usage of his two late Wives all the Country over' and was accused of their murders in Salem in 1692.⁹⁹ However, these cases were highly unusual – the Dulichius case, because it involved a divorce and the Burroughs case because his wives were dead by 1692 and (supposedly) made their allegations against him in spirit form. The actual and imagined presence of concubines in many of the trials of Catholic priests, on the other hand, linked the witch-cleric stereotype with another negative stereotype of the lustful, hypocritical priest who hid his lasciviousness behind a faced of celibacy. This latter stereotype had been a particular feature of the polemical discourse of the early Reformation and would have made it easier for later generations of Protestants to imagine priests rather than pastors as witches.

VI

Despite the fact that far more Catholic than Protestant clerics were executed for witchcraft in early modern Europe, the application of the witch-cleric stereotype was limited in its impact even in Catholic territories. The potential of the stereotype was theoretically immense – after all, who was better placed than a witch-cleric to advance the devil's cause by baptising children in his name, winning souls for witchcraft, misusing the sacraments, and officiating at

⁹⁸ Craft's wife was Maria Margaretha Geltner, the daughter of an urban official from Wiesenbach. Her brother, Niclauß Geltner, interceded with the Rothenburg councillors on Craft's behalf by letter (dated 26/02/1697) when Craft got into another dispute with his parishioners, see StAR AA335². Another brother, Johann Theodor Geltner, was by 1695 a deacon at the Rothenburg parish church of St James and was linked by his first marriage to a family of city councillors, see Dannheimer, *Verzeichnis*, pp. 60-1.

⁹⁹ See footnote 73 (Dulichius); Mather, *Wonders*, pp. 101-2 (Burroughs).

witches' sabbaths? Had the stereotype been taken to its logical conclusion, many more priests could have been made into witches.¹⁰⁰ As it was, the persecution of Catholic clerics was actually relatively patchy; the high number of canons executed in Würzburg between 1627 and 1629 was exceptional, with priests constituting only a small minority of the overall total of those executed in most other Catholic territories.¹⁰¹ More comparative analysis needs to be done on this subject, but I would suggest that there were three inter-linked reasons for this reluctance to make too many priests into witches. The first was that the witch-cleric stereotype emerged alongside, but by no means displaced, other stereotypes of women as child-corrupting witches. Thus, although the *Malleus Maleficarum* took the possibility of witch-clerics for granted, Heinrich Kramer devoted more space and criticism to the witch-midwives and witch-mothers who (supposedly) killed and ate babies or offered them to demons.¹⁰² A pamphlet published (anonymously) about the witch-persecution that occurred in Gerolzhofen in the Prince-Bishopric of Würzburg in 1616 likewise foregrounded the witch-midwife as the arch-corruptor of infants – in this case, the midwife in question had not only (allegedly) murdered 280 children but had also dug up and cooked their bodies, in order to make their flesh into witches' ointments and their bones into musical instruments for the witches' sabbath.¹⁰³ Similarly, a tract published in 1629 about the growing problem of the seduction of children into witchcraft did not mention witch-priests and demonic baptism at all – perhaps unsurprisingly, as its author was a Catholic cleric (Wolfgang Schilling), who

¹⁰⁰ In 'Würzburger Kleriker', Elmar Weiß also implies that the full potential of the stereotype was never reached, suggesting that priests were prosecuted only relatively late in the overall chronology of witch-persecution, p. 78. Rita Voltmer agrees that the number of witch-clerics was marginal in relation to the total number of executions. However, she makes the excellent point that their individual trials had an exceptionally high 'qualitative' significance in the context of contemporary demonological debate and confessional polemic, see Voltmer, 'Geistliche im Hexenprozess'. I think that this probably discouraged Catholic and Protestant territorial rulers from executing too many clerics for witchcraft, as each execution was a dramatic, public and potentially damaging admission of their own church's failure.

¹⁰¹ For example, 3 priests out of 430 executions in Ellwangen; one priest placed under house arrest in Eichstätt; 2 imprisoned in the Bamberg trials in which over 600 people were executed (see footnotes 27-31).

¹⁰² Mackay, *Hammer of Witches*, especially pp. 211-13, 366-75.

¹⁰³ *Zwo Hexen Zeitung. Die Erste: Auß dem Bißthumb Würtzburg....Die Ander. Auß dem Hertzogthumb Württemberg* (Tübingen, 1616), digital copy available at: https://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Zwo_Hexen_Zeitung

instead blamed midwives (for performing emergency baptisms incorrectly) and neglectful or over-indulgent parents (who failed to bring their children up as good Christians) for the problem.¹⁰⁴ The witch-cleric thus had to compete for imaginative space with these other, predominantly female, witch-stereotypes which may have been more emotionally powerful because they focused on the (supposed) maltreatment of defenceless infants' bodies.

Second, it seems likely that (overall) Catholic clerics benefited from a patriarchal dividend which made the men in charge of witch-persecution in Catholic territories reluctant to apply the witch-cleric stereotype systematically to them. Jonathan Durrant has shown how the witch-commissioners in the Catholic territory of Eichstätt were generally more reluctant to accept that men could be witches, and were therefore slower to act on denunciations of specific men for witchcraft, if they acted on them at all.¹⁰⁵ I would suggest that this same mechanism was at work (subconsciously or deliberately on the part of male witch-hunters) in regard to priests. Even in those territories where priests were tried and executed, a sticking point seems to have been reached which stopped such trials from escalating. This sticking point may have been linked to the number of priests put at risk of trial (as too many executions would have been grist to the mill of Protestant polemicists) or to the type of clerics targeted; problematic or unpopular rural incumbents were usually the easiest to make an example of. Even in Würzburg, the persecution of clerics did not spread beyond a contained group of urban canons, and the Catholic demonologist Heinrich von Schultheiss was keen to quash the rumour that was being falsely spread in the early 1630s that members of the Jesuit order had been executed for witchcraft in Würzburg.¹⁰⁶ There are tantalising hints from other regions that local enthusiasm for witch-trials diminished once Jesuits were at

¹⁰⁴ Wolfgang Schilling, *Newer Tractat Von der Verführten Kinder Zauberey* (Aschaffenburg, 1629), digital copy available from the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek:

<http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/~db/0007/bsb00070989/images/>

¹⁰⁵ Durrant, *Witchcraft, Gender and Society*, pp. 251-2.

¹⁰⁶ See footnote 37.

risk of being tried;¹⁰⁷ the logic of executing priests for witchcraft was perhaps only sustainable as long as the Jesuits - the crack troops of the Counter-Reformation - were protected from persecution.

A final factor which probably limited the potential of the witch-cleric stereotype for Catholics was that it was challenged from within by Friedrich Spee, the Jesuit who published (anonymously) the highly critical tract, *Cautio Criminalis* (1631), against the excessive witch-persecution that had occurred in some German Catholic territories in the early decades of the seventeenth century. In his text Spee attacked all the cruel and ignorant people who made the merciless process of witch-persecution possible, including father confessors who attended those accused of witchcraft in gaol and abused their spiritual power over suspects to force them into making false confessions.¹⁰⁸ For Spee, in other words, the priests who were really in the devil's service were those who forgot their spiritual duties and interfered in the legal process in order to bring about the executions of innocent people for witchcraft. The exact impact of this strand of Spee's writing on Catholic ideas about witch-clerics is (as yet) unclear, but his work may have encouraged individual clerics and ecclesiastical rulers to reflect more critically on their roles - and to show more mercy - in witch-trials.¹⁰⁹ By going into print Spee also challenged the idea that had long helped stymie clerical opposition to witch-trials, especially in some Catholic territories - namely that any man (including any man of the cloth) who was critical of witch-persecution was a secret patron of witches himself.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Dillinger, 'Böse Leute', pp. 333-4, notes that the Jesuits helped end witch-persecution in Trier in 1596 after a male suspect denounced several members of their order and most of the criminal court judges as witches.

¹⁰⁸ Friedrich von Spee, *Cautio Criminalis seu de processibus contra sagas liber* (*A Warning on Criminal Justice, or A Book on Witch Trials*), 1631, ed. and trans. by Joachim-Friedrich Ritter (Munich, 1982; 6th edn., 2000), pp. 72-8, 136-54, 285.

¹⁰⁹ It probably also influenced Enlightenment interpretations of witch-hunting as the 'fault' of the Church.

¹¹⁰ This idea can be traced back to the *Malleus* (see footnotes 20 and 21); see also Voltmer, 'Men in the mass persecution', pp. 86-7, on the idea of the 'witch patron'. An earlier Catholic witch-trial critic, the Dutch theologian Cornelius Loos, was forced to recant his opposition to the severe persecution in Electoral Trier in 1593; his text on the subject had been perhaps partially published in 1592 but was confiscated and is now largely lost, see Rita Voltmer, 'Loos, Cornelius (1540/1546- 1596)', in Golden, *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft* (vol. III), pp. 666-7.

Spee's critique was taken up by some Lutherans, showing again how demonological texts as well as popular print culture easily crossed confessional lines in early modern Germany. Most notable in this regard was the Lutheran theologian Johann Matthäus Meyfahrt, a witch-trial critic who followed Spee's example in suggesting that merciless and over-zealous rulers, judges and clerics who supported witch-persecution were actually 'infamous witch-masters' ('ruchlose Hexenmeister') in the devil's service themselves in his 1635 demonology, *Christliche Erinnerung an gewaltige Regenten*.¹¹¹ Andreas Koch, the Lutheran pastor executed for witchcraft in Lemgo in 1666 after criticising the city council's witch-persecution, had read Meyfahrt (and possibly also Spee).¹¹² Ironically (as he referred to Meyfahrt's text when trying to justify his interference in the trial of Barbara Ehneß in 1692), it was Church Superintendent Sebastian Kirchmeier who came closest to acting like one of Meyfahrt's 'infamous witch-masters' in Rothenburg.¹¹³ His abuse of his position as Ehneß's father confessor (which was part of an ongoing attempt on his part to increase ecclesiastical power within the city) was certainly strongly resented by the Rothenburg councillors, who brought the trial of Ehneß to a rapid end once Kirchmeier's inappropriate interference had been exposed, and stopped prosecuting witchcraft entirely thereafter.¹¹⁴ In their eyes, an over-zealous confessor was more of a threat to social stability and their own political power than a potential witch-cleric like Johann Craft.

VII

¹¹¹ Johann Matthäus Meyfahrt, *Christliche Erinnerung an gewaltige Regenten* (A Christian Reminder to Powerful Princes) (1635), digitised copy available at <http://diglib.hab.de/drucke/323-5-theol-2> (especially pp. 267-76. See also Wolfgang Behringer, 'Meyfart (Meyfahrt), Johann Matthäus (1590-1642)', in Golden, *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft* (vol. III), pp. 757-8.

¹¹² Wilbertz, "...es ist kein Erretter da gewesen....", pp. 31-3.

¹¹³ Rowlands, 'Father confessors', pp. 1032-4.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 1036-42. Barbara Ehneß was executed on 10 June 1692 for attempted murder by poisoning. Craft and the women she had been forced to denounce as witches were not named publicly at her execution; no further action was taken against them.

The overzealous clerical ‘witch-master’ was thus the last of what I suggest were three, distinct variants of the witch-cleric stereotype to emerge in Germany by the second half of the seventeenth century. Of these variants, the ‘witch-priest’ was the oldest, most powerful, and best developed in print culture, imagery and demonology. Drawing on late-medieval ideas that linked clerics with the practice of magic, the ‘witch-priest’ stereotype was re-invigorated by Counter-Reformation discourse and practice which sought to impose new standards of clerical behaviour and piety, and by demonological ideas that often situated the ‘witch-priest’ at the ritual centre of the witches’ sect, where he baptised people into witchcraft and officiated on the devil’s behalf at sabbaths. This stereotype was applied to some priests in often sensational witch-trials, particularly between c.1570– c.1630, and can perhaps be seen as evidence of an internal crisis of clerical masculinity within post-Tridentine Catholicism. The second variant was the Protestant ‘witch-pastor’; this stereotype drew on, and to some extent overlapped with, that of the ‘witch-priest’, but was a much weaker version of it. ‘Witch-pastors’ hardly ever appeared in print culture, lacked the sexualised dimension of the Catholic ‘witch-priest’, and were imagined only rarely in officiating roles in demonic baptisms or witches’ gatherings. As a result of this weaker stereotype and the reluctance of Protestant secular authorities to apply it, far fewer pastors than priests were tried for witchcraft. Overall, however, and despite the significance of witch-cleric stereotypes in witchcraft discourse and religious polemic, adult females remained the main target of witch-persecution throughout the early modern period, because of the real and imagined influence they had over children in maternal and quasi-maternal roles on the one hand, and their relative lack of social and legal power on the other. Factoring clerics into our understanding of witch-trials should not blind us to the fact that, despite the terrible suffering of individuals like Ruprecht Rambsauer and Andreas Koch, patriarchal authorities were on the whole hesitant about making too many men of the cloth into witches.