CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Definitions of Community in Early Modern Europe

Karen E. Spierling and Michael J. Halvorson

"Community," says Peter Burke, "is at once an indispensable term and a dangerous one, whether we are practicing history or sociology or simply living our everyday lives."[1] For historians, understanding the way that particular groups in European society—political, religious, economic, familial, and others—defined their membership, organized themselves, and interacted with other groups is vital to a full comprehension of the dynamics of change and continuity in early modern Europe. Thus, to borrow Burke's term, the study of community definition is certainly "indispensable," even though the meanings and applications of this complex word have been approached in many different ways by historians, sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and literary scholars. The danger lies not in trying to analyze community dynamics but in attempting to impose too great a clarity, simplicity, or transparency on the operations of any particular community. The original essays presented here demonstrate the wealth of information still to be gleaned from pursuing questions of community definition as well as the need to recognize both the complexity and, in many cases, the unexpected flexibility of community definitions and boundaries in early modern Europe.

This project came into being as a result of the editors' own discussions about a very particular aspect of community definition in the Reformation: the role of baptism in marking community membership. We each began our careers with major projects on the sacrament of infant baptism, examining the rituals and traditions surrounding the rite and the social and political

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[1] Peter Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 5. The problematic nature of the term community has often, over the past century, been the starting point for scholarly investigations of community. See, for example: Salo Baron, *The Jewish Community: Its History and Structure to the American Revolution* (3 vols, Philadelphia, 1945); *Communities in Early Modern England*, eds Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington (Manchester, 2000), pp. 1–15; Katherine Lynch, *Individuals, Families, and Communities in Europe, 1200–1800: The Urban Foundations of Western Society* (Cambridge, 2003).

significance of those practices.[2] In comparing our work, we talked about the ways that infant baptism and the practices attached to it were used variously to define Lutheran and Reformed communities, to challenge the reformers' notions of community, and to reinforce longstanding ties of community that reached beyond strictly religious definitions. In discussing our own findings about the way that a single ritual could both reinforce and contest official definitions of community, it became clear to us that while many scholars in our field were exploring issues of early modern community definition and construction, there was no single volume that brought together work on the broad topic of the definition of community across Central and Western Europe.

As we investigated ways to address this situation, we were confronted with the overwhelming variety of bases for defining early modern communities and the vast array of approaches that scholars have taken to explore historical community dynamics. Given our own scholarly grounding in the religious dynamics of the Protestant Reformation, we decided to construct this volume around the broad theme of the role of religion in defining early modern communities. Not surprisingly, however, none of our contributors examines religious definition in isolation: political, economic, familial, social, and other types of concerns appear as influential—and in some cases, primary—factors throughout the essays that follow. Thus, the discussion presented in this volume takes as its starting point a fairly broad definition of early modern community: a group of people who perceived themselves as having common interests and, thus, a common identity or self-understanding. In the studies presented here, the principal common interest was sometimes, but not always, adherence to a particular religious confession. These essays also demonstrate that individuals in early modern Europe could remain committed members of a community, convinced of their shared concerns and characteristics, even when they challenged the official religious principles and practices of that community. Further, some of the following chapters illustrate the ways in which members of a community could accept the same religious beliefs and authorities and still disagree on other fundamental aspects of community definition.

[2] Michael J. Halvorson, "Theology, Ritual, and Confessionalization: The Making and Meaning of Lutheran Baptism in Reformation Germany, 1520–1618" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 2001). Karen E. Spierling, *Infant Baptism in Reformation Geneva: The Shaping of a Community, 1536–1564* (Aldershot, 2005).

Approaching early modern communities

In exploring these complex dynamics of community membership and operation, the contributions to this volume build on over a century of scholarship on the definition and construction of early modern communities. Historians in particular have approached communities as defined by political, economic, religious, familial, and other social relations. In all of these approaches, it is common to examine notions of community in terms of the local, although there is a growing body of recent work that looks at community at the national level, or at communities that cross regional and national borders.[3] In the development of the idea that a community is *local*, one particularly influential nineteenth-century scholar was German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, whose famous contrast between a pre-modern *Gemeinschaft*, or community based on personal (face-to-face) relationships, and the modern *Gesellschaft*, or impersonal, institution-based *society*, continues to influence and resonate in modern scholarship.[4] Historical work of the later decades of the twentieth century, while often invoking Tönnies' distinction, also took important steps to provide significant nuance to the over-generalizations and distortions of that description, highlighting the complex and often contentious nature of early modern communities, whatever their size or location.

In the 1960s and 1970s, historians began to look more closely at the religious definition of communities during the Reformation period and the existence of competing definitions of community in particular cities, especially in the German, Swiss, and French lands.[5] One of the driving

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[3] Much work on early modern communities at the national level is influenced by Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (London, 1991; first edn pub. 1983). Important recent contributions on the impact of early modern religious change across entire nations include: *The Reformation in national context*, eds Bob Scribner, Roy Porter, and Mikuláš Teich (Cambridge, 1994); *Infinite Boundaries: Order, Disorder, and Reorder in Early Modern German Culture*, ed. Max Reinhart (Kirksville, MO, 1998); Robin Briggs, *Communities of Belief: Cultural and Social Tension in Early Modern France* (Oxford, 1995; orig. pub. 1989); Dean Phillip Bell, *Sacred Communities: Jewish and Christian Identity in Fifteenth-Century Germany* (Leiden, 2001); Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven, 2002); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400 – c. 1580*, 2nd edn (New Haven, 2005; orig. pub. 1992). Here and throughout this chapter, sources are listed in order by publication date.

[4] Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Darmstadt, 1979).

[5] See Steven Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities* (New Haven, 1975), pp. 5–14 for a contemporary evaluation of urban studies on the Reformation in the 1960s and 1970s. Key contributions by the authors mentioned here include: Robert M. Kingdon, *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France 1555–1563* (Geneva, 1956; reprinted 2007), and "The Control of Morals in Calvin's Geneva," in Lawrence P. Buck and Jonathan W. Zophy (eds), *The Social History of the Reformation* (Columbus, 1972); Gerald Strauss, *Nuremberg*

questions of the work of these decades was why the Reformation appealed to urban populations in particular. Scholars who took on this issue in those decades included Natalie Davis on Lyon; Robert Kingdon and William Monter on Geneva; Gerald Strauss on Nuremberg; Thomas Brady and Miriam Chrisman on Strasbourg; and Bernd Moeller on imperial cities in the Holy Roman Empire. During the 1980s, other scholars built on this work on urban centers, pushing further into the archives to explore official motivations for adopting the Protestant Reformation and the effects of both the Protestant and Catholic Reformations on different parts of the population, particularly on women. Important contributions to this phase of the developing discussion included Lyndal Roper's work on Augsburg; Susan Karant-Nunn's on Zwickau; Merry Wiesner-Hanks's on Nuremberg; and Philip Hoffman's on Catholicism in the Diocese of Lyon.[6] All of these scholars have made significant contributions to current conceptions of early modern communities, improving our understanding of official and popular motivations for reform; the political, religious, economic, and social organization of these cities and the power relations at play in each; the impact of religious change on particular sectors of the population—women, journeymen, and political leaders, to name a few—and, most generally, the myriad effects the Reformation and the resulting religious divisions had on both the official definitions and the practical operations of urban communities.[7]

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in the Sixteenth Century: City Politics and Life between Middle Ages and Modern Times (New York, 1966; rev. edn Bloomington, IN, 1976); Miriam Usher Chrisman, *Strasbourg and the Reform: A Study in the Process of Change* (New Haven, 1967); E. William Monter, *Calvin's Geneva* (New York, 1967); Bernd Moeller, *Imperial Cities and the Reformation: Three Essays*, ed. and trans. H.C. Erik Midelfort and Mark U. Edwards, Jr. (Philadelphia, 1972), originally published as *Reichsstadt und Reformation*, 1962; Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, 1975); Thomas Brady, *Ruling Class, Regime and Reformation at Strasbourg 1520–1555* (Leiden, 1978). For Italy, two key works from the same time period that analyze the ideals and workings of urban societies are Gene A. Brucker, *Renaissance Florence* (Berkeley, 1969; 2nd edn 1983), and Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City States in Renaissance Italy* (New York, 1979).

[6] Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *Zwickau in Transition 1500–1547: The Reformation as an Agent of Change* (Columbus, 1987); Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford, 1989); Merry Wiesner, "Paltry Peddlers or Essential Merchants? Women in the Distributive Trades in Early Modern Nuremberg," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 12/2 (1981): 3–13; Philip T. Hoffman, *Church and Community in the Diocese of Lyon, 1500–1789* (New Haven, 1984); Miriam Usher Chrisman, *Lay Culture, Learned Culture: Books and Social Change in Strasbourg, 1480–1599* (New Haven, 1982).

[7] While the focus on urban community studies had developed significantly in continental Europe by the 1960s and 1970s, the English historiography did not emphasize urban community dynamics until the 1990s. Instead, the 1970s and 1980s were marked by numerous local, rural community studies in England. See, for example: David Hey, *An English Rural Community: Myddle Under the Tudors and Stuarts* (Leicester, 1974);

An important corrective to this focus on urban settings as the heart of the Reformation is the work of Peter Blickle, who highlights the role of communalism, with its emphasis on horizontal economic, political, and social ties (rather than a vertical structure of authority) in the enactment of religious change, especially in the first decades of the reform movement. While Blickle locates communalism in urban as well as rural settings, he emphasizes the appeal of the Reformation to smaller towns and villages and the importance of rural communities in spreading and adopting the new reformed teachings in the 1520s.[8] For Blickle, "[g]iven that reformed theology was mediated through the late medieval institution of the commune, 'Communal Reformation' appears to be the logical term for the early Reformation," as opposed to "Urban Reformation."[9]

Additional nuance has come from the work of the late Robert Scribner, whose insights about the social and cultural dynamics of early modern communities have left an important scholarly legacy. Scribner asserted that studies of late medieval and early modern communities should focus less on the overarching concepts used to establish order or create a unifying political or religious vision and more on the competing discourses and strategies of power that reveal themselves in community conflict.[10] Over the past two decades, an increasingly wide variety of scholars have begun to look more closely at the varieties of conflict inherent within most early modern communities.[11] Historians who take this approach have observed

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Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities: English Villagers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London, 1974); Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525–1700* (New York, 1979; 2nd edn 1995); Gwyneth Nair, *Highley: The Development of a Community, 1550–1880* (Oxford, 1988); Marjorie K. McIntosh, *A Community Transformed: The Manor and Liberty of Havering, 1500–1620* (Cambridge, 1991).

[8] For a useful guide to the development of Blickle's thought and arguments, see the collection of recently translated essays: Peter Blickle, *From the Communal Reformation to the Reformation of the Common Man*, trans. Beat Kümin (Leiden, 1998); and Thomas A. Brady, Jr., "From the Sacral Community to the Common Man: Reflections on German Reformation Studies," in Thomas A. Brady, Jr., *Communities, Politics, and Reformation in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 1998), pp. 353–69.

[9] Blickle, *Communal Reformation*, p. 203. An important forerunner of Blickle in emphasizing the importance of rural communities in Germany is Otto von Gierke, *Community in Historical Perspective: A Translation of Selections from Das Deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht (The German Law of Fellowship)*, ed. Antony Black, trans. Mary Fischer (Cambridge, 1990).

[10] Robert Scribner, "Communities and the Nature of Power," in *Germany: A New Social and Economic History, Vol I: 1450–1630*, (London, 1996), p. 320.

[11] See, for example, David Sabean, *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1984); Carlos Eire, *War against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge, 1986); Thomas Robisheaux, *Rural Society and the Search for Order in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge,

that conflict is an integral part of community dynamics in both urban and rural settings. Philip Hoffman, for example, emphasizes the role of conflict as a basic characteristic of rural village communities in the diocese of Lyon:

> But communal solidarity did not mean that the denizens of the countryside were cheerful altruists or that their lives were serene or egalitarian. Peasants were often extremely selfish, and inequality and internal strife were prominent features of village life, particularly as the sixteenth century drew to a close. … The village institutions—from assemblies and youth groups to confraternities—were therefore more than mere marks of solidarity; they were in fact the very ties that bound these disparate, selfish individuals.[12]

As Hoffman suggests for Lyon, so scholars are finding in many places: while early modern communities may not have been defined solely by their institutions, those institutions—particularly religious and legal—played a vital role in mediating community conflicts. This mediation was part of a constant process of building tension and resolution rather than a progression toward the establishment of an actual, conflict-free community.[13] In other words, as David Sabean has famously asserted, "What is common in community is not shared values or common understanding so much as the fact that members of a community are engaged in the same argument … in which alternative strategies, misunderstandings, conflicting goals and values are threshed out."[14]

1989); Robert C. Davis, *The War of the Fists: Popular Culture and Public Violence in Late Renaissance Venice* (New York, 1994); Lee Palmer Wandel, *Voracious Idols and Violent Hands: Iconoclasm in Reformation Zurich, Strasbourg, and Basel* (Cambridge, 1995); Craig Muldew, "The Culture of Reconciliation: Community and the Settlement of Economic Disputes in Early Modern England," *The Historical Journal*, 39/4 (1996): 915–42; Keith Wrightson, "The Politics of the Parish," in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox, and Steve Hindle (eds), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1996); David Martin Luebke, "Terms of Loyalty: Factional Politics in a Single German Village (Nöggenschwihl, 1725–1745)," in Max Reinhart (ed.), *Infinite Boundaries*, pp. 77–100; Ulinka Rublack, *The Crimes of Women in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford, 1999); Edward Muir, "The 2001 Josephine Waters Bennett Lecture: The Idea of Community in Renaissance Italy," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 55/1 (2002): 1–18.

12 Hoffman, *Church and Community*, p. 68.

13 For example, Robert Kingdon has demonstrated that the Genevan consistory, a Reformed morals court, "was closer to an obligatory counseling service than to a court." Robert M. Kingdon, "A New View of Calvin in Light of the Registers of the Geneva Consistory," in Wilhelm H. Neuser and Brian G. Armstrong (eds), *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex: Calvin as Protector of the Purer Religion*, Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies, vol. 36 (Kirksville, MO, 1997), pp. 21–33, here at 23.

14 Sabean, *Power in the Blood*, p. 29.

Conflict could be embedded deep within the community, or it could erupt at points of boundary and intersection, where multiple communities overlapped or abutted one another. In exploring the interactions that take place at community boundaries, many historians have been influenced by a concept that originated with another nineteenth-century German sociologist, Georg Simmel, who argued that communities could be best studied and understood when they were thought of as collections of overlapping entities or "circles" that meet one another at points of common interest, dispute, or compromise.[15] In terms of relations *between* communities, it is at the margins or boundaries of these circles, where insider meets outsider, where group identities are tested, shaped, and ultimately accommodated or rejected.[16] In early modern Europe, these overlapping circles could be communities defined by kinship, political institutions or allegiance, occupation, economic or social status, gender, age, or religion, among other possibilities. Conflict at the boundaries of these communities might arise between the members of rival groups, but it also could be set off by the tensions inflicted on an individual or group of people caught in the competing demands of different community networks or emerging bureaucratic institutions.[17] Such individuals or groups depended on their ability to move back and forth between different communities; problems arose particularly when community leaders attempted to reinforce

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[15] Simmel uses the term "cross-cutting social circles." Georg Simmel, *Conflict and The Web of Group-Affiliations*, trans. Kurt H. Wolff and Reinhard Bendix, respectively (Glencoe, IL, 1955). An influential historical application of Simmel's ideas is found in Alan Macfarlane, Sarah Harrison, and Charles Jardine, *Reconstructing Historical Communities* (London, 1977). For a useful recent study employing this terminology, see Paul Griffiths, "Overlapping circles: imagining criminal communities in London, 1545–1645)," in Shepard and Withington (eds), *Communities in Early Modern England*, pp. 115–33.

[16] On the issue of boundaries, see the works listed above, and Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London, 1966); *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*, eds Will Coster and Andrew Spicer (Cambridge, 2005); Susan R. Boettcher, "Insiders and Outsiders," in Peter Matheson (ed.), *A People's History of Christianity, Volume 5: Reformation Christianity* (Minneapolis, 2007), pp. 232–58.

[17] This issue of boundaries is an important part of scholarship that builds on the well-known confessionalization thesis, originally developed by Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhard, which seeks to understand the long-term, structural and institutional developments in society that produced early modern states and the connections between the development of states and of clearly defined religious confessions. Proponents of this thesis have also sought to understand the dynamics of change within local communities, and especially the formation of collective identities that fostered competition among communities, the development of distinctive religious practices that demarked confessional boundaries, and the "social discipline" of community members. For an introduction to the growing literature on confessionalization, see *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555–1700*, eds John M. Headley, Hans J. Hillerbrand, and Anthony J. Papalas (Aldershot, 2004).

boundaries or eliminate the overlap between circles, thus restricting what for some members was necessary movement between groups.

This issue of boundaries—their establishment, enforcement, and violation—is an embedded theme in much historical work on early modern community, especially in studies influenced by the anthropological works of Arnold van Gennep on the "rites of passage" in human lives and Victor Turner's development of van Gennep's concept of a "liminal phase" of ritual during which an individual is "betwixt and between" his or her previous and new stages of life.[18] For his recent work on the co-existence of Protestant and Catholic communities in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France, Keith Luria chose the title *Sacred Boundaries*, establishing as a main theme the officially-set limitations of those communities and how specific restrictions developed over time. Luria is particularly interested in the variety of ways that boundaries were constructed even within a single community, and in the flexibility of officially established boundaries. As he states:

> [T]he confessional boundary in early modern France was permeable. Catholics and Huguenots crossed it often in a variety of daily interactions: they lived together, worked together, married each other, shared civic responsibilities, participated in each other's religious observances, and buried their dead together. In such exchanges the confessional boundary did not necessarily disappear, but it did not prevent people of the two faiths from living together.[19]

Thus, where one might expect conflict, at the official boundaries of religiously defined communities, one does not always find it in practice. Furthermore, official institutions and the regulations they established could sometimes be the *source* of conflict within a community, when challenged by community members, rather than the arbiters of conflict among members.

One particularly useful tool for uniting early modern communities—or at least presenting the appearance of unity despite internal conflicts—was ritual. Over the past several decades, and inspired by the methods of cultural anthropologists, historians have looked closely at a wide variety of religious and civic rituals as sources and reinforcers of community

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[18] Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago, 1960; orig. in French, 1908); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago, 1969).

[19] Keith Luria, *Sacred Boundaries: Religious Co-existence and Conflict in Early-Modern France* (Washington, DC, 2005), p. xxvi. For an overview of his conception of boundaries, see pp. xxiii–xxxviii.

definition.[20] It is by now well established that ritual—both religious and civic—was one of the most effective and public ways to define a community and demonstrate community membership, both by including members in public rituals and by excluding outsiders from ritual participation. And yet, as Edward Muir has observed in his excellent *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, "Rituals are inherently ambiguous in their function and meaning. They speak with many voices."[21] As he reminds us, just as with boundaries and other aspects of community definition, rituals could operate both to maintain "community solidarity" and to "incite strife."[22]

As our discussion thus far suggests, it is not only early modern communities and their definitions that are complex; the *study* of early modern communities is complicated and multifaceted, as well. A brief overview such as this only scratches the surface of the multitude of themes and approaches found in historical studies of community, much less the works in other fields—sociology, anthropology, literary studies, just to name a few—that have influenced historical scholarship. The trends presented here are those most fundamental for the work presented in this volume. Let us turn, then, to the essays that will follow and the important contributions that they make to the study of early modern European communities.

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[20] Two cultural anthropological works especially influential on early modern historians are: Turner, *The Ritual Process* and Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, 1973). Important contributions to the study of early modern ritual include: John Bossy, "Blood and Baptism: Kinship, Community and Christianity in Western Europe from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Centuries," in Derek Baker (ed.), *Sanctity and Secularity: The Church and the World* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 129–44; Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Sacred and the Body Social in Sixteenth-Century Lyon," *Past and Present*, 90 (1981): 40–70; Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton, 1981), and *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2005; orig. pub. 1997); Sabean, *Power in the Blood*; Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago, 1985); Robert W. Scribner, *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (London, 1987); Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*; R. Davis, *The War of the Fists*; Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Ritual: An interpretation of early modern Germany* (London, 1997); David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997); Craig Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450–1700* (New York, 2000); Michael W. Maher, S.J., "Jesuits and Ritual in Early Modern Europe," in Joëlle Rollo-Koster (ed.), *Medieval and Early Modern Ritual: Formalized Behavior in Europe, China and Japan* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 193–218; Michael J. Halvorson, "Baptismal Ritual and Court Culture during the Late Reformation," *Lutheran Quarterly*, 18 (2004): 406–34.

[21] Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, p. 5.

[22] Ibid., p. 4.

Contributions of the present volume

One goal of this project is to bring together work on a variety of regions in Western and Central Europe that are rarely considered collectively. In the past decade, a number of excellent volumes have appeared on the subject of early modern community, but as a rule they have focused on particular regions, countries, religious confessions, or other social groups.[23] The essays collected here address definitions of community in France, Geneva, the German Lands, Italy and the Spanish Empire, the Netherlands, England, and Scotland. Complementing the regional diversity is a broad spectrum of religious confessions: Roman Catholic communities in France, Italy, and Germany; Reformed churches in France, Geneva, and Scotland; Lutheran communities in Germany; Mennonites in Germany and the Netherlands; English Anglicans; Jews in Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands; and Muslim converts returning to Christian England. In bringing together these essays covering a range of geographical and religious settings in Western and Central Europe, this volume is intended as one step toward a comparative understanding of community definition across the whole of early modern Europe.

In current scholarship on early modern communities, it continues to be common to focus on a particular city or region—the *local*—and to examine the workings of the selected community in as much detail as possible. A number of our contributors do this in their essays: Karen Spierling looks at Geneva, Joel Harrington at Nuremberg, John Frymire at Straubing, Michael Halvorson at Saxony and Lower Saxony, Michael Driedger at Krefeld, Kathleen Comerford at the Grand Duchy of Tuscany and Lucca, and Sean Cocco at Naples. But this volume also demonstrates current efforts to build on local community studies by looking for patterns that extend across an entire nation or even broader regions, as in Raymond Mentzer's analysis of French Reformed churches; Amanda Eurich's treatment of Protestant will-making in France; Susan Boettcher's discussion of the use of commemoration and identity-defining memories to establish official definitions of Lutheran communities in Germany; Steve Hindle's discussion of boundary-marking in English parishes; and Claire Schen's exploration of the reintegration of renegades and former Muslim captives into religious and political communities in early modern

[23] Shepard and Withington, *Communities in Early Modern England*; *Christianity and Community in the West: Essays for John Bossy*, eds John Bossy and Simon Ditchfield (Aldershot, 2001); *Society and Culture in the Huguenot World, 1559–1685*, eds Raymond A. Mentzer and Andrew Spicer (Cambridge, 2002); *Memory and Identity: The Huguenots in France and the Atlantic Diaspora*, eds Bertrand Van Ruymbeke and Randy J. Sparks (Columbia, SC, 2003); *Women, Identities and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, eds Stephanie Tarbin and Susan Broomhall (Aldershot, 2008).

England. These approaches represent important steps toward creating broader understandings of community dynamics that may be applied across early modern Europe; at the same time, however, they demonstrate the critical importance of case studies to preserve nuance and prevent over-generalization in discussions. In addition, reminding us that not all concepts of community are inherently tied to geographic location, Dean Bell examines Jewish definitions of community across central Europe, and Susan Dinan considers the French Daughters of Charity and the ways in which their sense of community transcended specific places. Finally, this volume also includes one analysis of community definition at the national level in Kristen Walton's discussion of the Scottish reformers' efforts to legislate the institution and practices of the Reformed Scottish Kirk across all of Scotland.

Despite the multiplicity of approaches, locations, and religious confessions represented in these essays, a number of common motifs and dynamics have emerged. The broadest of these themes is that of inclusion and exclusion, which all of our chapters address in some way. Regardless of geographical location or the type of community, definition of that community required identifying who existed within the group (as members), who was excluded from the group (as non-members), and how one might achieve or be deprived of membership. These discussions of inclusion and exclusion build on a number of the developments presented above, including the metaphor of overlapping circles and the notion of conflict as inherent to communities. As we will see below, the image of overlapping circles reminds us that "individuals can and usually do belong to a number of different communities."[24] Even when official definitions of insiders and outsiders were very clear-cut, individuals might attempt to blur the lines for their own purposes. Furthermore, distinguishing included and excluded groups was not the same thing as creating a community free of conflict; various kinds of disputes could and often did occur among those individuals recognized as community insiders.

The process of inclusion and exclusion is perhaps most marked in cases of minority communities, who defined themselves in their own terms *and* against the terms of the wider community, at the same time that they were clearly excluded from that larger community in fundamental ways. For example, Dean Bell surveys the variety of ways that Central European Jews defined their own communities, emphasizing the important role of institutions and governmental structures in demarcating local communities clearly distinct from the surrounding Christian society. He also draws out the multiple and flexible definitions of community held by early modern Jews, asserting: "This flexibility and ability to understand community at

[24] Burke, *Languages and Communities*, p. 6.

different levels and for different purposes helped Jews to retain Jewish religious identity and communal cohesion in the midst of unstable and frequently hostile external conditions."[25] At the same time, Bell's essay raises the issue of the potential differences of perspective—and thus conflict—even among insiders, another theme that resonates throughout many of the chapters in this volume.

Looking at a case of a Christian minority population, Raymond Mentzer discusses the efforts of the French Reformed churches to unify their communities through worship practices which unquestionably identified them as different from their often-threatening Catholic neighbors. Similar to Bell's observations about the variation in community definitions even within a single local Jewish community, Mentzer's work reminds us that at the same time that French reformers set out to make the Reformed community exclusive, church elders themselves continued to marry their children to Catholics and resist efforts to collect the annual assessment that membership in the Reformed Church required. Being an insider did not necessarily imply the uniform behavior or beliefs that have sometimes been assumed for early modern religious communities. Amanda Eurich, too, examines the minority Huguenot population, in this case focusing on will-making and practices of preparation for death. While in many ways her discussion demonstrates determined efforts on the part of dying Protestants to establish themselves as unquestioned insiders within the exclusive membership of the Reformed Church, she also examines the issue of burials and, in particular, the desire of many Huguenots to be buried in the town cemetery, which by the early 1600s had often become exclusively Catholic. Despite the fact that the Reformed Church officially rejected Catholic burial practices, "many Huguenot testators nonetheless continued to request burial in ancestral plots alongside Catholics in the parish cemetery. Burial requests thus often challenged the competing configurations of community to which Huguenots simultaneously belonged—family, confession, village or town, and nation."[26] Even though such Huguenots had spent much, or all, of their lives marked as outsiders from the religious community of Catholics, at the end of their lives, they wanted to be included in all of the other community traditions—particularly the indication of social status—that such burial conveyed. In a related vein, Michael Driedger uses the case of Krefeld in the Lower Rhineland to illustrate the various degrees of exclusiveness that developed

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[25] Dean Phillip Bell, "Jewish Communities in Central Europe in the Sixteenth Century," in the present volume, Chapter 8, p. 161.

[26] S. Amanda Eurich, "Between the Living and the Dead: Preserving Confessional Identity and Community in Early Modern France," in the present volume, Chapter 3, p. 47–8.

in Dutch and German Mennonite communities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While scholars have long accepted the isolation and separateness of early modern Mennonite societies as an established fact, Driedger demonstrates that among the Mennonites of Krefeld, attitudes toward the outside world varied; rather than turning away from all worldly developments, some Mennonites encouraged and participated in the discussion of Enlightenment ideas, finding principles there that resonated with their own Christian values.

A number of our remaining authors look closely at case studies to explore some of the ways that individuals challenged official definitions of insiders and outsiders; these discussions often reveal that such official definitions of community were more flexible in practice than they appeared in writing. Karen Spierling presents the case of a single Genevan family that remained an active and influential part of the political, social, economic, and even religious community of Reformation Geneva, while at the same time continuing to interact with and tolerate Catholics, clearly identified not only as outsiders but as a threat by both the religious and political authorities of the city. Her subjects, the Lullin family, are an excellent example of individuals existing within the overlapping areas of what were officially seen as exclusive circles of community: Reformed Genevans and all Catholics. Spierling's essay illustrates the ongoing, and never fully resolved, tensions created when individuals continued to maintain contact with more than one religious community. John Frymire presents a contrasting situation in the Bavarian city of Straubing, where in the late 1550s and early 1560s a group of members of the Small Council refused to participate in local Catholic Eucharistic rituals and instead encouraged the establishment of evangelical practices, risking their political influence within the city and some of their wealth, and ultimately transforming themselves from powerful insiders to literal outsiders of the city. Frymire's study leads him to conclude: "What we should be suspicious of, therefore, is any hermeneutic that explicitly asserts or implicitly assumes a purely functional relationship between religious commitment and the will to acquire or maintain power."[27] Taken together, Spierling's and Frymire's essays remind us that in the end, the recognition of individuals as insiders or outsiders in religiously-defined communities depended as much on particular circumstance, personalities, and timing as it did on established rules or even the social status and material concerns of the individuals in question.

Joel Harrington's essay is also closely focused on a particular community dynamic in a particular city: the handling of foundlings and orphans in the

[27] John M. Frymire, "*Demonstrationes catholicae:* Defining Communities through Counter-Reformation Rituals," in the present volume, Chapter 9, pp. 181–2.

German Lutheran city of Nuremberg. The Nuremberg regulations were quite clear that abandoned children who were not from the city should be turned outside the city walls; this legislation has long been accepted by historians as reflecting the established practice of Nuremberg's city officials. Yet Harrington finds that in a surprising number of cases the city orphanage dealt with such children, instead, by finding them homes with local families, disregarding their cities of origin, and thus violating Nuremberg's official delimitation of the community and its responsibilities. Taking exception to Tönnies' classic conception of the *Gemeinschaft*, mentioned earlier, Harrington asserts: "The experiences of child circulation in early modern Nuremberg clearly convey an urban community that was much more flexible and porous than posited by 'essentialist and mystical' concepts of *Gemeinschaft* or by the town council's own often reiterated policy towards unwanted foreign children."[28]

Kathleen Comerford's discussion of the establishment of Jesuit institutions in the Duchy and then Grand Duchy of Tuscany, as well as in the city of Lucca, raises particularly interesting questions regarding insiders and outsiders because it highlights the fact that well after the Reformation, tensions continued to exist between members and non-members of local communities, even when everyone involved belonged to the same religious confession. In the Italian settings examined by Comerford, the Jesuits were always outsiders, and as such were continually under suspicion, despite the fact that they were both Italian and Catholic. Comerford demonstrates that the Jesuits' greatest successes came when they found means of allaying—if not abolishing altogether—those fears of outsiders, which was easiest when they had the support of powerful local insiders, especially the ruling Medici family: "The Society of Jesus and the Medici needed each other, and when they worked together they eventually succeeded in creating more centralized communities, as in Siena and Montepulciano."[29] Susan Dinan presents an interesting comparison with the Jesuits in her study of the French Daughters of Charity. While a number of our essays touch upon the aspect of gender as it related to community definition, Dinan's contribution focuses entirely on the defining of a specifically female community. The Daughters were a female religious order established in the seventeenth century, after the Council of Trent. In creating an order dedicated to service to the broader Catholic community, the leaders of the Daughters had to go to great lengths—including exploiting political connections as

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[28] Joel F. Harrington, "Child Circulation within the Early Modern Urban Community: Rejection and Support of Unwanted Children in Nuremberg," in the present volume, Chapter 6, p. 119.

[29] Kathleen M. Comerford, "'I can't imagine it won't bear fruit': Jesuits, Politics, and Heretics in Siena, Montepulciano, and Lucca," in the present volume, Chapter 15, p. 305.

did the Jesuits—to circumvent the Tridentine requirement that all religious women be strictly cloistered. They established small enclaves—often only two women—in towns across France with the mission of serving God by serving their fellow Catholics through education and other charitable services. Like the Jesuits, the Daughters of Charity were outsiders in the local community, although they were both French and Catholic. As Dinan demonstrates, the unity and stability of the order came from the teachings and practices of Louise de Marillac, the founder, which served to connect the members across time and space. "The community of women who formed the Daughters of Charity was fluid, and while its mission to help the sick and poor remained constant, its structure changed considerably over time as a result of the Company's growth. … The community was not an external place, but it was internalized and moved with its members."[30]

The variety of options that existed for distinguishing insiders and outsiders within the same religion is further highlighted by Sean Cocco's essay, which analyzes a pamphlet war centered on a battle over the significance and "ownership" of Mount Vesuvius that was intimately tied to local resentment of the occupation of Naples by the distinctly outside forces of imperial Spain. In contrast to Dinan's essay, Cocco's highlights the very significant role that place could have in defining a community. Vesuvius was a landscape adaptable to multiple visions of the community; Cocco finds that the volcano was used by both the unhappily governed and the foreign governors of Naples to symbolize God's judgment against or in favor of the political situation there. As Cocco asserts, "In the shadow world of furtive missives, scurrilous and seditious poems, and rebel schemes, the tremors of Vesuvius widened already-deep fractures in Naples's relationship to Habsburg Spain."[31] In examining this struggle between insider inhabitants and outsider rulers, Cocco's essay illustrates the important roles that printed rhetoric and natural phenomena could play in defining early modern communities.

Another essay that examines the importance of the physical characteristics of community boundaries is Steve Hindle's discussion of the practice of Rogationtide perambulations or "beating of the bounds"—the ritual demarcation of the boundaries of English parishes. Hindle examines the persistence of this tradition well into the seventeenth century and explores the ways that the traditional practice did and did not change, even as England became more formally Protestant over time. He emphasizes the importance of examining communities at their edges and of

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[30] Susan E. Dinan, "A Community of Active Religious Women," in the present volume, Chapter 4, p. 78.

[31] Sean Cocco, "Contesting Vesuvius and Claiming Naples: Disaster in Print and Pen, 1631–1649," in the present volume, Chapter 16, p. 309.

being aware of the consistent presence of conflict, "for it is at the margins where communities are most regularly tested and new social identities most intensively forged."[32] Hindle's chapter also raises the important issue of the "corruption" or changeability of community boundaries. Despite the best efforts of parish leaders to emblazon parish boundaries into the minds of their parishioners and to record the boundaries as remembered by the elders of the community, those boundaries seldom remained static: "Whether it was burned into the memories of the ancients or engrossed in the accounts of churchwardens, therefore, custom might all too easily be corrupted."[33] Thus, even reliance upon the memories and record-keeping of well-established insiders did not guarantee the stability or impermeability of the community.

Susan Boettcher also addresses the subject of the role of memory in the creation of communal identity, in her discussion of German Lutheran communities in the later sixteenth century. Similar to Hindle's English Anglicans, Boettcher's German Lutherans sought to create and reinforce a common identity through a common memory of their history—in this case, the history of the events of the early Reformation. Boettcher examines the ways that late sixteenth-century Lutherans employed images of historic figures and events of the Reformation, as well as ritual behaviors and church architecture, to create a common understanding of their shared past—distinct from the historical understanding of non-Lutherans: "As *memoria* developed and spread among evangelicals during and after the Reformation, it gave rise to a visible awareness and understanding of Lutherans as, among other things, a group of people who adhered to a collective memory of the Reformation's central actors and outcomes."[34] For these Lutherans, memory could serve to define and reinforce either membership in local communities, as with Hindle's English parishes, or "notions of shared community in space and time," as with Bell's Jewish communities and Dinan's Daughters of Charity.[35]

Physical boundaries and common memories were not the only things that were used to bind community members to one another. Among the many concerns involved in distinguishing insiders from outsiders was that of creating a "pure" community, free of religious or spiritual pollution. This focus is discernable in a number of our essays but especially comes to the forefront in the contributions of Michael Halvorson, Claire Schen,

32 Steve Hindle, "Beating the Bounds of the Parish: Order, Memory and Identity in the English Local Community, c. 1500–1700," in the present volume, Chapter 11, p. 225.

33 Ibid., p. 221.

34 Susan R. Boettcher, "Late Sixteenth-Century Lutherans: A Community of Memory?" in the present volume, Chapter 7, p. 122.

35 Ibid., p. 141.

and Kristen Walton. In one of our most direct examinations of the issue of insiders and outsiders, Halvorson's essay focuses on Lutheran efforts to convert and baptize adult Jews in Saxony and Lower Saxony, thus transforming stark outsiders into sometimes enthusiastically welcomed—and sometimes suspect—insiders. Halvorson examines some of the ways in which the perceived threat of Jews to Christian communities influenced the design of Lutheran baptismal examinations and initiation ceremonies for converted Jews. One of the primary perceived threats was the pollution of the community by an individual Jew who had not truly converted, or who remained embedded within his or her former community after conversion. Halvorson looks closely at the ways these concerns affected the development of baptismal examinations, observing: "Considered collectively, all the reports of Lutherans baptizing Jews make it clear that by the late Reformation, pastors had modified Luther's basic instructions about baptizing Jews to include much more catechetical content, and this content was used to express polemical concerns as well as to verify the proper intention and doctrinal instruction of converts seeking entrance into Lutheran community."[36] This chapter nicely illustrates the challenges faced by individuals who existed at the margins of two communities (or overlapping circles), each of which demanded rejection of the other community as a requirement of membership in its own.

Turning to seventeenth-century England, Claire Schen also examines questions of integrating potentially harmful outsiders into the community and the challenges faced by those individuals trying to navigate the crossing from one community to the other (and sometimes back again). Two of Schen's subjects are men who at one time belonged to the English community, but who as pirates and then captives on Muslim ships had been physically, culturally, and religiously removed from that community. The third is a Greek refugee and former Turkish captive who successfully integrated himself into the English community. Schen illustrates the ways in which a renegade's or captive's own behavior—treatment of Christians during his travels, efforts to help other captives return to England, demonstrations of repentance or clear rejection of Islam—were carefully taken into account in determining his fate within various English communities. Although her case studies demonstrate English concerns to protect communities from threatening outsiders at both the local and national levels, Schen's evidence also "emphasizes British ambivalence about Turks and Muslims as well as

[36] Michael J. Halvorson, "Lutherans Baptizing Jews: Examination Reports and Confessional Polemics from Reformation Germany," in the present volume, Chapter 10, p. 202.

flexibility toward and ambiguity about the renegades and pirates who had lived among them."[37]

Finally, still in the British Isles, Kristen Walton examines the initial efforts of the Scottish reformers to establish national guidelines for membership in the Scottish Reformed Kirk and for the enforcement of the discipline that membership required. In contrast to many reformers on the continent, Scottish reformers "more than Geneva and other reformed societies, [were] trying to create an entirely reformed *nation*: a Protestant land that was to include all of the Scots *actively*."[38] The reformers began with the goal of creating a nation fully subject to Christian discipline in which not fully participating in the Christian community—choosing to live as a religious outsider—was not an option. As Walton illustrates, however, they had to make a number of compromises at the national level in order to balance their desire to establish a "purely reformed" community with the determination of many Scottish elite not to give up their way of life or cede too much authority to the new church.[39] In other words, the reformers faced challenges from individual Scotsmen who sought to maintain their membership in multiple communities, or circles, at the same time, without allowing the requirements of one to impinge too greatly on the needs (or privileges) of another.

Ritual, boundaries, and charity

In addition to the very broad theme of inclusion and exclusion, the more specific themes that emerge among these essays include the role of ritual in community definition, the transgression of community boundaries, and the place of charity in defining community membership. A number of our authors address the role of ritual in defining and unifying early modern communities. Building on the scholarship on ritual discussed above, the essays in this volume demonstrate that the close examination of ritual practices continues to be an important and profitable approach to comprehending the dynamics and outlines of early modern communities. But many of our authors confirm Edward Muir's observation about the ambiguity of ritual, emphasizing the importance of looking at the complicated nature of ritual and its effects. In particular, Raymond Mentzer, Michael Halvorson, and

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[37] Claire S. Schen, "Breaching 'Community' in Britain: Captives, Renegades, and the Redeemed," in the present volume, Chapter 12, p. 230–31.

[38] Kristen Post Walton, "Scotland's 'City on a Hill:' The Godly and the Political Community in Early Reformation Scotland," in the present volume, Chapter 13, p. 248.

[39] The phrase is borrowed from Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven, 2002).

Amanda Eurich, in their discussions of Protestant communion, baptism, and death rituals, demonstrate the variety of concerns at play in the creation and enactment of these practices. The chapters by Mentzer and Eurich especially suggest the ways that traditional ritual practices could continue to exert influence on people otherwise committed to Reformed communities. John Frymire's essay demonstrates the sophistication of both official Catholic ritual theory and lay understandings of the significance of ritual practices in late sixteenth-century Germany. Sean Cocco's essay directs our attention to the importance of religious and civic rituals associated with natural phenomena, connecting divine and saintly power to volcanic activity and the protection of the community. Local comprehension of the importance of such ritual is demonstrated in the struggle to claim authority over the meaning both of the natural disaster and of the processions that resulted. Susan Boettcher also looks at the careful employment of ritual and liturgy—as well as altarpieces and other artwork that commemorated Lutheran ideas about the sacraments—to build and strengthen a sense of belonging to the new Lutheran confession. And in a final example, Kristen Walton highlights the important role that ritual played in creating Reformed communities as she examines Scottish reformers' efforts to legislate new boundaries for the Reformed Scottish community by outlawing specific Catholic rituals and prescribing only particular Reformed ones.

Another motif that emerges in many of these discussions is the theme of movement across boundaries, including religious, spatial, and political boundaries, as well as boundaries between different states of being or stages of life. Resonating with Keith Luria's findings regarding the permeability of boundaries for parts of France, introduced above, a number of the essays in the present volume illustrate not only the earnest attempts on the parts of religious and government officials to set boundaries, but also the variety of ways in which such boundaries were transgressed—and sometimes ignored altogether—on a regular basis. As Steve Hindle and Joel Harrington concluded in a discussion among some of our authors at the 2007 Sixteenth Century Studies Conference in Minneapolis, one thing that the work in this volume suggests is the "futility" of establishing strict, impermeable community boundaries. For example, Karen Spierling's essay examines a family that chose intentionally and repeatedly to cross a number of boundaries established by Genevan officials, including the civic and religious boundaries of the city that were intended, in part, to prevent Reformed Genevans from interacting with Catholics. Claire Schen's discussion addresses the crossing and re-crossing of far-flung religious, civic, and cultural boundaries and the varying results of such transgressions. Michael Driedger's work suggests, in contrast to a bold challenge to established boundaries, a more gradual easing of community

limits effected by certain members, permitting the exchange of ideas across community boundaries more than the physical violation of those limits.

Finally, a number of recent contributions to the current scholarship on European communities address the topic of charity, and the question of whether charitable institutions in particular towns and cities distinguished between religious confessions or allowed Protestants and Catholics to work together.[40] While none of our contributors focuses solely on the economic definition of community membership, a number do discuss or touch upon the issue of charity as a marker of community belonging. Steve Hindle, for example, illustrates the ways in which Rogationtide celebrations were limited to parish members and organizers made pointed efforts to exclude outsiders from access to the food provided on such occasions. In the cases Hindle addresses, parish boundaries were certainly used to define charitable obligations—and to foist such obligations on other communities, as in the practice of forcibly removing unwed pregnant mothers outside of parish boundaries so that a given parish would not be responsible for the illegitimate child. Amanda Eurich's discussion of Protestant will-making, too, demonstrates concerted efforts to keep financial charity within the Protestant community. On the other hand, Susan Dinan's essay illustrates one way in which service to the poor could transcend certain boundaries—geographical, in the case of the Daughters of Charity—but still serve to characterize the nature of a religious community and define the obligations of community membership. And finally, Joel Harrington's discussion reveals some of the ways in which charity both helped to define the religious and civic community and also challenged the established definition. In the end,

[40] See Natalie Zemon Davis, "Poor Relief, Humanism, and Heresy," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, pp. 17–64; Thomas Max Safley, *Charity and Economy in the Orphanages of Early Modern Augsburg* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1987); Jeannine E. Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare: Deacons and the Bourse française* (London, 1989); Lee Palmer Wandel, *Always Among Us: Images of the Poor in Zwingli's Zurich* (Cambridge, 1990); Robert Jütte, *Poverty and Deviance in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1994); Charles H. Parker, *The Reformation of Community: Social Welfare and Calvinist Charity in Holland, 1572–1620* (Cambridge, 1998); *With Us Always: A History of Private Charity and Public Welfare*, eds Donald T. Crichtlow and Charles H. Parker (Lanham, MD, 1998); Timothy Fehler, *Poor Relief and Protestantism: The Evolution of Social Welfare in Sixteenth-Century Emden* (Aldershot, 1999); Joel F. Harrington, "Escape from the Great Confinement: The Genealogy of a German Workhouse," *The Journal of Modern History*, 71/2 (June 1999): 308–45; *Health care and poor relief in Counter-Reformation Europe*, eds Ole Peter Grell, Andrew Cunningham, and Jon Arrizabalaga (London, 1999); Martin Dinges, "Huguenot poor relief and health care in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries," in Mentzer and Spicer, *Society and Culture in the Huguenot World*, pp. 157–74; Claire S. Schen, *Charity and Lay Piety in Reformation London* (Aldershot, 2002); *The Reformation of Charity: The Secular and the Religious in Early Modern Poor Relief*, ed. Thomas Max Safley (Leiden, 2003); Steve Hindle, *On the Parish?: The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c. 1550–1750* (Oxford, 2004).

the willingness of Nuremberg officials to deal flexibly with non-native foundlings and orphans, as revealed by Harrington, means that in this case charitable practices are a more useful indicator of the character of the community than of its religious or civic boundaries.

Early modern communities in theory and practice

If conflict was an inherent characteristic of early modern communities, the essays collected here suggest that one of the greatest sources of that conflict was the tension between the idealized visions of community espoused by religious and civic leaders and the daily workings of communities made up of flesh-and-blood individuals. Taken all together, this collection of essays demonstrates that it is important always to distinguish between the rhetorical ideal of community advanced by early modern philosophers, magistrates, and theologians, and the real communities that developed in practice. Ritual, boundaries, and standards of inclusion and exclusion were all created to distinguish, strengthen, and unify ideal communities as reformers and civic leaders envisioned them. For both religious and secular leaders in the early modern period, one of the main goals of community definition was to emphasize the relationship of a given community to God and to ensure that the community met God's standards for "true Christians." The following chapters remind us, however, of the many exceptions, transgressions, and multiple interpretations involved in the actual operations of early modern communities.

While civic and religious regulations, didactic literature, and court records—some of the types of sources used by many of our contributors—are valuable sources especially for understanding the intentions of secular authorities and religious reformers, the legislation of ideas seldom equated to absolute enforcement or to full assent to the rules among a given population. As Peter Burke remarks:

> If real communities are messy affairs, ideal ones – 'imagined communities', as Benedict Anderson has called them – have clear boundaries. Imagined communities, like other figments of the imagination, have real effect, and attempts to create communities by imposing a particular language or variety of language have important consequences, even if they are not always the consequences intended by the planners."[41]

[41] Burke, *Languages and Communities*, p. 6. Anderson, focusing on the development of modern ideas of nationalism, argued that virtually *all* political communities are in some way imagined (Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 6). The essays collected in the present volume, however, demonstrate that a more fruitful approach to understanding most early modern communities—political and otherwise—is to consider the relationship between

What Burke observes for language holds true, we would argue, for any vision of the ideal community: understanding the practical consequences of plans of action and legislation is equally as important as understanding the ideals themselves. The essays presented here reinforce and provide further nuance to the conclusions of other recent scholars that defining early modern communities was a process of constant negotiation—not only between those in authority and the general population, but at times among religious and secular officials, as well. Such negotiation might serve to strengthen or nurture a community, or simply to ensure its survival; on the other hand, as some of our contributions illustrate, "negotiation" could also take the form of divisive arguments and struggles, and the apparent stability of communities was sometimes predicated on practices of ostracism and exclusion.

Related to the problem of theory versus practice is the ambiguous significance of geographical place in creating and defining communities. A number of these essays remind us that the least-conflicted and most coherent early modern communities were often those whose members were widely dispersed and who, therefore, relied even more heavily on abstract ideas of unity as promoted through shared texts, letters, rituals, and images. The scattered members of these groups had the flexibility of agreeing to the significance of ideas, words, and practices in theory, without having to confront possible differences among their interpretations in their daily lives. Such communities, not tied to specific localities, fit the concept of Anderson's "imagined communities" closely in some ways. In cases where community members did not have to interact on a daily basis, and perhaps never even met each other face-to-face—especially where community membership was, by definition, voluntary—it was possible to approach the ideal of a community knit together by consensus and a shared vision. Communities based on co-residence, by contrast, were often rent by conflict and disagreement at a variety of levels and, over time, such conflict helped to forge the definitions of those communities.

In conclusion, the work collected here demonstrates that early modern communities were often surprisingly permeable, certainly not static, and considerably messier on a day-to-day basis than one would expect from reading the political and religious rhetoric of the day. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to define in absolute, analytical terms a particular size, political structure, or expected life-cycle of a community that applies to a majority of the case studies presented in this volume. Nonetheless, it is clear that early modern Europeans in a wide variety of situations did successfully use religious standards and distinctions to

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imagined or *ideal* communities and practical or functioning communities, *both* of which existed and often overlapped.

shore up their communities and unstable polities—even if the resulting communities were not ideal and oftentimes operated according to exceptions over rules. Finally, the essays that follow reveal that there are important similarities and points of resonance in the ways that communities were defined across Europe, but also that early modern notions of community were complex and multivalent even within a specific country, principality, or city. At many levels and across regions, early modern religious and civic leaders were constantly working *toward* their ideals while simultaneously navigating complexities and exceptions presented by their actual human communities.