

CLASSICS  
OF THE  
RADICAL  
REFORMATION

# Jörg Maler's Kunstbuch

*Writings of the Pilgram  
Marpeck Circle*

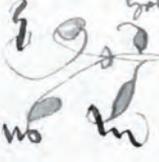


# JÖRG MALER'S KUNSTBUCH

Writings of the  
Pilgram Marpeck  
Circle



Z. Das Kindling bin ich gemacht. In Pfingsttag ich beschick,  
 was aber den Geist reich hat, der frucht darinnen frucht von hat,  
 was sein frucht und gemacht thut frucht, bei got allein kumbt zu frucht,  
 es ist wort aber selber du gald, darinn frucht bis zu den frucht  
 gold, mit geist gebrunnst sand darinn, walen es verbrucht  
 die frucht mit und frucht, darinn laß die frucht sein mit  
 hoch zu lob, im gottvertraut dich allzeit hat, was du  
 mit frucht verbrucht, mit got das er dies got frucht kumbt,  
 der galden wert dich wert frucht, das got uns got durch  
 frucht guth, durch frucht reichte frucht frucht, der  
 gald uns im sein galden. Amen



W. . . . .  
 dem gald in es tragen dar, was es dann frucht frucht  
 er hat, der frucht uns all sein gald. Amen

. . . . .  
 den man nennt, walen. ut

. . . . .  
 frucht beantworte mit all frucht, obre, es und gald  
 frucht, dem obren. bis es selbst frucht dich vor, er  
 . . . . .

# JÖRG MALER'S KUNSTBUCH

Writings of the  
Pilgram Marpeck  
Circle

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Edited by John D. Rempel



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Map: Area and Places of Marpeck's Life and Work, by Kerry Jean Handel, reprinted from Klaassen, Walter, and William Klassen, *Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity* (Herald Press, 2008). Used with permission.

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### ***Dedication***

To my brother Henry Rempel, voice of justice for ordinary people  
and my sister Rita Brown, source of hospitality and companionship

## *Classics of the Radical Reformation*

Classics of the Radical Reformation is an English-language series of Anabaptist and Free Church documents translated and annotated under the direction of the Institute of Mennonite Studies, which is the research agency of the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, and published by Plough Publishing House.

1. *The Legacy of Michael Sattler*. Trans., ed. John Howard Yoder.
2. *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck*. Trans., ed. William Klassen and Walter Klaassen.
3. *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources*. Trans., ed. Walter Klaassen.
4. *The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism: The Grebel Letters and Related Documents*. Ed. Leland Harder.
5. *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*. Ed. H. Wayne Pipkin and John Howard Yoder.
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7. *The Anabaptist Writings of David Joris: 1535–1543*. Ed. Gary K. Waite.
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9. *Peter Riedemann's Hutterite Confession of Faith*. Ed. John J. Friesen.
10. *Sources of South German/Austrian Anabaptism*. Ed. C. Arnold Snyder, trans. Walter Klaassen, Frank Friesen, and Werner O. Packull.
11. *Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition: 1527–1660*. Ed. Karl Koop.
12. *Jörg Maler's Kunstbuch: Writings of the Pilgram Marpeck Circle*. Ed. John D. Rempel.
13. *Later Writings of the Swiss Anabaptists: 1529–1592*. Ed. C. Arnold Snyder.

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## Series preface

The modern publication of sixteenth-century Anabaptist source documents has been under way since the beginning of the twentieth century. Scholars working with German-language texts, both treatises and court records, continue to publish meticulously annotated editions of seminal texts from the Radical Reformation. Most of these have appeared in the series *Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte* and its sub-series *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*. Early in the twentieth century (*Bibliotheca Reformatoria Neerlandica*) and again more recently (*Commissie tot de Uitgave van de Documenta Anabaptistica Neerlandica*), the similarly impressive publication of Dutch-language sources has gained momentum.

The series Classics of the Radical Reformation (CRR) was inaugurated to make major selections from this literature, in and beyond the above series, available in translation with interpretive introductions for a broad English-language readership.

*Jörg Maler's Kunstbuch: Writings of the Pilgrim Marpeck Circle* is the twelfth volume in the CRR series. Its distinction is that it gathers together a broad range of writings that could be called the core library of the farflung Marpeckite congregations across German-speaking Europe. In reading it we encounter theological and spiritual currents that gave sustenance and unity to these scattered communities. The

diversity of its contents strikes the reader immediately. Of course Pilgram Marpeck, Leupold Scharnschlager, and their fellow ministers figure prominently in this anthology. But so does the editor, Maler, until now a shadowy figure in Anabaptist historiography. Anabaptists from other streams of the movement as well as figures from the Reformation at large also have a place in this collection. It portrays one Anabaptist approach to the elusive goal of theological and communal unity in which patience and tolerance were also seen as part of the Holy Spirit's work.

The publication of *Jörg Maler's Kunstbuch: Writings of the Pilgram Marpeck Circle* follows volume eleven, *Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition*, by three years. We hope that another volume of primary sources will be forthcoming within a similar length of time.

On the occasion of his retirement as general editor of Herald Press, a word of gratitude to Levi Miller is in order. Throughout his tenure Miller has been a consistent proponent of Herald Press's publishing of academic works in Anabaptist history and theology, and of CRR volumes in particular. When it seemed wise to all parties to co-publish the series with Pandora Press, with distribution by Herald Press, Miller helped to put that arrangement on a stable footing.

I am thankful for the shared vision among the staff of the Institute of Mennonite Studies that makes possible the ongoing publication of Mennonite-related research, including Classics of the Radical Reformation. For the fruitful partnership IMS has with its co-publishers, all of us are grateful.

John D. Rempel, Editor, Classics of the Radical Reformation  
Institute of Mennonite Studies, Elkhart, Indiana

## Editor's preface

Scholars have been fascinated by Pilgram Marpeck and his circle since the rediscovery of the long-lost legacy of their writings, and that interest has not abated. This volume offers another part of that legacy to English-speaking readers, not only scholars, but also inquiring general readers who might find theological insight and spiritual depth in the conviction and diversity of the authors who make up this anthology. It is a remarkable amalgam of pastoral letters, meditations, tracts, and poems.

Awareness of the distinctive significance of Marpeckian Anabaptism did not extend beyond specialists in North America until Marpeck's ideas began to appear in English. J. C. Wenger translated short pieces of Marpeck texts that appeared in the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* in the late 1930s. But it was William Klassen's 1968 doctoral dissertation, *Covenant and Community: The Life and Writings of Pilgram Marpeck*, that set the course of Marpeck studies on this continent. A decade later William Klassen and Walter Klaassen translated core texts by Marpeck, including his letters in the *Kunstabuch*, in the *Writings of Pilgram Marpeck* (1978). This splendid collection first made the study of the primary texts possible for English speakers. Klassen and Klaassen's comprehensive biography, *Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity* (2008), will be the door into Marpeck studies for the next generation.

Jörg Maler's manuscript of the *Kunstbuch* has been in the Burgerbibliothek in Bern, Switzerland, for about three centuries. I am grateful to Patrick Andritt, curator, for providing access to the manuscript as well as for sending a high quality copy of its title page (which serves as the frontispiece for this English edition). This translation of the *Kunstbuch* is based on the critical German edition of the original text, the 2007 *Briefe und Schriften oberdeutscher Täufer 1527–1555: Das "Kunstbuch" des Jörg Probst Rotenfelder gen. Maler*, edited by Heinold Fast, an independent scholar and Mennonite minister in Emden, Germany. It was Fast who first brought the manuscript to the attention of the scholarly world. Martin Rothkegel, a historian of sixteenth-century radical reform movements in Moravia, and assistant professor of church history at the Baptist seminary in Elstal near Berlin, completed the task that ill health had compelled Fast to lay down. Rothkegel worked in consultation with Gottfried Seebaß, chair of the series *Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte*. The *Kunstbuch* was published as volume 17 in its subseries *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*. The annotated edition pays meticulous attention to all the aspects of concern to scholarship, among them literary and social context, textual variations, linguistic archaisms, implicit scripture references. Without their enormous achievement in bringing the original manuscript to life and comprehension, an English translation would have remained out of reach.

Both the scholarly achievement of the modern critical edition and the translation project fired the imagination of the Institute of Mennonite Studies, especially the Reference Council of IMS's Classics of the Radical Reformation. That group quickly arrived at agreement to publish an English translation of the *Kunstbuch*. Since the modern critical German edition would be the authoritative text for scholars, it was agreed that the English translation should be carried out in a format that would bring these letters to a less specialized readership. The translation was to be faithful to the original text, of course. But, given the complexity of German syntax, it was to be a dynamic equivalent rather than a strictly literal rendering. We were confident that the *Kunstbuch* merited the attention of church leaders, students, those

seeking guidance on the spiritual path, and those looking for another kind of Anabaptist model for the church's relationship to society.

The goal of accessibility led to two decisions. One was that there should be a carefully but significantly reduced critical apparatus. The other decision was that the commentaries on the individual pieces and the volume as a whole should highlight their pastoral and spiritual, as well as historical, relevance. For the sake of its intended audience, the English version should supply theological comments on the major themes of each document and offer concise explanations of European historical and geographic references unfamiliar to people from other continents.

To the Anglophone ear the long lists of nouns and verbs and the Germanic word order found in these writings are hard to follow. This linguistic difference is a challenge to translator and editor alike. How much do we translate verbatim in order to remain faithful to text and context? How much do we edit to make the text (and perhaps even the context) come alive for readers in another language and culture?

It is the task of a translator to concentrate on exact equivalents in concepts and turns of phrase. It is the task of an editor to make a piece of literature come alive in another time and tongue. My maxim was: the translator's chief responsibility is to the author, while the editor's chief responsibility is to the audience. I tried to honour both callings as I edited the translations I received. My heartfelt thanks go to the translators—C. J. Dyck, Leonard Gross, Linda Huebert Hecht, Daniel Liechty, Walter Klaassen, William Klassen, Gerhard Reimer, John D. Roth, C. Arnold Snyder, Jonathan Seiling, and Victor Thiessen—for their labour of love, for their high level of competence (sometimes under the pressure of deadlines), and for the affection they lavished on the words and thoughts they conveyed into another language. I am grateful for a research grant from William Klassen and Walter Klaassen that allowed Victor Thiessen to devote himself to translating several of the most challenging texts. Late in the process, when there seemed to be no acceptable way of accommodating all the original and modern annotations in a readable text, a generous grant from William Klassen and Dona Harvey allowed us to hire Andrea Dalton to undertake that arduous and exacting task. In consultation with Barbara Nelson Gin-

gerich, Dalton devoted her scholarly and technical skills not only to the accurate placement of annotations but to the indices and the refinement of other details of the manuscript. My thanks also to Jonathan Gingerich for his careful work in completing the scripture index, and to Sarah Thompson and Jonny Gerig Meyer for their heroic efforts in proofreading the indices under pressure of a deadline.

In addition to the translators there have been other significant partners in this project. Let me begin by thanking the Reference Council of the Institute of Mennonite Studies series, *Classics of the Radical Reformation*—Karl Koop, Gerald Mast, John D. Roth, and C. Arnold Snyder—for helping me arrive at an adequate conceptual framework for the unusual challenge of translating a sixteenth-century collection of forty-two texts by a dozen authors for a scholarly as well as a general audience. They have counselled and encouraged me at each step of the way. In addition, John Roth has been a patient conversation partner on a number of puzzling issues arising from my research. I am equally grateful to the Institute of Mennonite Studies at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, in the persons of director Mary H. Schertz and managing editor Barbara Nelson Gingerich, for sustained moral and financial support. With the encouragement of Marlin Jeschke I applied for and received a generous research grant from the Mennonite Historical Society. It allowed me to take my sabbatical in Germany, where I had access to specialized libraries and the counsel of specialists in the field. During my sabbatical I lived with long-time friends, Goetz and Katharina Doyé in Bergholtz, near Berlin. They offered me not only space and seclusion but also conversation and companionship that sustained me in my toil. In Hamburg I benefited from many hours of probing conversation with Hans-Jürgen Goertz and Martin Rothkegel about the significance of the *Kunstabuch* and the ephemeral *Marpeck Circle*. Their insights and academic camaraderie gave my work a depth it would not otherwise have achieved.

I have three debts to pay to colleagues who helped create the book. The first one I owe to Barbara Nelson Gingerich for the wisdom, competence, and steadiness with which she prepared the texts for publication. The second debt I owe to James Nelson Gingerich for undertaking the formatting process from start to finish with an aesthetic sensibility

that both pleases the modern eye and conveys original illustrations in elegantly stylized form. The third debt I owe to Brent Graber, our director of information technology. He kept his patience and good cheer on a thousand different occasions when computer problems stumped me.

Andy Alexis-Baker freely offered his skill in solving stylistic, formatting, and other computer problems at a time when I had almost given up on the project.

Finally, I am indebted to Jonathan Seiling for his insightful critique of the introduction to this volume. My thanks go to Jan Gleysteen for his kind permission to reproduce the historic photos in this volume. I am grateful to Elinor Neufeld and Hedy Rempel for volunteer work in incorporating documentation of scripture references. I applaud Pandora Press for its commitment to scholarly and popular publication of all things Anabaptist, and I am grateful for the flexible and cooperative spirit of Christian Snyder, publisher.

The writings of the *Kunstabuch* are both a handbook and a cautionary tale. They are a handbook for radical Christians in search of models for being in but not of the world. At the same time these writings are a cautionary tale about the vulnerability and precariousness of such a stance.

John D. Rempel

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## List of abbreviations

- AB      Armour, Rollin Stely. *Anabaptist Baptism: A Representative Study*. Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite history, no. 11. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1966.
- AD      Rott, Jean-Georges, and Simon Leendert Verheus, eds. *Anabaptistes et dissidents au XVIe siècle: actes du Colloque international d'histoire anabaptiste du XVIe siècle tenu à l'occasion de la XIe Conférence Mennonite mondiale à Strasbourg, Juillet 1984*. Bibliotheca dissidentium; Scripta et studia, no. 3. Baden-Baden : Éditions Valentin Koerner, 1987.
- ARG     *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*
- BCSB   Snyder, C. Arnold, ed.; Gilbert Fast and Galen A. Peters, trans; *Biblical Concordance of the Swiss Brethren, 1540*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2001.
- BD      Séguenny, André, ed. *Bibliotheca dissidentium: répertoire des non-conformistes religieux des seizième et dix-septième siècles*. Bibliotheca bibliographica Aureliana Baden-Baden: Éditions Valentin Koerner, 1980.
- BH      Pipkin, H. Wayne, and John H. Yoder, trans. and ed., *Balthasar Hubmaier: Theologian of Anabaptism*. Classics of the Radical

- Reformation, vol. 5. Kitchener, ON, and Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989.
- Bern MS Heinold Fast. Transcription and commentary on Das “Kunstabuch” des Jörg Probst Rotenfelder gen. Maler (Burgerbibliothek Bern, Cod. 464). Unpublished manuscript. Electronic copy sent by Fast to John Rempel, 1998.
- BSOT Fast, Heinold, and Martin Rothkegel, comp. *Briefe und Schriften Oberdeutscher Täufer 1527–1555: Das “Kunstabuch” des Jörg Probst Rotenfelder gen. Maler (Burgerbibliothek Bern, Cod. 464)*. Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer, vol. 17. Edited by Heinold Fast and Gottfried Seebaß. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007.
- CC Klassen, William. *Covenant and Community: The Life, Writings, and Hermeneutics of Pilgram Marpeck*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968.
- EAS Liechty, Daniel. *Early Anabaptist Spirituality*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994.
- GOT Müller, Lydia, ed. *Glaubenszeugnisse oberdeutscher Taufgesinnter*. Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte, vol. 20. Gütersloher Verlagshaus: G. Mohn. Reprinted New York: Johnson Reprint, 1971.
- HB Packull, Werner O. *Hutterite Beginnings: Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.
- KB Kunstbuch
- LWPM Klaassen, Walter, Werner O. Packull, and John D. Rempel, trans. *Later Writings by Pilgram Marpeck and His Circle*. Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1999.
- ME *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 5 vols. Scottsdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1955–1959, 1990. This material is available in the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online <<http://www.gameo.org/>>

- MESG Packull, Werner O. *Mysticism and the Early South German-Austrian Anabaptist Movement, 1525–1531*. Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, no. 19. Kitchener, ON, and Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1977.
- MEWLT Seebaß, Gottfried. *Müntzers Erbe: Werk, Leben und Theologie des Hans Hut*. Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte, vol. 73. Göttingen: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002.
- MGB *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter*.
- MLDC Klaassen, Walter, and William Klassen. *Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity*. Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2008.
- MQR *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.
- PAW Snyder, Arnold C., and Linda A. Huebert Hecht, eds. *Profiles of Anabaptist Women: Sixteenth-Century Reforming Pioneers*. Studies in Women and Religion. Waterloo, ON: Published for the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion by Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996.
- PMA Loserth, Johann, ed. *Pilgram Marbecks Antwort auf Kaspar Schwenckfelds Beurteilung des Buches der Bundesbezeugung von 1542*. Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte der oberdeutschen Taufgesinnten im 16. Jahrhundert. Vienna: Carl Fromme, 1929.
- PMLST Boyd, Stephen B. *Pilgram Marpeck: His Life and Social Theology*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1992.
- PRR Goertz, Hans-Jürgen, ed., and Walter Klaassen, English edition ed. *Profiles of the Radical Reformers: Biographical Sketches from Thomas Müntzer to Paracelsus*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1982.
- WPM Klassen, William, and Walter Klaassen, trans. and ed. *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck*. Classics of the Radical Reformation, vol. 2. Kitchener, ON, and Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1978.

# Introduction

On 26 September 1561, Jörg Maler, a painter, minister, and author from Augsburg, Germany, deposited a treasure at Gregor Mangold's book-binding shop in Zurich, Switzerland. Half of that treasure has been lost without a trace. The half that remains is the book before you, now in English translation. These writings by a wide range of authors were collected into one volume because scattered congregations living a precarious existence—as a result of their dissent from the theological and political commitments of the realm—had found them life giving.

The manuscript Maler brought to Zurich consists of fifty-six eclectic writings: pastoral letters, theological treatises, tracts, devotions, poems, and sayings. It includes twenty-seven letters, sixteen of them by Pilgram Marpeck, an engineer, minister, and theologian, also from Augsburg. Marpeck was the outstanding leader of these scattered congregations. In addition to his letters there are eleven by other ministers of what has come to be called the Marpeck Circle. Six were written by Leupold Scharnschlager, Marpeck's closest co-worker. Many of these are open letters,<sup>1</sup> usually addressed to a particular party but intended for a wider readership. This form of writing was common in the age of the Reformation. In addition, there are five tracts by formative figures

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<sup>1</sup> *Sendschreiben*.

in South German–Austrian Anabaptism, one each by Hans Hut and Hans Schlaffer and three by Leonhard Schiemer. All three men died a martyr’s death in the early years of the Reformation.

Jörg Probst Rothenfelder, called Maler (“painter”) because of his profession, was editor of the *Kunstabuch* and the author of three of its treatises: an evangelistic letter, a digest of the community’s convictions, and a confession of faith. The remaining seven writings have in common only that they were known and prized by members of the Marpeck Circle; they include meditations on God’s faithfulness, a member’s confession of sin, and a poem warning against false belief.

The book begins with four prefaces, and ten interludes are scattered throughout the volume. The second preface is an epic poem by Spiritualist Valentin Ickelsamer on the dangers of misusing academic training. The other three prefaces contain short meditative thoughts that fit into spaces left vacant when a text did not completely fill a given quire of the manuscript. At the same time extra leaves have been inserted into the codex.<sup>2</sup> The interludes are also short; they contain devotional and prophetic writings, including two statements by Maler. Most of the interludes seem to have been added at the last minute to make use of vacant space.

The arrangement of the original table of contents<sup>3</sup> is different from the one used in the critical German edition<sup>4</sup> and in this translation. It reveals the first of several surprises connected with the *Kunstabuch*. The original table lists thirteen dated epistles by Marpeck. Then come four “Epistles of Pilgram, Written at Unknown Times.” One of them is “Concerning True Godliness” (no. 41), which scholars now know was actually written by Christian Entfelder, a Spiritualist with whom Marpeck debated! In the next section are three notes by Maler. Five writings by Scharnschlager follow. Then come six texts by “Anabaptist brothers.” One is actually Marpeck’s “Concerning Hasty Judgments and Verdicts” (no. 7). It is remarkable that Marpeck’s colleague Maler would not have

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<sup>2</sup> Perhaps when the compiler had selected a piece to fill the blank, he couldn’t relinquish its place in the volume even when it more than filled the available space.

<sup>3</sup> BSOT, 94–96.

<sup>4</sup> BSOT.

known who had penned this signature writing. The remaining texts, including the Athanasian Creed, make up the final category. The original table of contents also includes two treatises that have gone missing and must have been taken over into the second half of the codex: “Questions concerning Word and Sacrament” and “Questions and Answers Having to Do with Magistrates.”

Most of the manuscript was copied by Maler.<sup>5</sup> On the left side of each page a blank column was reserved for marginalia, consisting of biblical citations, glosses, and corrections. Besides Maler’s handwriting, two other distinct writing styles are evident. One of these copyists penned the title page and the table of contents. The other one corrected spelling errors on a few pages of the codex.<sup>6</sup>

Because of the many layers of editing of which this edition of the *Kunstabuch* is a product, an explanation is in order regarding how scripture references, glosses, and other notes, penned by various hands, appear in this edition. Scripture references included in the text of the original appear here in parentheses in the form (Heb 10 [37]) (with verses in brackets supplied by the editors of the German critical edition, BSOT). Presumably these references were included by the original author of the article. When a reference appears in the text in brackets, in the form [Heb 10 (37)], that reference was written in the margins of the original text, presumably by a sixteenth-century editorial hand (Jörg Maler?). Other marginal notes in the *Kunstabuch* are included as footnotes in this edition, with an asterisk next to the footnote number. Bracketed footnotes were written by the editor or translator of the article in the present edition. Plain footnotes—with no asterisks or brackets—are English translations of footnotes taken from the German critical edition.

It is noteworthy, given Maler’s precarious circumstances, that he did not merely copy in the simplest possible fashion the documents he had assembled. The first page of the text is copiously illuminated,

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<sup>5</sup> BSOT, 83–87.

<sup>6</sup> A third hand wrote a family chronicle in 1579 and added it to the codex after “Concerning the Two Golden Calves (1 Kgs 12) and the Two Beasts (Rv 13)” (no. 42). This chronicle is not included in the English translation, because it was not originally part of the anthology.

and the first letter of the opening and closing paragraphs of each text is illuminated. The creator of the *Kunstbuch* cared not only about truth but also about the beauty of the truth.

We do not know how long the codex remained in Anabaptist hands. It was listed for the first time in a 1697 catalogue of the *Burgerbibliothek* in Bern, Switzerland, where it was discovered in the 1950s; with that event the reclaiming of the Marpeck literary legacy reached its culmination.

The first recovery of a Marpeck Circle text took place in the 1860s as part of church historian T. W. Roehrich's innovative research on Anabaptism in Strasbourg.<sup>7</sup> He found a copy of "A Clear and Useful Instruction," not yet attributed to Marpeck but known to date from Reformation-era Strasbourg. Fortunately, Roehrich copied excerpts from it; the printed version perished in an 1870 fire that consumed the Strasbourg city archive.

A scholarly sensation of Radical Reformation studies in the 1920s was the discovery of three substantive writings of Marpeck and his circle: the admonition of 1542 (*Vermannung*; also called the *Bundesbezeugung* or baptism booklet of 1542),<sup>8</sup> Marpeck's response (*Verantwortung*) to Caspar Schwenckfeld's judgment (*Judicium*),<sup>9</sup> and the explanation of the Testaments (*Testamentserläuterung*).<sup>10</sup> Discoveries of other writings in European archives continued through the following decades. In 1950 Delbert Gratz, an American Mennonite historian of Swiss Anabaptism, discovered the *Kunstbuch* codex in Bern and had it microfilmed, but never determined its identity.<sup>11</sup> Then in 1956 a Ger-

<sup>7</sup> Jan J. Kiwiet, *Pilgram Marbeck: Ein Führer der Täuferbewegung im Süddeutschen Raum* (Kassel: J. G. Oncken, 1958), 9, 50.

<sup>8</sup> It was discovered in the British Museum by American Mennonite church historian John Horsch in 1923. See J. C. Wenger, "The Life and Work of Pilgram Marpeck," *MQR* 12 (July 1938): 158.

<sup>9</sup> Johann Loserth, Austrian Catholic church historian, meticulously studied the three extant copies (Zurich, Munich, Olmütz [Olomouc]) and published the text with commentary in 1929 (PMA, 48–53).

<sup>10</sup> German Mennonite minister Christian Hege discovered it in the Zurich central library in the mid-1920s. See Wenger, "The Life and Work of Pilgram Marpeck," 161.

<sup>11</sup> Delbert Gratz, "Research Note," *MQR* 31 (October 1957): 294–95.

man doctoral student, Heinold Fast, and fellow student J. F. G. Goeters discovered this codex for a second time and identified it as a Marpeck Circle collection. The significance of their discovery is attested by the fact that *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, the most prominent journal in the field, immediately published Fast's article about it.<sup>12</sup> For thirty-five years Fast devoted himself to the study of the *Kunstbuch* and its literary and geographical context, especially in eastern Switzerland.<sup>13</sup> When ill health prevented him from completing his task, Gottfried Seebaß, chair of the Anabaptist documentation commission,<sup>14</sup> entrusted Martin Rothkegel, a German church historian, with completing this massive project. In 2007 a meticulously researched critical edition of the *Kunstbuch* was published. As is noted in the preface, the critical edition is the basis of this translation into English. Without it, the present project would have taken many more years to publish.

The title *Kunstbuch* can be translated in a number of ways, because the term was widely and variously used in the sixteenth century. Some books bearing that title would most accurately be translated into English as "book of understanding." The term also suggests skill or artistry, hence the possible translation "book of artistry." In other instances, *Kunstbuch* was used in the sense of "handbook," an introduction or guide to a certain subject. Preface 1, by the editor, tells us what he had in mind for his anthology. He calls it "a divine mystery" that can "illuminate your heart, courage, and understanding."

In addition to being the most diverse collection of Marpeck Circle writings, the *Kunstbuch* is also the most provocative document to emerge in that network of congregations: it includes authors whose understanding of faith and of the church were sharply critical of Pilgrimage ones. As a foretaste of more detailed discussion in the commentaries that accompany each document, let us look at one example. Already in the late 1520s, as radical groups in Strasbourg further de-

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<sup>12</sup> Heinold Fast, "Pilgram Marbeck und das oberdeutsche Täuferturn: Ein neuer Handschriftenfund," ARG 47 (1956), 212–42. It is reprinted in BSOT, 13–41.

<sup>13</sup> Heinold Fast, ed., *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer in der Schweiz 2: Ostschweiz* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1973).

<sup>14</sup> The Täuferakten Kommission has published more than thirty volumes of sixteenth-century documents.

fined themselves, Entfelder and Marpeck went in contrary directions. The former preached that the Spirit's working is purely inward, while the latter argued that a visible church and its ceremonies are also essential aspects of the Spirit's activity.

The reader should bear in mind three things, in order to get a fair picture of the *Kunstbuch's* editor and his purposes. First, the Marpeck Circle was a type of Anabaptism that placed great weight on Christ as a living presence in each believer. Marpeck never tired of reciting Galatians 2:20: "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." At the same time Marpeck placed great weight on the theological exposition of belief. Thus the unity of the church lay equally in a shared subjective experience and an objective articulation of foundational beliefs. It was not that discipleship was of secondary value, but the form it took was not as uniform as in other types of Anabaptism.<sup>15</sup> Because of where the weight fell, Pilgrimage Anabaptism had the capacity to accept diversity of conduct and theology. One expression of this approach was plural leadership. Even though Marpeck was a charismatic leader, neither he nor any other single individual determined the life of the congregations who shared a covenant.

Second, if we consider the striking diversity of the *Kunstbuch's* writings, the selection process, culminating in Maler's work, seems to have been based on the meaning a particular text held for some grouping within the Marpeck-related congregations and not on whether it conformed to Marpeck's theological position. Judging by the number of writings in the *Kunstbuch* offering comfort, guidance, and warning to Christians under persecution, we conclude that inspiration to remain

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<sup>15</sup> Marpeck has a clear place for separation from worldly habits and people. The difference between Marpeckites and the Swiss is not on nonconformity as such but in understandings of the nature of nonconformity. Marpeck's approach can be seen in embryo in "Concerning Hasty Judgments and Verdicts" (no. 7). There he first urges separation from the body of Christ for persistent evildoers, but then he warns against banning such people and making irrevocable judgments about them. Finally he warns against reducing to our own rules a Pauline understanding of good and evil.

faithful in suffering was a chief criterion for their inclusion; the collection contains such works by authors with whom Marpeck and others had had disputes. Marpeck is given pride of place in the *Kunstbuch*, but his writings are not presented as a canon within the canon. We will look in more detail below at factors at work in the shaping of the codex.

The third criterion for inclusion in Maler's collection is geographic breadth. Documents representing the life and thought of the circle—from the Alsace, in present-day France, to Moravia, in the present-day Czech Republic—are preserved.

The didactic poems, passionate meditations, pastoral letters, and searing confessions that are part of the *Kunstbuch* open a door into the intimate life of a now lost community. Maler's collection is like an album of photographs taken over a period of thirty years, documenting the life of a family and its friends. In rare detail it records the existence of one kind of Anabaptism, preserving for posterity the personalities and issues, the brilliance and the tragedy that made it what it was. Many of these "photographs" were probably already in the family's possession years before they were pasted into the album we have before us. But there are late additions, some of them written by the compiler or gathered by him from other collections. It was five years after Marpeck's death in 1556 that Maler copied these writings into the handwritten manuscript.

Mid-twentieth-century readers of the *Kunstbuch* brought to their reading a particular set of concerns. Then scholars were seeking to legitimate the Radical Reformation as a third form of sixteenth-century church renewal. It was of urgent importance for its defenders within and beyond Mennonitism to see Anabaptism as parallel to the official forms of Reformation—Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican. To meet that standard, scholars and church leaders (in that generation, the same people often served in both roles) identified with some parts of the radical reform movement<sup>16</sup> and distanced themselves from

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<sup>16</sup> Hans-Jürgen Goertz distinguishes social movements from organizations or institutions. A movement involves a collective actor, continuity on the basis of a strong collective "we" sense, with many fluid forms of participation. See *Pfaffenhass und gross Geschrei: Die reformatorischen Bewegungen in Deutsch-*

others. Those who used this approach were a generation of scholars now known as the “Bender school,” so named for Harold S. Bender, an American Mennonite scholar and churchman.<sup>17</sup> Thus, there came to be an “evangelical Anabaptism,” made up of leaders and writings that were theologically orthodox, pacifist in principle, and remote from apocalyptic fervour.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, scholars of this school assumed that evangelical Anabaptism had a single source, in Zurich, and that it had spread from there.

Much has changed in scholarship since then.<sup>19</sup> In every discipline concerned with examining history, scholars know vastly more about religion and culture in central Europe than their counterparts half a century ago knew. This expanded knowledge has affected the study of radical reform movements such as Anabaptism. Most students of the subject now assume that Anabaptism was a charismatic, barely institutionalized movement—or movements—shaped by various backgrounds and taking many forms. This understanding of Anabaptism

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*land 1517–1529* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1987), 246. In personal conversation (in Hamburg, 6 December 2006) Goertz claimed that some expressions of Anabaptism, including the network (his word) of which Marpeck was a key figure, do not meet the criteria of a movement.

<sup>17</sup> Bender’s emphasis was spelled out in his presidential address to the American Society of Church History and published as “The Anabaptist Vision,” *MQR* 18 (April 1944): 67–88.

<sup>18</sup> For instance, Hans Denck, an Anabaptist writer with a mystical orientation, was on the edge of orthodoxy. Balthasar Hubmaier, who made a case for defensive warfare, did not quite belong. The Münster Anabaptists, who legitimated violence and transgressed moral norms on the basis of apocalyptic visions, clearly did not belong.

<sup>19</sup> The seminal essay that inaugurated a new historiography of Anabaptism is James M. Stayer, Werner O. Packull, and Klaus Deppermann, “From Monogenesis to Polygenesis: The Historical Discussion of Anabaptist Sources,” *MQR* 49 (April 1975): 83–121. For new syntheses of the subject, see Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *The Anabaptists* (New York: Routledge, 1996), esp. 6–35; C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2002), esp. 379–404; and J. Denny Weaver, *Becoming Anabaptist* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2005), esp. 161–222. For a survey of scholarship on Marpeck, see William Klassen, “The Legacy of the Marpeck Community in Anabaptist Scholarship,” *MQR* 78 (January 2004): 7–28.

makes it irresistible to ask, what kind of Anabaptism—or what kinds of Anabaptism—are represented in the *Kunstbuch*? In what follows, I hope to shed light on that question, and on the surprises, puzzles, and ambiguities that accompany it.

### ***Pilgram Marpeck: The man and the movement*<sup>20</sup>**

Pilgram Marpeck was born about 1495 to a devout Catholic patrician family in Rattenberg, Tyrol (40 kilometres east of Innsbruck, in western Austria). He learned the skills of a mining engineer and entered public life as a mining magistrate, also serving one term as mayor of Rattenberg. Sometime before 1520 he married Sophia Harrer. By 1528 she had died, and he had married a woman named Anna, whose maiden name we do not know. She became his companion for life.

During the early 1520s Marpeck was drawn to the cause of reform, first through his parish priest, Stephan Castenbaur, then through Lutheran reformers, and finally through radical reformers such as Leonhard Schiemer and Hans Schlaffer, whose legacy is preserved in the *Kunstbuch*. He was attracted to their primitivist vision of a church like the one portrayed in the New Testament, but he is not known to have been involved in the fledgling Anabaptist congregation that emerged in the area. In late 1527 the imperial government ordered local officials, including Marpeck, to arrest leaders of the radicals and execute them. This provoked a crisis of conscience for Marpeck. He resigned, and he and Anna were banished in early 1528.

They made their way to Moravia, a region of historic religious tolerance near the present Czech, Slovak, and Austrian borders, where Anabaptist groups were in the process of formation. The Marpecks first stopped in Krumau (now Český Krumlov in the Czech Republic), a mining town to which other radicals from the Tyrol had fled. They settled in Austerlitz (now Slavkov u Brna in the Czech Republic), where a community based on voluntary communalism was in the process of forming. They were probably baptized there. We know they were com-

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<sup>20</sup> Immediately upon its publication, the comprehensive and probing biography of Marpeck by Walter Klaassen and William Klassen, *Marpeck: A Life of Dissent and Conformity* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2008), became the standard reference.

missioned to lead a similar group establishing itself in another haven of relative tolerance, the free city of Strasbourg, on the present French-German border.

From the mid-1520s to the early 1530s, Strasbourg was a crossroads for many kinds of reformation. Even though the city had officially embraced reforms championed by Martin Bucer and Wolfgang Capito (along the lines of the Swiss reformers Ulrich Zwingli and Johannes Oecolampadius), Catholic, Anabaptist, and Spiritualist dissenters also had limited religious freedom. Marpeck secured a position as forestry engineer for the city, which gave him personal stability and allowed him to develop a vision of a church that remained more engaged with political institutions, a posture most groups of Anabaptists were unwilling to venture. Remaining in such a public position was rarely possible for the radicals, most of whom sought refuge in transient or menial labour. It was in Strasbourg that Marpeck began his lifelong pastoral and theological partnership with Leupold Scharnschlager. Both men came from prosperous Tyrolean families. Each had left behind a secure life. They must have been kindred spirits, because they soon collaborated in fostering a nonconformed yet not withdrawn form of church life. This partnership continued when both moved to eastern Switzerland, where they undertook writing projects together.

It was in the midst of Strasbourg's religious and social ferment that Marpeck's theology crystallized. He shared general Anabaptist convictions that belief cannot be coerced and the church cannot be one with the state. In debate with the city's leading reformers, Bucer and Capito, he ably articulated the Anabaptist interpretation of the New Testament on believer's baptism and nonresistance. Yet his more original contribution to Anabaptist identity came out of his confrontation with Spiritualism, a diverse movement that saw the spiritual and the material, the inward and the outward, in opposition.<sup>21</sup> Protestant and

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<sup>21</sup> Much controversy surrounds Spiritualism. Some students of the phenomenon argue from its inwardness that it was not a movement, as other types of radical reform were. Scholars who rose to prominence in the field in the 1960s, such as George H. Williams and Rollin Stely Armour, refer to Spiritualism as a loosely definable type of Christian faith. This approach is continued in recent writing by R. Emmet McLaughlin, "Reformation Spiritualism: Typology, Sources,

Catholic reform during the sixteenth century was inspired by the Spiritualist impulse, as a corrective to the externalism of much late medieval religion. But in keeping with much Catholic and Lutheran thought, Marpeck argued that to take the inward impulse as the norm for the Christian life is to deny belief in the incarnation. To make his case, Marpeck authored two treatises<sup>22</sup> that set the course of his theological identity. His argument at its most basic is that “Christ became a natural man for natural man”; the Word became flesh to bring humanity salvation on its own terms. In the power of the Holy Spirit the outward and material becomes the medium of the inward and spiritual. The visible church is the prolongation of the incarnation of Christ, the extension of his humanity in time and space.

By late 1531 Strasbourgh had greatly restricted freedom of dissent. When Marpeck refused to recant his criticism of infant baptism, he and Anna were banished once again. They moved to the Grisons (Graubünden) in eastern Switzerland, where Swiss Anabaptists, simply called “Brethren,” were trying to establish stable congregations. Because of the threat of persecution, which kept them outside the towns, these believers were more withdrawn from civic life than Marpeck, Scharnschlager, and others in their congregations had been. Yet it was not their separatism but their legalism that Marpeck criticized. Apart from fragments, we know little about the twelve years that followed. Marpeck had work as a water engineer for part of that time. He became acquainted with the local Brethren, but we have no information on the nature of their relationship. All we know about it comes from Marpeck’s pastoral letters written to the Swiss a decade later and pre-

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Significance,” in *Radikalität und Dissent im 16. Jahrhundert*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Goertz and James M. Stayer (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2002), 123–40. Geoffrey Dipple argues that there were “Spiritualist Anabaptists” who tried to reconcile the two radical impulses; see “The Spiritualist Anabaptists,” in *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521–1700*, ed. John D. Roth and James M. Stayer, (Boston: Brill, 2007), esp. 293. In his response (*Verantwortung*) to Schwenckfeld’s judgment (*Judicium*) (LWPM, 67–157), Marpeck honours the Spiritualist impulse as a corrective to an overly externalized Christian identity but rejects it as the norm of that identity.

<sup>22</sup> “A Clear Refutation” (WPM, 43–67), and “A Clear and Useful Instruction” (WPM, 69–106).

served in the *Kunstbuch*; in these epistles he accused the Swiss of having a narrow view of the Christian life.

The unguarded intensity of his reaction against certain Swiss practices sounds like theirs was a quarrel if not between lovers at least among siblings. Taking this relationship into account is essential to fairly appraising their debate. Marpeck was incensed because so much was at stake. The Marpeck Circle and the Swiss Brethren had both been stung by the Hutterite judgment that only those who hold all things in common are faithful Christians. These two groups considered the Hutterite model coercive. They argued that the free sharing of one's worldly goods belongs to the call to discipleship. Their point was that giving needs to happen voluntarily. Marpeck concluded that the Swiss were discrediting the voluntary model by rushing to premature and coercive judgment.

During this period Marpeck became active as an itinerant elder (overseer) for a different grouping of congregations who looked to him for leadership; this network stretched from the Alsace across southern Germany to Moravia. With reference to this time in Marpeck's life the term *circle* begins to be used to describe the unusual dynamic of a religious community characterized by a variety of articulate voices, a collegial leadership group of elders, and one individual whose thinking was especially relied upon and whose person was highly esteemed.

In their attempts to piece together a description of Marpeckian Anabaptism, scholars have emphasized different aspects. Jan Kiwiet, a Dutch church historian who first suggested the term *circle*, gives a concise summary of the ferment within the Radical Reformation in the South German realm in the late 1530s and early 1540s. Alignments were solidifying: the Hutterites were taking the vision of renewal in a communitarian direction and the Spiritualists in an individualistic one.<sup>23</sup> Werner Packull, a more recent historian of sixteenth-century radicalism in South Germany, Austria, and Moravia, also sees Marpeck as the pivotal figure in an unstable mediating path. His case focuses on Marpeck's decisive role in the debates with Spiritualists in Moravia.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Kiwiet, *Pilgram Marbeck*, 54–64.

<sup>24</sup> HB, 135–58.

On the other hand, Martin Rothkegel, co-editor of the critical edition of the *Kunstbuch*, describes Marpeck as one who deliberately remained a largely anonymous partner in a collective leadership. This is suggested by the fact that no author is named in any of the major writings—the admonition (*Vermannung*) of 1542,<sup>25</sup> the response (*Verantwortung*) to Caspar Schwenckfeld’s judgment (*Judicium*),<sup>26</sup> and the explanation of the Testaments (*Testamentserläuterung*). Rothkegel argues that it is only the writing of twentieth-century theologians that has constructed Marpeck as an original personality and pulled him out of the literary anonymity in which he and his colleagues chose to work.<sup>27</sup> Rothkegel’s graciously contrarian argument stands as a warning against tendencies in certain Mennonite and Baptist settings to remake Marpeck in our image, to see our own pastoral and theological commitments in his.<sup>28</sup> But it is unclear what Rothkegel makes of Marpeck’s extensive pastoral correspondence, which bears the stamp of a strong personality with deep convictions.

Toward the end of his time in Switzerland and at the beginning of his time in Germany, Marpeck became a prolific author, often writing collaboratively with Scharnschlager and others. In addition to the letters collected in this volume, he and his closest comrades in the tribulation of Christ<sup>29</sup> expanded an existing treatise by a fellow Anabaptist<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> WPM, 159–302.

<sup>26</sup> LWPM, 114–19.

<sup>27</sup> Personal conversation in Hamburg, Germany, on 11 December 2006.

<sup>28</sup> It is instructive to see Marpeck portrayed in North America, on the one hand, as an ally of progressive Mennonites (John D. Rempel, “Ambiguous Legacy: The Peace Teaching, Speaking Truth to Power, and Mennonite Assimilation through the Centuries,” in *At Peace and Unafraid*, ed. Duane Friesen and Gerald Schlabach [Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2005], 349–63); and, on the other hand, of traditional Baptists (Malcolm B. Yarnell, *The Formation of Christian Doctrine* [Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007], 73–106).

<sup>29</sup> Typically the closing lines of his letters identify him as *mitgnöß am truebsal Christi* (“comrade in the tribulation of Christ”).

<sup>30</sup> Bernard Rothmann, *Bekentnisse van beyden Sacramenten, Doepe unde Nachmaele der predicanten tho Münster* (Münster, November 1533); see Frank Wray, “The Vermanung of 1542 and Rothmann’s Bekenntnis,” ARG 47 (1956): 243–51.

on the meaning of baptism and the Lord's Supper; they called it "the admonition" (*Vermannung*). When Marpeck's most formidable Spiritualist critic, Caspar Schwenckfeld, read the book, he bitterly accused Marpeck of abandoning the inward experience of Christ for lifeless outward forms. Marpeck and his comrades responded, no less adamantly, with the *Verantwortung*, a 586-page synthesis of the Spiritualist and sacramentalist impulses in the gospel, grounded in a Trinitarian understanding of the incarnation.

In 1544 the Marpecks moved to Augsburg—a surprising choice, given that the official church of the city had suppressed religious pluralism and was caught up in political and military alliances that created a situation in which authorities perceived all dissent as seditious. An Anabaptist conventicle in the city survived by making itself almost invisible.<sup>31</sup> Once again Marpeck found some provisional stability for his ministry by working as a forestry engineer. Since the authorities in Augsburg did not tolerate visible acts of dissent, Marpeck shifted from public proclamation to pastoral and theological writing as the most fruitful way to nurture Anabaptist church life and foster unity. It is difficult not to see in this shift a retreat from Marpeck's breakthrough insight that the humanity of Christ is prolonged in the visible church and its visible acts of preaching, baptizing, communing, and loving our neighbours. At the same time, it is hard to imagine that stable relationships and rituals could develop in a setting such as Augsburg in the 1540s and 1550s. In Augsburg, at least, the evidence suggests that the Pilgrimage presence was more a matter of the occasional gathering than of covenanted congregational life.

Congregations from the Marpeck Circle in the Alsace and Moravia also struggled to remain true to themselves in settings without freedom of expression, yet the literature suggests that they were more able to strive toward Marpeck's vision of nonconformed but not withdrawn church life. It is a disconcerting irony that Marpeck's belief about the visible church as a continuation of Christ's incarnation applied more readily to the Swiss Brethren—and more fully to the Hutterites—than

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<sup>31</sup> For a succinct portrayal of the effect in Augsburg of the Schmalkaldian War and the imperial rule that followed it, see MLDC, 287–96.

to the Pilgramite congregations, including his own congregation in Augsburg. Even though the Augsburg congregation was unable to sustain itself on Marpeck's ecclesiology of patience and freedom, he remained sharply critical of the separatist congregations in the Grisons. They were almost as hemmed in as the one in Augsburg, but their severe discipline enabled them to survive long after the Pilgramites in Augsburg had dispersed.

Marpeck continued to write until just before his death late in 1556. In 1561 his colleague Jörg Maler gathered together sixteen of Marpeck's pastoral epistles and assorted other materials—twenty-five tracts, devotionals, poems, and pastoral letters by his co-workers and others—that had acquired enduring significance for the circle of congregations Marpeck led, to form the collection of writings now before us. Some of the congregations in Moravia continued to build church life in Marpeck's spirit, until they and all dissenters were suppressed in the 1620s.<sup>32</sup> Elsewhere they gave up their separate existence soon after Marpeck's death. Marpeck's legacy lived on most tangibly among the Swiss Brethren, in southern Germany and Moravia as well as in Switzerland. In another irony, the Swiss took to heart his approach to discipline as well as the rudiments of his incarnational theology in vindicating their way of life to their critics, but they did so without mentioning Marpeck's name.<sup>33</sup> Thus Marpeck was forgotten; his writings were lost to posterity for three centuries. He was like those described in Sirach:

But of others there is no memory;  
they have perished as though they had never existed;  
they have become as though they had never been born,  
they and their children after them.

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<sup>32</sup> The last pastoral correspondence on record is in 1579. But other sources mention Pilgramite congregations as late as 1632; see Jerold Zeman, *The Anabaptists and the Czech Brethren in Moravia 1526–1628* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), 256–58, 301.

<sup>33</sup> C. Arnold Snyder, "The (Not-so) 'Simple Confession' of the Later Swiss Brethren," *MQR* 73 (1999): 677–722; and "The Evolution of Separatist Anabaptism," *MQR* 74 (2000): 87–122. John D. Roth, "Marpeck and the Later Swiss Brethren 1540–1700," in *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism*, ed. Roth and Stayer, 347–88.

But these also were godly men. . . .  
 Their descendents stand by the covenants.<sup>34</sup>

Of Marpeck it can be said, “This also was a godly man.” In the course of the twentieth century the rediscovery of Marpeck as someone who stood by the covenants has allowed us to probe, test, and (at least for some) confirm Marpeck’s vision, to an extent that never happened during his lifetime.

### ***Pilgram Marpeck: The theologian***

Pilgram Marpeck is an original and eclectic theologian whom history forgot. In the past two generations he has come to the attention of students of the sixteenth century because he, and the short-lived movement whose deepest thinker he was, holds a mediating position within the spectrum of Anabaptist experiments. The model of church life he advocated attracted believers who were looking for a *via media*—a mediating path, an alternative to trends that took hold in early Anabaptism.<sup>35</sup> One of these trends believed that reform inspired by the New Testament would lead to an inward life in the Spirit that went beyond outward doctrinal or ecclesial forms. The opposing trend was based on a strictly literal reading of the New Testament and a code of discipleship set down in doctrinal and ecclesial forms.

Marpeck affirmed both an inward life in the Spirit and an outward life of discipleship but placed them within a more complex and developed frame of reference. First, he put great weight on letter, Spirit, and community as inseparable in finding the truth of the Bible.<sup>36</sup> This dynamic kept the movement both from extreme literalism and from private paths to the spiritual life. Second, Marpeck sided with the majority conviction in Anabaptism, which held that the Sermon on the Mount, especially its teaching of noncoercion in matters of faith, nonresis-

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<sup>34</sup> Sir 44:9–12.

<sup>35</sup> A *via media* is not a middle ground or centre. The Marpeck Circle was not the centre of Anabaptism but an attempt to combine antitheses into a new synthesis. For instance, Marpeck was not primarily focused on compromise, as we see from his blunt criticism of the Appenzell Brethren and Schwenckfeld.

<sup>36</sup> “A Clear and Useful Instruction” (WPM, 76–82); “Marpeck’s *Response* to Caspar Schwenckfeld’s *Judgement*” (LWPM, 120–24).

tance to evil, and love of enemies, is central to the meaning of Jesus' ministry and death.<sup>37</sup> But third, he taught that conformity to Christ is not brought about simply by conversion or by ethical rigour. The life of obedience—to cite one of Marpeck's cherished themes—calls for a holy patience that waits for the blossoms, then the flowers, and finally the fruits of faith.<sup>38</sup> His fourth trait was a commitment to nonconformity to the world but not withdrawal from it.<sup>39</sup>

The outworking of this cluster of convictions is the dynamic that animates Marpeck and Scharnschlager's writings in the *Kunstbuch*. Their vision of the church was distinctively Anabaptist but sought to overcome two of the movement's weaknesses. One was the factionalism this vision had generated among those who pursued its perfect realization. The second tendency was the inverse of the first: it overcame such factionalism by the internalization of all things spiritual. The distinctive convictions of Marpeck and his circle emerged in their competition with other radical groups for adherents.<sup>40</sup> The Pilgrimage mediating path stressed sets of complementary differences: visible community as well as individual gifts, rigorous but not legalistic ethics, ability to bear with different stages of spiritual development without making hasty judgments, and the capacity to discern what is essential for unity and what is not.

The writings in the *Kunstbuch* by Marpeck and his fellow ministers dealt, for the most part, with two areas of church life. One was spiritual guidance for everyday conduct. This included the tendency toward legalism (and its opposite) as a pastoral problem that could be addressed through practical counsel and a deeper grasp of the Spirit's work. Helena von Freyberg's "Confession of Guilt" (no. 28) belongs to this category. The other area was the path of self-surrender and the accompanying riddle of innocent suffering for Christ's sake. This too the ministers' letters addressed pastorally in terms of the believer's

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<sup>37</sup> See "Concerning the Love of God" (no. 13).

<sup>38</sup> "Concerning Hasty Judgments and Verdicts" (no. 7).

<sup>39</sup> "Exposé of the Babylonian Whore" (LWPM, 31–37).

<sup>40</sup> Werner Packull (HB, 133–46), and Martin Rothkegel ("Anabaptism in Moravia and Silesia," in *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism*, ed. Roth and Stayer, 177–89), describe how this struggle unfolded in Moravia.

experience and the promises of God. In their writing on the spiritual life, Hartmut von Cronberg, Hans Has von Halstatt, and Christian Enfelder's meditations are cut from similar cloth.

While these letters empathetically engage the issues before the congregations and lift up the promises of the Bible, they do not attain the profound grasp of the spiritual life and its existential intensity found in the treatises of Hans Hut, Leonhard Schiemer, and Hans Schlaffer. These writers achieved a rare understanding of the stages of spiritual growth<sup>41</sup> and identified the illusions and temptations the believer needs to come to terms with in order to die and rise with Christ. The fusion in these letters of lament, pain, and joy gives them a depth and insightfulness that comes only to those who live in the shadow of death. These treatises were included because in them "heart speaks to heart."<sup>42</sup> On that primal level Marpeck and his colleagues would have welcomed their inclusion.<sup>43</sup> More will be said of this in the next section.

At the same time, the enormous theological creativity that arose from the minds of Marpeck and his comrades shows their ongoing concern with Spiritualism—when it became an autonomous approach rather than a corrective—as the foremost doctrinal threat to their understanding of the gospel. Their scholarly writing in the 1540s shows that they viewed Spiritualism as a theological challenge that could ultimately be addressed only by appeal to the doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation. Thus legalism and suffering were dealt with in the elders' epistles in the *Kunstabuch*, while Spiritualism was addressed in two lengthy books, the admonition (*Vermannung*) of 1542, and the response (*Verantwortung*) to Caspar Schwenckfeld. Both books were in circulation when Maler gathered writings for a collection, whereas the elders' pastoral epistles were not readily available.<sup>44</sup> They and

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<sup>41</sup> In late medieval mysticism these stages were renunciation, illumination, and unity. This threefold path is not laid out step-by-step in these texts, but it is implicit in them.

<sup>42</sup> From Augustine (*Cor ad cor loquitur*).

<sup>43</sup> MESG, 182, describes a similar dynamic among the Hutterities of this era, which led to the inclusion of Spiritualistic texts in their chronicles.

<sup>44</sup> Was Maler's criterion for inclusion length or availability? Likely it was not availability, because there were multiple copies or printings of works such as Hans

the prophetic and meditative writings of other authors seem to have been included because of their pastoral relevance, not their affinity for Marpeck's theology.<sup>45</sup>

We need to understand the Marpeckian theology that informed pastoral practice, in order to make sense of the tensions and complementarities in the writings of this anthology as a whole. The great and abiding achievement of Marpeck and his co-workers was their thoroughgoing critique of Spiritualism. The nature of Spiritualism had changed over time. It began as a tendency in much of the late medieval church to overcome the externality and corruption of religious life by seeking the inner reality behind the outward form. At that point, it developed within—and was based on—Catholic institutions. In the chaos of the Reformation, Spiritualism burst this framework and became a new type of religiosity, unconstrained by ritual or dogma, a state of affairs that would have been unimaginable to a medieval Christian.

In some settings of radical reform, the movement toward inner religiosity was as much a tactic as a conviction: in the face of relentless persecution, believers did what they had to do in order to survive. This sometimes included abandoning outward forms by which believers could be identified and controlled. So, as much for practical as for theological reasons, the turn toward Spiritualism remained an abiding challenge for Anabaptism.

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Hut's "A Beginning of a True Christian Life" (no. 6) and Christian Entfelder's "Concerning True Godliness" (no. 41). Did Maler then exclude excerpts from the admonition (*Vermannung*) of 1542 (WPM, 152–302), or his response (*Verantwortung*) to Caspar Schwenckfeld's *Judicium* (LWPM 67–157), on his own pastoral or theological grounds?

<sup>45</sup> Werner Packull offers a nuanced examination of the mystical Spiritualism of Hans Hut, Leonhard Schiemer, and Hans Schlaffer, and its "devolution" and "evolution" in the South German–Austrian realm (MESG, 118–54). On the one hand, he notes the affinity of the *Aufdeckung der babylonischen hürn* ("Exposé of the Babylonian Whore") (MESG, 150–51), now attributed to Marpeck, for the early phase of Spiritualism. This impulse and the Christology out of which it arose were carried forward by figures such as Entfelder (MESG, 163–75). Marpeck was an "unlikely progeny" (MESG, 180) who countered that tendency by "systematizing the theological doctrines of the movement" (MESG, 183).

Marpeckite Christology and ecclesiology constituted the most sophisticated Radical Reformation rebuttal of Spiritualism. It made the case for a believers church on the grounds of the incarnation. A summary of its convictions follows. Behind the New Testament practice of a visible church of believers lay the principle of the incarnation: just as the Word had become flesh, so God prolonged the humanity of Christ in his body on earth, the church. As Marpeck liked to say, God continues to use the outward to reveal the inward.

The context for this defining belief was the doctrine of the Trinity, whose formulation was the most profound doctrinal achievement of the fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, especially Augustine and the Cappadocian Fathers (Gregory Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil of Caesarea). It safeguarded the primal claim of the New Testament, that Jesus and the Spirit are part of the identity of God. In other words, had the Son not been one with the Father, there would have been no incarnation—merely the appearance of the greatest among the prophets. From the vantage point of dissident Christian movements across the ages, the official church gravely compromised its teaching of God as Trinity by becoming the religion of the empire and legitimating violence as the basis of order. In so doing, the church abstracted dogma from discipleship. In the thinking of some radical movements in the sixteenth century (and the twenty-first), Trinitarianism and a state church ecclesiology cannot be disentangled.<sup>46</sup>

It is the surpassing merit of Pilgramite Anabaptism that it attempted the daunting task of reuniting dogma and discipleship. However lacking in philosophical precision certain of its formulations may have been, Marpeckian thought went on the offensive to defend its ecclesiology with Trinitarian thinking.<sup>47</sup> Marpeck's genius was that he under-

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<sup>46</sup> A summary of J. Denny Weaver's approach may be found in "Nicaea, Womanist Theology, and Anabaptist Particularity," in *Anabaptists and Postmodernity*, ed. Susan Biesecker-Mast and Gerald Biesecker-Mast (Telford PA: Pandora Press US, 2000), 251–79.

<sup>47</sup> It was perhaps the great virtue of an "amateur" theology that it couldn't and didn't engage in speculative philosophizing about the inner nature of God. Theological systemization remained marginal to Anabaptism in general and to its Marpeckian form. See Preface 2 in this volume, "The Learned Ones, the

stood the classical doctrines well enough to apply them in a novel way: he used the incarnation to provide a theological defence for a believers church ecclesiology and believers baptism.<sup>48</sup> His insight was that that the very notion of a pure church as the visible embodiment of the converted life was under siege as much by Spiritualism as by the magisterial churches.

There is at the same time an irony in the development of Marpeck's position. Both outward circumstance (suppression of dissent in Augsburg) and inner disposition (a lack of raw courage to persistently defy authority) combined to make theological writing Marpeck's foremost expression of his calling. It was more and more by means of his writing, and less and less by means of a visible, disciplined church, that he sought to vindicate Anabaptist belief. The contrast between Marpeck and Menno Simons is instructive at this point. For Menno a disciplined, visible community was the lifeblood of the church's mission and the measure of its integrity; theology was a necessary evil. For Marpeck it was the other way around. Hans-Jürgen Goertz reinforces this characterization when he notes Marpeck's defence of diversity in the church's composition. He points to Marpeck's principle of patience with each believer's stages of growth—from blossoms and leaves to fruit. He goes on to say that there is no evidence of a call for common outward forms of holiness in Marpeck's pursuit of unity with the Swiss Brethren and the Hutterites. In both cases outward diversity was held together by inward theological principles and commonly held spiritual experience.<sup>49</sup>

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Wrongheaded Ones," for a protest against arid abstractions used in defence of the status quo.

<sup>48</sup> In his practical orientation, Marpeck was not unlike most of his contemporaries. In their introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), editors David Bagchi and David Steinmetz write, "A point which can never be made too often is that the theologians of the Reformation were not ivory tower academics. Their principal tasks were in most cases pastoral, and we derive their theologies from utterances from the pulpit, from spiritual advice given in letters, from rushed polemical outbursts, in the midst of persecution" (4).

<sup>49</sup> Conversation with Hans-Jürgen Goertz in Hamburg on 6 December 2006. In Goertz's mind the debate about the presence of texts in the Kunsbuch that are at variance with Marpeck's views omits the fact that South German–Austrian

Looked at from that perspective, the pluriformity of the *Kunstbuch* is largely in keeping with the development of Marpeck's convictions in his Augsburg years.

### ***Jörg Maler: Keeper or maker of the legacy?***

The editor of the *Kunstbuch*, Jörg Maler, was born in Augsburg about 1500. We first hear of him as an apprentice in the studio of an established Augsburg artist, and then in 1526, when he was charged with molesting a woman. In 1532 Maler was baptized, at a time of growing repression, into the Anabaptist congregation in Augsburg. In the same year in which he was baptized, however, he was well known to pastors of the official church and considered for ordination—until his ties to the radicals became known.<sup>50</sup>

Maler's story illustrates how fluid individual religious loyalties were in the first three decades of sixteenth-century reform, even though confessional identities quickly hardened. In the magisterial Reformation there was a steady movement toward confessionalization beginning in the late 1520s. Confessionalization was the fusion of political and religious identity in a particular territory.<sup>51</sup> In mid-century this dynamic was especially at work in cities such as Augsburg, where the reigning religions toppled each other. In this turbulent and repressive setting, the Anabaptist presence was reduced to clusters of believers who met sporadically so as not to arouse public attention. Even so there were periodic arrests and deportations.

Maler himself was arrested in the year of his baptism. To the authorities he described his relationship to the Anabaptists as “nothing other

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Anabaptism arose out of the Spiritualism of Hans Hut, whose influence continued to shape the movement. Even in the Marpeck Circle it was believers' mystical experience of God more than their outward disciplines that created church unity.

<sup>50</sup> Heinold Fast, “Vom Amt des ‘Lesers’ zum Kompilator des sogenannten Kunstbuches; auf den Spuren Jörg Malers,” in *Aussenseiter zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit: Festschrift für Hans-Jürgen Goertz zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Norbert Fischer and Marion Kobelt-Groch (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 191; MLDC, 262.

<sup>51</sup> Wolfgang Reinhard, “Pressures towards Confessionalization? Prolegomena to a Theory of the Confessional Age,” in *The German Reformation: The Essential Readings*, ed. C. Scott Dixon (Malden MA: Blackwell, 1999), 169–92.

than the pursuit of truth.”<sup>52</sup> Before long he recanted of his dissident faith. This “recantation” was not so much a repudiation of all things Anabaptist as it was a relativizing of certain of the movement’s postulates. Maler asserted, with regard to “the Word” (with reference to Romans 10) that inner and outer can not be separated. Here Marpeckites agreed with Lutherans against the Spiritualists. Yet, he went on, salvation does not depend on externals such as baptism and Communion. He allowed that a Christian can be a magistrate and that some oaths can be taken.<sup>53</sup> It is difficult to say whether the spiritualistic tone of his statement on the sacraments left a permanent mark on his thinking (see no. 40: “Confession of Faith according to Holy Scripture”); at least it offered him theological formulations that would lessen his conflict with the authorities. Later he made a second disavowal of his Anabaptist belief. Later still he fled Augsburg because he could not abide by his renunciations. He made contact with Anabaptists in the Grisons and Moravia, then settled in the Grisons for six years as a weaver and a leader in a Swiss Brethren congregation. On Easter Sunday of 1537 Maler was ordained as an elder in St. Gall and spent eight years in that role in nearby Appenzell.<sup>54</sup> By working in shops outside city walls Maler and his fellow Anabaptists in the area managed to maintain a precarious participation in the commercial life of the towns.

Maler was truly a man in pursuit of a Christ-like life. Even though he endured a two-year prison sentence for his faith, he seems to have been ambivalent about how his pursuit of Christ could best be carried out. His ambivalence concerned the same issues Marpeck faced in Strasbourg: is spiritual reality ultimately inward, and are the outward forms of the church ultimately of secondary significance? It was an ingrained ambivalence. On the one hand, Maler defended believers baptism<sup>55</sup> and church discipline.<sup>56</sup> He astutely corrected the treatise on baptism of Spiritualist Anabaptist Hans Hut, moving it in a sacra-

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<sup>52</sup> Fast, “Vom Amt des ‘Lesers’ zum Kompilator des sogenannten Kunstbuchs,” 193.

<sup>53</sup> ME 4:365.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>55</sup> “An Attempt to Win Him for Christendom” (no. 14).

<sup>56</sup> “Confession of Faith according to Holy Scripture” (no. 40).

mental direction.<sup>57</sup> He seems to have spared no effort in his role as the compiler of the communal legacy preserved in the *Kunstabuch*.

On the other hand, in talking about himself late in his life, Maler minimized the contact he had had with Marpeck while they were both leaders in Appenzell. He was careful not to call himself an elder but instead referred to himself as a reader, a role assigned to literate members who could read the Bible to illiterate ones. At the same time Maler was willing to carry mail for Marpeck to distant places, documents the authorities would have considered seditious. He speaks gratefully of Marpeck's care for him during sickness, but there is only one fragment of recorded evidence for the nature of their relationship. Maler writes that his view on the oath had changed to one very like that of Marpeck.<sup>58</sup> To complicate matters, apparently Maler was not thoroughly familiar with Marpeck's writings. Two of his editorial decisions stand out as illustrations. In the original table of contents to the *Kunstabuch*,<sup>59</sup> Maler ascribed authorship of one of Marpeck's seminal treatises, "Concerning Hasty Judgments and Verdicts" (no. 7) to an unknown Anabaptist. At the same time, he ascribed to Marpeck "Concerning True Godliness" (no. 41), when it was actually the work of Spiritualist Christian Entfelder.

Contradictory evidence abounds about Maler's convictions and the nature of his role in the Marpeck Circle. In his meticulous compiling of the seminal texts of the movement gathered around Pilgram, was Maler simply paying homage to Marpeck and his collaborators in leadership, such as Leupold Scharnschlager and Cornelius Veh? Did he, as Walter Klaassen and William Klassen have stressed, "emphatically . . . not abandon Marpeck's theological accomplishments as out-of-date and unworkable"?<sup>60</sup> Other scholars wonder whether Maler was one of the "homeless minds" of his age, who could not find a place in any community.<sup>61</sup> Heinold Fast, Maler's biographer, concludes that Maler

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<sup>57</sup> "A Beginning of a True Christian Life" (no. 6).

<sup>58</sup> "Why He Changed His Position on the Oath," Interlude 4.

<sup>59</sup> BSOT, 94–96.

<sup>60</sup> MLDC, 354.

<sup>61</sup> The term is Packull's, and he does not apply it explicitly to Maler (MESG, 155).

remade what was originally a literature of dissent and struggle into one of edification.<sup>62</sup> Examining the evidence from yet another perspective, Martin Rothkegel asserts that Marpeck's vision of a bourgeois urban Anabaptism was no longer viable by the time of his death.<sup>63</sup>

And why did the editor of the codex take it to Zurich to be bound? Was it merely that it was less dangerous to approach a bookbinder in a strange place than in one where he was known and watched? Or was the book intended for a likeminded but more tenacious community than his own Augsburg one? Does Maler's journey to Switzerland suggest that he believed the legacy he had compiled would be more faithfully preserved by the very Swiss Brethren congregations against whose biblicism and separatism he had once chafed?

These are overarching questions that can guide readers as they make their way through an ambiguous and fascinating treasure.

### ***Historical and theological considerations***

Thus far this introduction has sought to place Marpeck and Maler within their personal, intellectual, and social backgrounds in order to illuminate their role in the formation of the *Kunstbuch*. The task before us now is to turn our focus to the codex itself and what it can teach us about the distinctive stream of Anabaptist church life we associate with Pilgram Marpeck.

The first question is, how did the *Kunstbuch* come to be? Three possibilities suggest themselves. First, is its content the final stage of a long process? In other words, had this collection already been circulating—and growing as it incorporated local favourites? Second, is the content of the anthology largely an embodiment of the movement's communal leadership, combined with the respect it accorded individual inspiration? In other words, is the *Kunstbuch's* diversity a faithful expression of the communities it documents? If either of these is the case, Maler would be primarily a copyist, someone who wrote out familiar writings for a new generation of believers. Or, third, is Maler's role that of an editor: are the contents of the collection a reflection of his com-

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<sup>62</sup> Fast, "Vom Amt des 'Lesers' zum Kompilator des sogenannten *Kunstbuches*," 217.

<sup>63</sup> Martin Rothkegel, "Randglossen zum *Kunstbuch*," *MG* 61 (2004): 62.

mitments? If that is the case, then Maler is engaging in an act of theological creativity and dissent—going against the communal grain and rehabilitating figures such as Hut and even Entfelder.

Scholarship has long been divided in its judgment about whether the codex preserves Marpeckite tradition. This first question needs to be asked in two ways. First, are its authors and subjects of one mind with Marpeck and his closest co-workers? The second approach is to ask if the *Kunstbuch's* authors and subjects are in keeping with the ethos of the broader movement around Marpeck. Most often the question is phrased only in the first way.

In his probing examination of the ever-growing polarization between Anabaptists such as Entfelder, who had turned toward Spiritualism, and Marpeck, Packull finds it “inexplicable” that Entfelder was given a place in the *Kunstbuch*; he goes so far as to question whether it is truly a Pilgrimite document.<sup>64</sup> Rothkegel continues this line of thought. He asks whether Maler was conscious of the theological heterogeneity—indeed, the contradictory character—of his collection of texts, in which Marpeck texts stand next to those of his theological opponents Christian Entfelder and Valentin Ickelsamer.<sup>65</sup> Later in his portrayal of the community behind the *Kunstbuch*, Rothkegel describes it as urban through and through, bearing the literary and intellectual traditions of artisan guilds, as well as their limitations.<sup>66</sup>

The confessionalization of the German cities and territories exacted such comprehensive conformity from citizens that this remarkable experiment in fusing urban sensibility with radical religion, a bourgeois way of life with costly discipleship, appeared to be doomed.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, Rothkegel concludes, the *Kunstbuch* represents Maler's departure from Marpeckite Anabaptism. Marpeck's most recent biographers vigorously contest this conclusion. On the basis of Marpeck's own pastoral writing, Klaassen and Klassen acknowledge that a middle ground between legalism and its opposite could not be stabilized. But they

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<sup>64</sup> MESH, 163.

<sup>65</sup> Rothkegel, “Randglossen zum *Kunstbuch*,” 55.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>67</sup> Klaassen and Klassen describe the harsh effect of the Schmalkaldian Wars on this process (MLDC, 287–96).

draw a conclusion different from Rothkegel's. "The Kunstbuch was the last, herculean effort of an aging follower to give the Marpeck legacy new life in a radically different setting."<sup>68</sup>

For all his mastery of the subject, Rothkegel's assertion that Marpeckian Anabaptism was an urban phenomenon seems too unguarded a claim, at least without further defining of what is meant by urban. For instance, was Nikolsburg, with a few thousand inhabitants, considered to be an urban center in sixteenth-century central Europe? Were the congregations in the Leber Valley, south of Strasbourg, urban because of their association with Strasbourg? Could it be that Maler's taking of the Kunstbuch codex to Zurich to be bound (and by implication, to the Swiss Brethren) was a last, faithful attempt to give the Marpeck Circle legacy a home outside the confessionalized cities, in the unstable but durable Swiss Brethren settings outside town walls and on remote mountainsides?

The Kunstbuch is remarkable in the range of its writings. The more closely one looks, the more this breadth seems to mirror the diversity of influences on Pilgramite congregations, as seen in the codex's pastoral writings. This diversity should not surprise us, because Marpeck himself was an eclectic thinker and imaginative compiler. His world of ideas stands behind the borrowing and editing of Bernard Rothmann's *Bekentnisse van beyden Sacramenten* and its refashioning into the admonition (*Vermannung*) of 1542. He willingly employed a text that had been useful in reaching a notorious outcome that went totally against his grain, namely, the takeover of Münster in an Anabaptist holy war.<sup>69</sup> In addition, Marpeck's personality should be taken into account. What we know of him suggests that unlike many people, his ego needs were modest. In contrast to other early South German–Austrian radicals, such as Schiemer and Schlaffer, Marpeck relied on the model not of a self-appointed prophet but of a minister commissioned by the church. He had an unusual talent for collaborative work, as is evident in his collective writing projects.

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<sup>68</sup> MLDC, 353–54.

<sup>69</sup> Conversation with Hans-Jürgen Goertz in Hamburg on 6 December 2006.

Because a pluralism of positions had characterized the Marpeck Circle from the beginning, and because Marpeck's personality and habits nowhere suggest that he thought himself the only authority in the circle, there was never the assumption that the community's canon would reflect only Marpeck's theology. Therefore it is improbable that Marpeck would have been threatened to find that his words alone were not enough, in the age of confessionalization, to sustain these beleaguered communities. If not in all its particulars, then in the principle of borrowing texts that speak to the need at hand, the *Kunstbuch* may be seen to be compatible with Marpeck's approach to ministry. His explicitly stated goal when he revised Rothmann's work on the sacraments was the unity of the fractured body of Christ.<sup>70</sup> The evidence suggests that this was also Maler's goal in his compilation of the codex.

This claim still leaves unanswered the question of who first made the editorial decision to preserve writings beyond those of the Pilgrimage elders, documents that had become life giving for congregations whose existence was precarious. The presence of many glosses within and beside the columns of text can be read in two different ways. They could be Maler's personal stamp on writings already canonized by the community. Yet they could also be taken as evidence of Maler's active style of editing: he aspired not to be a mere copyist but to shape the collection from start to finish. Maler's lack of reluctance to edit Hut's mystical contribution ("A Beginning of a True Christian Life," no. 6) or Marpeck's own epistles may be taken as evidence for seeing the *Kunstbuch* as much as Maler's creation as it was of the congregations in whose life these writings already had a place.

Let us turn to the texts themselves for clues. What light do they shed on these questions and assertions? Preface 1 sets forth Maler's intention<sup>71</sup> in verse.

Many a divine mystery lies in this book;  
if you so desire,

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<sup>70</sup> WPM, 164–67.

<sup>71</sup> At this stage of research we cannot say to what extent Maler's selections represent communal choices that have grown up over the years and to what extent the contents of the codex reflect Maler's personal judgment. Hence, the use of "Maler" in this discussion includes both possibilities.

it will illuminate your heart, courage, and understanding.  
 Therefore make room for it with heart's devotion.  
 Constantly practise the fear of God.  
 When you can't grasp something,  
 ask God to grant you understanding.  
 That will protect you completely from violent judgment!

Maler is offering his readers help along the path of spiritual comprehension. This purpose is reinforced in Preface 2, in which Ickelsamer warns with wit and passion against the pretensions of scholarship and its too-ready alliance with hierarchy and violence. The author (and the editor) makes bold political judgments in an attempt to be faithful to the gospel. Ickelsamer debunks the pretensions of the official churches as well as the divisive sects. It is Ickelsamer's prophetic utterances and his iconoclasm, much more than his Spiritualist frame of reference, that seem to make him appealing to Maler.

As we prepare ourselves to examine the texts—particularly those that seem furthest from the core—it is important to remind ourselves that modern categories are inadequate to grasp the nature of the communities of thought represented by the *Kunstbuch*. To take the example of the Spiritualists: to insist that the Bible is not primarily a book of commandments does not necessarily mean that one is rejecting its authority. To seek a mystical experience of grace rather than a code of behaviour does not mean that one is thereby necessarily trying to reduce the cost of discipleship. In fact, the Spiritualist goal was to free oneself from the lesser forms of the spiritual life for the greater ones. It was crystal clear to the writers and the hearers of the *Kunstbuch* that “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die,” as Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in *The Cost of Discipleship*. One senses from the opening passages of the *Kunstbuch* onward that the criterion for inclusion in this canon is less theological, in the sense of doctrinal formulations, than spiritual, in the sense of learning the art of surrender.

This is clearly the case for the presence in the collection of writings by three brilliant martyrs who shaped South German Anabaptism before it split into factions: Hans Hut (no. 6: “A Beginning of a True Christian Life”), Leonhard Schiemer (no. 9: Concerning the Grace of God”; no. 10: “The Twelve Articles of the Christian Faith”; and no. 11:

“A True, Short Gospel to Be Preached Today to the World”), and Hans Schlaffer (no. 12: “A Simple Prayer”). It was they, more than any others, who married an apocalyptic strand of late medieval mysticism to a believers church ecclesiology, including its biblical literacy and missionary fervour. Apocalyptic mysticism was not Marpeck’s stance, but he does share with his three forerunners a commitment to a life of surrender.<sup>72</sup> Here again Marpeck’s character traits need to be taken into account. From what we know, Marpeck did what he could to avoid martyrdom. Models for faithfulness to death had to come from elsewhere. When the writings of this cloud of three martyr witnesses are read with a critical theological eye, their spiritualist and mystical bent stands out. But they were cherished primarily for reasons other than their theological orthodoxy; they were models of prayerful nonresistant faithfulness in the face of death.

The *Kunstbuch* gives Marpeck ample space to make his theology and spirituality clear. In no. 7 (“Concerning Hasty Judgments and Verdicts”) he extols patience as the surpassing gift of the Spirit. In no. 18 (“Concerning Five Fruits of True Repentance”) his piety is laid out with remarkable conciseness. In no. 33 (“Concerning the Christian and Hagarite Churches”) he warns against false manifestations of church. And in no. 35 (“Concerning the Lowliness of Christ”) he rises to lyrical bursts of praise for the lowliness of Christ. His own writing in the codex (no. 14, “An Attempt to Win Him for Christendom”; no. 25, “An Account of Faith”; and no. 40, “Confession of Faith according to Holy Scripture”) provides evidence that Maler shared many of these convictions. In no. 14 he concludes his conversation with a seeker by appealing for faith sealed in believers baptism in a believers church. Texts included from the popular Lutheran Hartmut von Cronberg (no. 21, “War Ordinance of the Heavenly Emperor for His Captains”) and the even more popular Spiritualist Christian Entfelder (no. 41, “Concerning True Godliness”) take their place in this anthology because of their

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<sup>72</sup> With Walter Klaassen’s ascription of the authorship of “Exposé of the Babylonian Whore” to Marpeck (LWPM, 22–23), common assumptions about Marpeck’s theological stance need to be reviewed.

burning conviction that God leads his suffering church. This was the word of God the church craved to keep it on the path of faithfulness.

The publication of the *Kunstbuch* in a German critical edition and an English popular edition moves us a mighty step closer to a true perception of the Marpeck Circle—Marpeck himself and his fellow leaders, especially Maler, as well as the circumstances, habits of mind, and spiritual pursuits of the congregations they led. As we read we can begin to imagine the world the *Kunstbuch* reflected and what it meant to the original writers and readers. Yet the full logic of the editor's choices still eludes the modern reader.

The modern editions of the *Kunstbuch* measurably expand our knowledge of one largely urban expression of Anabaptism that flourished between 1530 and 1560. As noted above, it records the life of one kind of Anabaptism in rare detail, preserving for posterity the personalities and issues, the brilliance and the tragedy, that made it what it was. If it is akin to an album of photographs taken of a family and its friends over a period of thirty years, we cannot say with certainty who started assembling the album. But we know who completed it. The fact that there are many photos of a few people tells us they were the immediate family. But the album had space for pictures of others, some of them estranged relatives and even strangers. In the mind of the album maker, all of them belonged. To move from metaphorical to literal speech, the *Kunstbuch* is Maler's record of Marpeck's legacy.

In the writings it puts between two covers, the *Kunstbuch* cuts its own swath and at the same time demonstrates Marpeck's principle of synthesis: biblicist principles and Spiritualist ones, dogma and discipleship, inwardness and outwardness. This outwardness is the implicit, pastoral form of Marpeck's sacramentalism, which is worked out explicitly in other volumes of the Marpeck Circle, whose concern was theology.

The writing and compiling of the *Kunstbuch* arose from impassioned attempts to be the body of Christ faithfully and to trust God utterly in the midst of terrifying insecurity. In their faithfulness and trust, Marpeck's people are a cloud of witnesses who have a claim on us today.

## Preface 1 [title page]

# “The Book of Understanding is my name”

*Jörg Maler*  
*26 September 1561*

A straightforwardly composed piece of verse serves as the foreword to the *Kunstbuch*. It is the first of several introductions or prefaces to portions of the text, written in rhyming quatrains (in the original) and concluded with a proverb. Jörg Maler promises the reader that his volume contains “many a divine mystery,” perceived only by practising the fear of God. This preface makes clear that the book’s contents are not primarily intellectual but spiritual, not accessible to reason but to the inspiration of God’s Spirit. Maler repeatedly quotes from a late medieval tradition of pious sayings and writes in the same style.

The preface to the *Kunstbuch* was added after Maler had “transported it to where it then belonged.” Is this comment coded, in order to protect the authors, editor, and binder, or is it a flourish intended to add a touch of mystery to the text? We know that the *Kunstbuch* was bound in Zurich, so it likely was intended for the use of the Swiss Brethren. In addition, Maler’s appeal to read it with humility so as to avoid harsh judgment evokes Pilgram Marpeck’s arguments with the Swiss.<sup>1</sup> This does not preclude Maler’s more fraternal concern to pro-

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*Vorspann 1: Jörg Maler, “Das Kunstbuch bin ich genannt” (Titelseite); 26. September 1561. Translation by Leonard Gross.*

<sup>1</sup> See KB, no. 7: “Concerning Hasty Judgments and Verdicts.”

vide persecuted fellow believers with a collection laying out the struggles and insights of other communities of Anabaptists.



The Book of Understanding is my name;  
 I am unknown to the fleshly minded.  
 Yet whoever has the Spirit of Christ  
 will find in me, throughout life,  
 whatever frees heart and soul.  
 What we do flourishes solely through God;  
 it is far above silver and gold.  
 Therefore, devout one, be pleasing to him from the heart.  
 Many a divine mystery lies in this book;

if you so desire,  
 it will illuminate your heart, courage, and understanding.  
 Therefore make room for it with heart's devotion.  
 Constantly practise the fear of God.  
 When you can't grasp something,  
 ask God to grant you understanding.  
 That will protect you completely from violent judgment!  
 May God grant this to us through his goodness,  
 through Jesus Christ, his Son.  
 May he help us from his throne of grace. Amen.

Written and completed  
 the twenty sixth of September,  
 in the sixty-first year,  
 after which I transported it  
 to where it then belonged.  
 May God bestow his grace on all of us. Amen.



Jörg of Augsburg, called Painter<sup>2</sup>

“If you desire peace and tranquility,  
remain silent, not responding to every concern.  
Make allowances, and meet obligations  
to the magistracy. Avoid evil society. . . .”

Freidank<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [Original: *Maler*.—Ed.]

<sup>3</sup> [See BSOT, 98.—Ed.]

