Breaking Bread and Washing Feet: Rituals and Ritualized Practices in Vistula Delta Mennonite Communities

Kat Hill, *Birbeck College, University of London*

In 1722, Johann David Zancker posthumously published a work by Abraham Hartwich, a German evangelical theologian, entitled *Geographisch-Historische Landes-Beschreibung derer dreyen im Pohlnischen Preußen liegenden Werdern als des Dantziger-Elbing- und Marienburgischen.*[1] Hailing from Königsberg, Hartwich was posted to Lipinka (Lindenau) in 1698 in the Werder to occupy a position as pastor.[2] During his time there, he observed and researched the landscape, flora and fauna, history, the people, and religion. He wrote his study, which was later published by Zancker, of the three Werder townships in the rich fertile land of the Vistula-Nogat Delta in west Polish Prussia.[3] Alongside observations on the Lutheran church and the Roman Catholic faith, Hartwich's second section concluded with a report on Mennonites and Quakers, collected through observation and verbal exchanges with members of the community.[4] First, he recounted the history of Prussian Mennonites and the splits between the Frisian and Flemish congregations. Then he described the beliefs, rituals, and practices of Mennonite communities in the Werder.[5] Hartwich outlined what he considered to be the twelve main articles of faith for Mennonites: baptism, the Lord's Supper, the election of preachers, footwashing, marriage, obedience to authorities, not swearing oaths, not taking revenge on

enemies, the Christian ban, expulsion of those who sin, the repentance of those who want re-acceptance, and the resurrection of the dead. Along with other sources, Hartwich's account allows us to consider what ritual meant for Mennonite communities in early modern Prussia. How did it help to shape belonging and the internal dynamics of Mennonite congregations? While not without problems, an understanding of rituals in early modern Prussian Mennonite communities offers insights into their cultural and confessional worlds. It allows us to examine the lived experience of faith and consider the meaning that men and women found in their actions. This article focuses on three ways in which we can analyze Mennonite ritual. First, it explores the relationship between emotions and ritual and considers the productive tension between feeling and action. Second, it examines the material culture of rituals and how practice might seem to act as a bridge between the material and spiritual worlds. Finally, it turns to ritual and change, considering how ritual shifted at moments of tension and how it acted as a negotiator between past, present, and future.

From the sixteenth century onwards, Mennonites migrated from the Netherlands to the Vistula Delta. The privileges granted to them by certain landlords in west Polish Prussia allowed them to settle and farm in the countryside surrounding the Vistula and Nogat rivers, and Mennonites transformed the landscape by draining the swampy marshes into arable land.[6] The powerful trading city of Danzig (Gdańsk) offered a unique opportunity. Although the Polish crown ruled areas near the city, Danzig and other cities along the Vistula had gained a great degree of autonomy following wars between the Polish king and the Teutonic Knights. Opportunities for Mennonite settlement arose as a result of the city's political independence, while the autonomous estates controlled by Catholic bishops and monasteries in the region also permitted Mennonite migration.[7] Mennonites, too, were welcomed into Elbing and its environs from 1535.[8] In Danzig, Mennonites were generally not allowed to buy property owned by the council nor live within the city's walls. They were also denied citizenship until 1800.[9] However, their presence was accepted and often viewed favourably by many in the Vistula Delta, as a decree by King Władysław IV confirmed in 1642.[10] In the triangle between Danzig, Elbing, and Marienburg, a series of interconnected Mennonite communities developed across west Polish Prussia in the early modern period which, along with some in east Ducal Prussia, retained close contact with sister communities spread across the Netherlands and the Baltic coast. Disagreement and disunity, though, also characterized Mennonite life. Danzig itself had two separate Mennonite congregations, the Flemish and

Frisian, and this division was replicated across the Vistula Delta. Relations between the two could be fraught and antagonistic although congregations lived in close proximity. By the time that Hartwich arrived in 1722, just after a devastating plague and at the tail end of the brutal conflicts between northern European powers, the Vistula Delta Mennonite churches were well established in the Prussian landscape.

Reconstructing the ritual world of early modern Prussian Mennonites is not always easy since the sources are patchy and scattered. Aside from the observations by Hartwich on the nature of Mennonite life, we have various records left by the communities themselves, as well as the archival record of their interactions with the authorities. Georg Hansen, the elder of the Flemish Danzig church from 1690 to 1703,[11] bequeathed some of the richest sources for Mennonite life along with numerous catechistic and liturgical works. Bishop Stanisław Sarnowski also questioned Hansen and Heinrich van Duhren, the elder of the Frisian Danzig Mennonite Church in 1678,[12] and the responses and interrogations provide an invaluable window into Mennonite life. In addition to Hansen's writings, there survives a confession of faith by Gerhard Wiebe, an elder of the Flemish Church in Elbing and Ellerwald from 1778 to 1798,[13] sermons and catechisms from Jacob and Benjamin Wedel, elders of the Flemish Przechówko congregation in the eighteenth century,[14] as well as letters, church books, printed confessions and catechisms, and songbooks.[15] Various documents also record the ongoing connections between the Prussian and Dutch congregations—for example, the travel account of Hendrik Berents Hulshoff documenting a trip from Groningen to Prussia in 1719,[16] or the *Memoriaal* of Eduard Simonsz Toens.[17] Toens's book describes events in the conservative Mennonite community of Dantziger Oude Vlamingen in Haarlem from 1735 to 1749 and the contacts with Prussian congregations.[18] These sources are all richer and more numerous for the eighteenth century. Many Mennonite congregations only started their church books in the later 1700s, often accompanied by chronicles such as the records produced by Heinrich and Johann Donner, elders of the Frisian Orlofferfelde church in the eighteenth century.[19] However, for the crucial seventeenth century and the early eighteenth, the overall record is still relatively sparse and produces a patchwork of information. The observations by Hartwich and Hansen's writings are, therefore, particularly valuable, as are chronicles and church records that note events in the early eighteenth and even seventeenth century. Noteworthy is the Lehn diary, started in 1725 by Christoph Lehn of the Danzig congregation and continued by Jacob Lehn.[20] A typed transcription and translation of the manuscript

original, edited by descendant Waldemar H. Lehn, is now held by the Mennonite Heritage Archives in Winnipeg and suggests there may be more sources to be found in family collections that could further reveal the picture of ritual and congregational life.

In Hartwich's account, we get a clear sense of this ritual world. According to Hartwich, services of worship were organized by preachers who spoke in Dutch or Low German, and these took place in the *gross Stube*, the large parlour of farms, in the winter and in barns or cow stalls, made clean and decorated with greenery, in the summer. The preacher generally stood while the others sat and listened, but Hartwich distinguished between the Flemish and Frisian services. The former sat in silence and did not sing, while the latter group used voices in worship, singing Lutheran psalms. In both cases, Hartwich mentioned that sermons could go on for three hours.[21] When describing specific ceremonies there was only scant information on baptism, Hartwich noting merely a ceremony where the baptizand was presented and baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. He described the Lord's Supper in more detail and mentioned the type of bread that was eaten, the psalms, and the order of service. Hartwich also discussed footwashing. This recreation of a central moment in John's Gospel represented a sign of love and was an essential element of Mennonite spiritual life, an example set by Christ to his followers. Songs (often Lutheran songs) accompanied death and funeral rites, the dress was simple, and sometimes Mennonites were buried in Catholic cemeteries. Hartwich notes that marriage involved a speech by the preacher and the joining of the pair in God's name.[22]

For seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Mennonite congregations in the Vistula Delta, rituals drew on forms of practice that they had established over decades, moved and modified by communities as they migrated from the Netherlands to Prussia. The regularity of daily, weekly, and annual rhythms of ritual solidified the community's sense of identity. Ritual has been particularly important in accounts of religion, but ritual, in this case, was more than formal or sacred moments of transition. Through repetition, quotidian elements of life that shaped social networks and interactions in Mennonite communities, such as the ways of speaking, greeting, dressing, and being, were also ritualized.[23] The theory of ritual can make the act of ritual appear timeless, carrying with it an embodied continuity. Religious ritual seems to speak to the persistent power of deep time related to biblical pasts, but the pattern of daily Mennonite existence, which appeared to preserve simple and uncomplicated living, is often presented as continuing practices from an older time. Rituals and their rhythms often seemed constants in a world of

change. The Lord's Supper recreated the spirit of the Last Supper. Footwashing was an intimate embodied practice that recalled a moment of fellowship and yielding amongst Christ and his disciples. But this is a problematic, although powerful, way to see ritual. The sense of continuity does not mean that communities have preserved timeless practices. Ritual is constantly culturally constructed and reworked. There is a strong emphasis on tradition amongst Mennonites, but as James Urry's work shows, traditions have often come under strain with new notions of tradition evolving in novel contexts.[24] This article explores ways we can use ritual to think about the dynamics of change, conflict, and accommodation in early modern Mennonite Prussian communities. Ritual is often associated with tradition and constancy; instead, I will argue it is a way of thinking about transformation and difference.

Ritual has been central to classical anthropology and a crucial intersection between the disciplines of history and anthropology. Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner's influential work theorized that human life was characterised by rites of passage, which accompanied transitional moments of existence.[25] These anthropological approaches have become ubiquitous in the humanities and shaped historical analyses of ritual.[26] However, scholars have not been blind to the limits of anthropological approaches to ritual, which can be critiqued for reductionist generalizations that obscure questions about change, conflict, and specific historical contexts.[27] Ritual can seem to construct a universalized, static view of the mentalities that are enmeshed with practices, rather than thinking about discord, ritual transformations, and individual subjectivities. Ritual is more than symbolic or functional, and it certainly did not always work to soothe fears and divisions, as Clifford Geertz himself suggested.[28] However, while ritual is not a "global construct" or "a key to culture", as Catherine Bell reminds us,[29] it remains an important concept in helping to connect practice and mentalities.

Early modern history, in particular, is methodologically rich in its approach to ritual. Influential historians such as Natalie Zemon Davis, Edward Muir, and Barbara Stollberg-Rillinger have employed microhistory to explore the symbolic acts and practices interwoven with society, politics, and culture in the early modern period.[30] Anthropologically informed analyses of baptism, funeral rites, violence, or the practice of political authority in the early modern world have explored the relationship between the performance of ritual and the psychologies of individuals and communities, exposing how ritual intersects with deep-seated human concerns about purity, safety, the meaning of life and death, and the boundaries of communal existence. The early modern period has also

emerged as a period of ritual transformation. Muir argued that from 1400 to 1700 ritual was gradually emptied of its emotive content so that ritual practice became "mere" ritual.[31] This analysis is not without problems, but it reminds us of the importance of thinking about how debate and conflict shaped ritual practices in the early modern world. Indeed, scholars have looked to understand the Protestant Reformation as a ritual event. Susan Karant-Nunn's innovative work provided a hitherto untold account of the changing nature of ritual in Reformation Germany and stimulated further research on the ritual transformations that accompanied religious change.[32] Other scholars have paid increasing attention to the way in which religious belonging was rooted in changing ritual, emotional, and material practices.[33] Alec Ryrie, for example, examines the interior and emotional worlds of early modern English Protestants and analyzes what it meant to live a Protestant life.[34] Ritual was not "mere" ritual nor simply a functional expression of confessional identity, but essential to the lived experiences and emotional and material boundaries of confessional communities. Without resorting to universalist or functional interpretations, the practice of ritual helps us think in dynamic ways about the nature of belonging and community amongst Prussian Mennonites in the early modern period.

Emotions

Ritual's role in the human lifecycle and the pattern of daily experience connects it to emotions. Funerals, marriages, graduations, and forms of greetings and farewell all seem to be intimately connected to emotional states or transitions, from loss to joy, shame to pride. Renato Rosaldo has observed that some rituals are designed to manage emotions, but emotion does not simply explain ritual, nor does ritual merely reflect emotion. A funeral ritual, for example, cannot contain the complete emotional process of grieving.[35] Both ritual and emotions are part of the webs of experience which organize and shape cultural and communal relationships, hierarchies, and experience.[36] Kiril Petkov's work on the Kiss of Peace, for example, examines the emotional economy of ritual, exploring the "emotion work" of this rite of reconciliation in medieval Europe. The embodied act helped transform the emotional dissonance of feelings such as hatred, anger, and grief into emotions like shame which could be managed and aligned with social norms.[37] Ritual seemed to play a central role in the creation of early modern emotional communities, to use Barbara Rosenwein's terminology, but emotions are also integral drivers of ritual practice.

As early as the 1520s, the emotional dilemmas posed by some of the early reforming ideas shaped Anabaptist communities. The Reformation entailed the transformation of emotional and sensual cultures as well as theological changes, and the alteration of rites and rituals was never just a question of theology and liturgy. As I and others have explored, it involved profound emotional discussions about salvation, community, and transformation, as well as individual doubts and fears over life and death.[38] Rejecting infant baptism meant parents had to relinquish the emotional comfort of its salvific power, a decision which some found hard to make. Equally, the acceptance of adult baptism by grown men and women signalled a shift which was both theological and emotional, as they spurned the validity of the faith with which they had grown up and accepted a community bonded by novel ideas of fellowship.[39] While the urgency of decisions over infant baptism had faded for Mennonites in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Prussia, the meaning of adult baptism still raised emotive issues about belonging and animated debates between Mennonites and other confessions. At the heart of these discussions, profound questions persisted about the nature of the transition enacted during baptism. Hartwich observed that Mennonites understood baptism as the moment when sin is buried in Christ and just as Christ was resurrected from the dead, so after baptism a new life begins.[40]

What did the rite of baptism in emotional terms mean for those who received it as adults? In 1678, Hansen was questioned about the nature of water baptism and who would need a new baptism to enter a Mennonite community. On the issue of water baptism, he stated that pouring, not immersion or sprinkling, was the correct method, mirroring the baptism of the spirit when the Holy Spirit poured onto the Apostles. Hansen also underlined this was not a mere washing away of sins in water, but through baptism, sins are buried in the death of Christ.[41] On the question of new baptism, Hansen trod carefully and denied that he wanted to question the validity of baptisms used by other confessions. However, he confirmed that anyone who wished to join the Flemish church, whether or not they had received a Lutheran or Catholic baptism, indeed even if they were a Jesuit, would need to be baptized again, though he later adapted this position.[42] His responses underscored how baptism drew the boundaries of the community and pointed to the emotional power of an act that signalled the entry into a new life and fellowship. However, we have little direct evidence of how individuals at the moment of baptism felt. Sources that record the moment of baptism give little detail on the baptizand's experience. Church records, for example, list names, dates, and numbers of baptisms, while even the more

descriptive sources, like the Lehn diary or congregational chronicles, note only basic details; liturgical texts, such as Jacob Wedel's outline of the baptismal service in his 1787 confession of faith, record the intended meaning of the rite but not the experience of the participants.

Despite these silences, the sources still speak to the profound importance of baptism. Although sparse in detail, the chronicles and church records suggest the emotional meaning of congregational rituals. Keeping lists of births, deaths, and marriages became the norm for all confessions, but the act of recording carried meaning and indicated the desire to create a material embodiment of the community and the rites which circumscribed it. A typical entry for July 9, 1775, by Jacob Lehn records that the elder, Dirk Tiessen, performed a Christian water baptism for twenty-three people in Ladekopp and "God grant that it may serve them all for their salvation and blessedness."[43] Baptism was a moment of transformation and hope, as Wedel underlined in his address to baptizands, reminding them of the love and light of Christ so that it might shine in their souls for their whole lives. When they were children, not yet at the age of understanding, Christ's sacrifice covered them, but now, old enough to reason, these young people made a union with God and the community.[44] Mennonite baptism was a public act of faith by adults or young adults, a recognition of sinfulness and trust in the love of Christ, made in the presence of others. Wedel's ordinance detailed five questions to be asked of the baptizands to prove their faith and commitment. He also recorded the question posed to the community: did anyone object to the baptism of those "who have made their confession before God and many witnesses?"[45] Unlike infant baptism, in which the child took no active part, this spoken and bodily expression of love and faith signalled the *Bund* or covenant with the community.[46] The performance of the ritual was intended to evoke an emotional response in the audience, and the baptizand would be expected to feel certain things: awe, joy, and hope, and perhaps grief for the passing of a childish way of life.

This parallels the ritual of baptism that occurred in conversion contexts[47] which also involved a public rite of spiritual and emotional transformation undertaken by adults. Moravian missionaries, for example, understood the conversion moment as defined by love for Christ, and this had emotional and somatic consequences, for tears would flow from a "warm" heart.[48] While Mennonite baptisms did not necessarily involve tears, it was a moment that depended on the expectation of a particular emotional state with the recognition of Christ's love, expressed in the presence of others and with professions of communal belonging. For those born into Mennonite

communities, baptism was an expected and important moment of transition, but it would have held perhaps a more profound sense of transitional meaning for those who chose to convert to the Mennonite faith. This was rare, as Mennonites did not evangelize and seek converts in the same way as Jesuit missionaries or the Moravian Brethren. Conversions did happen,[49] but unfortunately, we have little detail on what this rite meant for those who entered Mennonite congregations.

A counterpoint to baptism amongst Mennonites, which signalled acceptance, was the practice of shaming, the ban, and shunning. Misdemeanours or lack of discipline could result in punishment or even expulsion from the community, although the harshness with which congregations should apply the ban was contentious amongst Prussian Mennonites.[50] Hartwich recorded his conversation with a Mennonite informant, who confirmed the power of the church to do the work of loosing and binding, and that one should not associate with those under the ban.[51] Transgressions would not necessarily result in expulsion, though elders did enact this in Vistula Delta Mennonites congregations. However, lapses in discipline would involve repentance and contrition even if they did not result in the full ban. This approach mirrors disciplinary practices amongst Dutch Mennonites. As Troy Osborne has shown, Reynier Wybrandtz (1573–1645), an elder in the Amsterdam Waterlander congregation, understood two types of the ban, the greater and the lesser. The greater ban meant excommunication, but more common was the lesser ban, whereby an individual retained membership in the congregation but would not be allowed to partake in communion.[52] When members of the congregation suffered expulsion or confessed their sins, they engaged in an emotional performance that involved feelings of shame, guilt, and contrition. For example, in 1725, several members of the Danzig church confessed their sins. Hinrick Lybeck made a "heartfelt confession of guilt" for living luxuriously in a nearby inn after he had been robbed. Hans Classen faced exclusion for the shameful sin of *weeklingen*, effeminacy, possibly a reference to his sexual behaviour.[53] Rituals like baptism and the ban drew the boundaries that shaped the Mennonite congregation as both an emotional and a theological community. Baptism forged bonds of love and fellowship but it also stirred up tensions about following the right path. The threat of the ban evoked feelings of fear, shame, and anxiety as well as pride over the purity of the church.

Rituals expect particular emotional performances. However, the tension between expectation and reality provides insights into the lived experience of Prussian Mennonites. This tension is perhaps most evident when it came to death. Hartwich described the funeral

rites of Mennonites at which people wore simple clothing, sang Lutheran songs, and used Catholic space.[54] In terms of ritual performativity, we might argue that practices around death provide ways of managing grief by providing stability and comfort at a moment of loss. However, ritual practices involve individuals, not just systems, and the trauma and emotions in rituals surrounding death provide a lens through which to examine dissonance and fractures. In 1709 plague hit the Danzig Mennonites. Four hundred and nine men, women, and children died in a few months.[55] We can only presume how funeral and burial rites were altered in these circumstances as Mennonites struggled to cope with the number of dead. Such times of trauma upended the emotional worlds of communities and individuals, and as a consequence, the rituals of mourning could fracture. An unnamed Mennonite man wrote to his relatives in Altona in 1710 to share his grief. His wife had died of the plague, and it was about to claim his son. He described contact with the world of the dead, as a spirit visited him in his dreams, and he saw his family united and happy in the afterlife. The rituals of loss and grieving in the context of faith comforted him, but fault lines also appear. His view of the afterlife does not seem to be particularly a Mennonite one. It was filled with a hierarchy of spirits which is redolent of the imagery of the saints. He also alluded to an idea of limbo, an in-between place, although the author stressed that nothing on earth can affect the fate of those in the afterlife. These ideas may have been shaped by contact with other confessions as the man turned to comforting images and interpretations. He wanted to hope that he would see his family in heaven soon and should feel joyful that they were in a better place, but he also remained alone and grieving.[56] Often dissonance existed between subjective emotional lives and the expectations of rituals surrounding death. Such tensions multiplied at times of trauma and disruption, such as the eighteenth-century plague.

Ritual's embodiment of complex emotional dynamics at times of tension or anxiety also helps understand its role in negotiating connections between dispersed Mennonite communities. Travel and migration, central to Mennonite narratives, were emotional experiences, replete with feelings of anxiety and joy, sometimes boredom, sometimes relief. Expressions of emotion and familiarity were intangible structures that worked across distances to connect dispersed Mennonites, and the ritual performance of emotional displays between communities separated by distance was integral to the bonds of fellowship and belonging. In a 1719 journey, Hendrik Berents Hulshoff, an elder of the Groningen Mennonite community in the northern Netherlands, left his wife and children and boarded

a boat that travelled along the well-established trade routes of the Baltic coast from the Netherlands to Danzig to visit groups of fellow Mennonites in the Vistula Delta. Hulshoff kept a detailed travel diary of his journey, and it is full of the language of emotion, friendship, familiarity, and reciprocity, as he recorded encounters, meetings, and conversations. On Wednesday, July 8, he arrived in Przechówko, and Mennonites there received him with "uncommon affection." Tears, embraces, the singing of songs, and praise to God reflected the joy and relief at the safe arrival of the travellers.[57]

Hulshoff described tearful moments and he often placed these in direct or indirect connection with a biblical motif and the performance of rituals such as footwashing or a supper. When he left Przechówko, he described their last meal overflowing with so much emotion that the attendees could not control it, and they shed many tears. By framing and enacting these emotional experiences of greeting and departure in this way, modelled on a scriptural example, Mennonites helped create a ritual an emotional dynamic which could be shared across translocal communities. Mennonites could feel they were performing similar types of greetings and departures which contained the experience. Ritual did not simply soothe tensions, rather these rites of interaction were a way of negotiating change and displacement as practices that were expected to produce feelings of love and familiarity, even if individuals did not always feel this way. Emotions were not just "flat feelings" expressed on the page, but through ritual practices were embodied expressions of the bonds between dispersed communities.

Hulshoff's experiences reveal how ritual becomes part of emotional communities that create bonds across time and space. Singing and recounting martyr stories, for example, underscores the importance of the repeated recreation of these emotional ties. Mennonites continued to tell martyr stories even as martyrdom became a memory rather than a lived reality. These memories derived power by calling to mind the real persecution of early Anabaptism, and the narratives invited an emotional response. New emotional communities evolved as congregations re-enacted the recollected suffering through the ritual experience of singing songs or studying texts. When the expanded and illustrated edition of the *Martyrs Mirror* came out in 1685, for example, it did so at a time of security and prosperity, but its agonized engravings by Van Luyken were a reminder of the past suffering. Documents and records from early modern Prussian communities also recall the early days of martyrdom. For the year 1769, Jacob Lehn wrote little about his community but recorded the contents of a letter that had come to him from the Swiss Brethren. It recounted the origins of Anabaptism going back

to Conrad Grebel, Feliz Mantz, and Georg Blaurock. Many paid for their faith "with their blood," and the persecution spread. However, the entry recorded that at least the reality of how things started persisted and that "the firm foundation of the truth has remained."[58] While we do not know what Lehn did with this letter, communities would have shared these stories of earlier persecution. Texts like *Martyrs Mirror* have also been important for inculcating the values and ethics of Anabaptist traditions amongst children and young adults. Georg Hansen's catechism for older children included snippets of the text, suggesting that learning about the martyrs might in itself be a rite of passage.[59] In the process of recounting the stories, individual, emotional experiences of suffering or joy mapped onto broader, collective memoryscapes. Memory and emotion were entangled in these ritualized practices of reading, studying, and singing about martyrs, and they created emotional communities, bound by these recollections of the past, that functioned across time and space.

Understanding ritual practices like baptism, the Lord's Supper, or recounting martyr stories does not simply help us read mentalities and emotions, nor were rituals simply triggered by certain emotional states. Emotion and ritual intertwined in a form of embodied practice, and ritualized practice helped distinguish between emotions that should or should not be felt. Monique Sheer has argued that we should see emotions themselves as a form of practice. We perform emotions, not just feel them. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, she encourages us to think about the habitus of emotional practice and the embodied nature of emotion. Emotion-as-practice connects emotions to ritual and habitual actions, that is to the performative and embodied acts which shape communities and individual lives.[60] When early modern Prussian Mennonites held communion or washed feet, they imitated Christ's fellowship. However, such practices were also bound up with a haptic, embodied expression of love and community. The taste of food and wine, the touch of hands and lips, and the shared sounds and sensations of sharing a meal were ritualized forms of emotional communication. Thinking about what people are doing and the emotional work of rites and habitual practices allows us to understand ritual's place in these Mennonite communities beyond its symbolism.

Materialities

When Hartwich wrote about the ritual of the Lord's Supper, he described the material worlds which accompanied these practices:

the bread, the wine, the vessels, the dress. Materiality plays a central role in ritual practices that connect emotions, performance, and action. Scholars no longer see the material dimensions of ritual, whether the bodies of individuals or the objects used, as mere things to which ritual is done but as performative subjects.[61] These observations are part of a broader trend in our scholarship, which considers materialities as active subjects in networks of connected relationships of people and things.[62] Ritual negotiated boundaries between the material and spiritual worlds, and objects and material things were entangled with the emotional transformations that occurred in these rites. The material dimensions of early modern Mennonite rituals—things, bodies, and places—were more than mere context. Rather, materiality was an integral expression of the emotive and performative power of ritual practices amongst Prussian Mennonite communities.

Hartwich described fairly unremarkable objects used by Vistula Delta Mennonites in their services, but these everyday things seemed to be transformed by their use in rituals in which they embodied and enacted symbolic practices.[63] Mennonite congregations did not believe that the bread and wine became the flesh and the blood of Christ, but the cups, the bread, the wine, and the bodies of believers united in the ritual act to manifest the love and fellowship of the community who were sharing sustenance. Differences existed between the two branches of Prussian Mennonites, the Frisian and the Flemish.[64] The former started the ceremony with a sermon by the preacher about the suffering of Christ. Then, the congregation sang the 119th psalm. White bread, divided into little balls, though baked as one long piece then broken up by the preacher, was placed on a table, and as people came up to the table, he passed each a morsel. As he did so, he said the words: "Take and eat, that is the community of the body of Jesus Christ, done in remembrance of him." The congregation put the bits of bread in their handkerchiefs, sat back down, and then ate with the greatest of care. Once everyone had eaten, one of the two deacons brought two or three silver cups, which the preacher filled with wine as he said a few words of blessing. Then a cup was passed to each bench, and everyone drank without saying anything. Following this, they all sang the 163rd psalm.[65] The Flemish church followed a different pattern. The preacher addressed everyone present, calling them by name—brother Jacob, brother Issac, etc.—and then invited them to break some bread off the white loaf and dip it into milk. They all sat around one table, putting aside differences, and once everyone had soaked their bread, the worshippers crumbled the rest of the loaf into the milk and ate it with spoons. After eating, the preacher would speak,

although the noise of animals and servants often interrupted the service.[66] The plainness of material practice and form generally characterised the rituals of the Danzig Mennonites. The communion rite was simple, but the use of silverware also reminds us that the community reserved some valuable material objects for sacred moments.

The bread and wine remained simply bread and wine. Yet, the ritual was a material practice that embodied the communal fellowship of these Mennonite congregations. It is unclear how often Prussian Mennonites took communion, although it was probably no longer practiced every Sunday, but at more irregular intervals, such as at times when the community came together. The bread was baked as a whole piece, as a complete body, which was then shared between community members. The significance of the milk is obscure but may well be related to widespread beliefs about parallels between milk and blood, and the spiritual nourishment provided by Christ. Breast milk was commonly considered to be blood purified by the women's breast into sustenance, and an older iconographic tradition suggested the blood of the crucified Christ was similar to the milk of a lactating mother.[67] The material differences in ritual also mattered here; taking the bread and sitting down to eat in unison emphasized hierarchy but togetherness, while the Flemish practice of eating around a table stressed equality.

Whether or not individuals believed that the bread and wine became flesh and blood, the inherent corporeality associated with communion meant that bodies still acted as material agents in the performance and practice of the ritual. As Petkov suggested for the Kiss of Peace, the embodied action was more than symbolic but was a way for individuals to structure and transform feelings. The kiss was a practice that worked as a form of "bodily intervention" to negotiate between individual and society. Mennonite rituals could work in similar ways through their embodied nature. They, too, used the kiss of peace or reconciliation. Ministers in Danzig reprimanded Jan Spronk, the deacon in Königsberg in 1725, for wearing a Japanese gown with an otter fur muff. He protested at a meeting with the ministers but the clothes were not permitted, yet he still left the meeting with a "brotherly kiss of love."[68] Whether or not Spronk felt love, the ritual enabled a form of reconciliation. Footwashing enacted a gesture of association, humility, and obedience, transforming possible tensions about hierarchies or difference into a recognition of fellowship.[69] When Hulshoff practiced the rite as he travelled around the Vistula Delta, this intimate physical gesture was a performative reality that expressed bodily intimacy and love. Hulshoff may have expected to feel fellowship with his fellow Mennonites,

but we can imagine that this was harder in practice; these men and women were, after all, not well known to him.[70] The act of washing feet may have helped shape the anxiety into affection. In some congregations, including George Hansen's, washing feet only occurred between elders, and arguably in these contexts it was even more important as a way of transforming rivalries and tensions into embodied equality and humility.[71] In the Lord's Supper, the body was more than an agent. It was integral to the materiality of the ritual that enacted and re-enacted the fellowship in Christ. Eating, drinking, singing, and breathing bodies themselves became the embodiment of a loving Christian community.

Bodies and objects were part of the materiality of ritual, but the place where rituals happened also had a material dimension. Seventeenth-century Prussian Mennonite services took place in halls and barns by necessity, yet the simple space echoed the plain, unadorned nature of worship and emphasized the message of fellowship over the spectacle of performance. Confessional belonging was shaped by the places in which communities performed their devotions, and there is a large body of scholarship devoted to the material and spatial histories of early modern religion.[72] Space always affected the sensory and material dimensions of worship, and rituals involved particular sensory experiences.[73] Early modern Prussian Mennonites did not have the smell of the censer in their noses or the sound of the organ in their ears;[74] silence and sound played a crucial sensory role. For example, for the Flemish, singing signalled the beginning and end of the moment when worshippers shared food. However, they performed that act of eating itself together in quiet contemplation. This ritual world also existed in and alongside the reality of everyday life. Its boundaries were permeable, and it was not a perfect sphere of separation. As Hartwich noted, the humdrum sounds of the farm and domestic to-ings and fro-ings intruded on the ritual space. As these material worlds changed, the way in which they shaped the lived experiences of communities also changed. By the mid to late eighteenth century the Vistula Delta Mennonites established cemeteries and built their own church houses.[75] The eleven wooden meeting houses constructed from 1725 to 1800 would have offered quiet and undisturbed space for worship in simple buildings. Mennonites had previously shared the cemetery space with other confessions, but death now meant separation, and it drew new boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. At the same time, evolving materialities and technologies of death and remembrance offered new possibilities; cemeteries were filled with headed gravestones with intricate carvings that were designed to last so that the community endured even in death.[76] As the solidity of the

headstones reminds us, rituals were not abstract practices but materially enacted. In the spaces, bodies, and objects that constitute the material dimensions of ritual we can see how ritual embodied the community's place in the Vistula Delta.

Change

Outside forces had always shaped and altered ritual life amongst early modern Prussian Mennonites, for they did not live completely isolated from the world. The funeral rite which Hartwich described reveals the types of accommodations that early modern Mennonites had made with other confessions in borrowing from Lutherans and negotiating with Catholics. Jacob Lehn records that Königsberg Mennonites could attend Lutheran or Catholic services if they did not have a minister to serve them, though there was a danger of unfaithfulness.[77] However, the social, cultural, and material contexts for Mennonite ritual life were changing more dramatically at the end of the eighteenth century, and external pressure on Vistula Delta Mennonites intensified with the rise of the Kingdom of Prussia. German became the language of worship and liturgy rather than Dutch.[78] The Lehn diary notes this with casual simplicity: "On 30 March . . . Dutch songbooks were set aside in our Ladekopp meetinghouse, and we began to sing High German songs."[79] Wedel's Confession of Faith responded explicitly to the changing world in which Mennonites now found themselves, subject to the pressure of the Prussian authorities, and his emphasis on community and love may have been in part a response to the threat of these outside forces.[80] It is striking that many congregations started their church books in the later eighteenth century, perhaps out of a desire to create a stable record of the community at a time of change.

At the end of the eighteenth century, many Mennonites decided to migrate to the Russian lands (modern-day Ukraine) rather than attempt to renegotiate their position in the Vistula Delta. Migration offers a particularly interesting moment at which to understand how rituals took on new meanings and forms when communities were remaking their relationships to people, practices, and material worlds. Ritual practices did not simply soothe conflicts associated with this change, nor implode when they no longer fitted new contexts, but were agents in the process of transformation. Church books recorded baptisms of members which had taken place in Prussia, but then listed the deaths of these same individuals in New Russia, now Ukraine. The use of German in services, which had been part of the adaptation to the situation in Prussia, now became

a practice that distinguished migrants in the new colonies. Separate cemeteries, which were a recent development in Prussia, were integral to the new settlements in Ukraine. For Mennonites, shifts and adaptations in ritual practice at moments of pressure were crucial to the evolution of their identity and a sense of belonging, enacted through the lived experience of faith. Ritual practices did not remain unchanged, but as communities moved, rites looked back to pasts and helped created new futures.

The experience of migration and the role of ritual within this experience, therefore, also offers the chance to examine how nostalgia shaped memories of rituals over a longer time frame. It is no surprise that congregations took significant objects used in rituals and rites when they moved. The pewter and silverware used for communion services, for example, often made its way to Russia or America. Some sit in museums or archives, such as the items displayed on the top of the shelves in the Mennonite Archives at Bethel College, in Kansas.[81] Others may still be in use. One beautiful pewter communion set housed by the Kauffman Museum at Bethel was made for Mennonites in Danzig in 1768 and then taken by the Heubuden Mennonites to Nebraska.[82] It seems designed for use on the go, and perhaps it was similar to the set used by Hulshoff when he embarked on his travels. As Caroline Bynum suggests, vessels carried with them "accretions of previous worship" but also layers of personal interactions.[83] The simple, silver cups and flask have been handled by many generations. They call to mind the repeated practices of worship and the types of travelling encounters in which objects like the communion cup were essential. Communion vessels embodied, in material form, the bond of a repeated gesture of ritual over generations. In this way, through their haptic, emotional, and ritual associations, things can operate across scales of time and place.[84] Joanne Begiato emphasizes that there is a process by which objects become "emotional artefacts."[85] In this way too, the signification of things and materialities can also change. As objects and people move, things move between categories of meaning and sacred significance is not stable.[86] The pewter cups, which now sit in the museum, are no longer ritual objects but retain the recollection of ritual pasts, activating feelings of nostalgia and memories. Their meanings are no less powerful but now sit removed from the embodied practice of ritual and point to the absence of that past. Thinking about rituals as part of this emotionally embodied and materially enacted reality does not simply turn our attention to the things, bodies, and places of ritualized practice. It also helps us consider how objects, in their longer material histories, hold tensions of past and present as well as illustrate movement and change.

New rituals have developed around the spaces, ideas, and objects associated with the histories of communities and their practices. Cemetery spaces became central to Mennonite communities, and when communities moved to Ukraine or transplanted their lives across the Atlantic, cemeteries, such as the Alexanderwohl Friedhof cemetery in Goessel, Kansas, were a crucial part of settlement patterns.[87] Among contemporary Mennonites, a strong interest in genealogy and widespread fascination with the Prussian past has created a market for Mennonite trips to the Vistula Delta, which include cemetery visits. It has also led to the digitization of church records.[88] These developments suggest that new practices related to death and loss have evolved in the modern world, which online communication and increased opportunities to travel have facilitated. However, they also remain rooted in the remembrance of rites of the past and memories about both loss and survival. The sense of connection that Mennonites feel to these now unused cemeteries opens up perspectives on the long histories of rites and rituals, and the implications of Mennonite heritage practices. The desire to preserve pasts, traditions, and rituals or seek stability or constancy in a changing world also brings its own form of change.

A documentary broadcast on Deutsche Welle about Mennonites in Belize describes visiting the Mennonites as akin to taking a step back in time. The camera follows the education of boys and girls. They are separated from each other, wear traditional dress, read High German in Fraktur, and sing, doing things just as previous generations had done.[89] As the documentary suggests, part of the aim of education in these communities is to teach children about traditions, practices, and rituals that elders have passed down to maintain these ways of life. However, the illusion of ritual is that it remains unchanged. In reality, ritual life, as well as the lives of these communities, are subject to constant shifts. Rites are part of the process of change and adaptation, not a reflection of traditions frozen in time. As Lorenzo Cañás Bottos argues, modern conservative Mennonites and Amish do not represent the embodiment of the lost American past, nor the continuation of an early modern past.[90] The performance of rituals such as baptism may seem to have remained unchanged throughout time, but rites always evolved, developed, and were shaped by the material worlds in which they existed. For early modern Prussian Mennonites, the use of German or the creation of church records were part of a new response to the changing world of the eighteenth century, and only later became part of the heritage traditions of these congregations. In the modern world, we might think, for example, of the role of plain and simple dress, which was practical, conventional, and common for Mennonites in the

nineteenth century as they came to North America, and similar to the attire which other migrant families wore. However, for modern communities in Mexico or Bolivia, clothing has become a ritualized marker of tradition that marks these communities out as distinct from the modern world.[91] Daily rituals of living, like ways of dressing or the use of certain languages or dialects, that had once seemed mundane or ordinary, take on new meaning. Similarly, the confessional rituals of baptism, the Lord's Supper, and death acquired new meaning in the experience of migration. Ritual is always more than a collection of symbols or coded acts. It is a dynamic agent in the processes of change that shaped early modern Prussian Mennonite communities. It was entangled with emotional economies and material worlds as well as individual and collective experiences, and has constantly shaped ideas about identity and belonging.

Conclusion

When Dirk Janssen was selected to be elder of the Amsterdam Danzig church in September 1725, his departure from his congregation in Danzig was marked by a ritual of farewell. He gave a moving goodbye, kissed the elder, his brother Anton, twice and proceeded to do the same with the other deacons. His formal rite of goodbye, accompanied by a bodily gesture, was designed to negotiate this difficult and emotional transition. However, the moving address and kiss of brotherly love did not seem to have erased all anxiety and sorrow. Anton died a month later and, before his demise, had suggested that his brother's departure would result in his death. "He said that when his brother, the honourable Dirk Janssen, departed for Holland, he would be brought here to the cemetery."[92] As we have seen, Danzig Mennonites used kisses at other times in rites of reconciliation and repentance. Like the medieval contexts of the Kiss of Peace that Petkov described, the bodily performance of the ritual expected and performed certain emotions as a way of negotiating conflict or anxiety. Kisses of farewell, peace and reconciliation, washing feet, the Lord's Supper, or baptism were embodied acts that worked with agentic force in the emotional and cultural economy of early modern Prussian Mennonite communities. Rituals and ritualized practices were integral to the lived experience of Mennonites and offer revealing perspectives on their confessional world.

However, ceremonies of farewell, greeting, and reconciliation, and more formal traditional rites of passage like baptism, communion, and footwashing, cannot be read as simple symbols laden with

cultural meanings. Nor were these rituals unchanging signifiers of meaning, although they drew on well-established forms. Compared with the kiss which ended medieval feuds, the ritualized kisses of love and peace used by Prussian Mennonites took on a very different meaning when used in the practices of congregational discipline. Rituals were deeply embedded in specific emotional and cultural landscapes, and rites shifted and changed as early modern Prussian communities changed, came under pressure, and moved. Whether in the form of the German language, new spaces for worship, or Wedel's emphasis on the communal bond of love through baptism, ritual has played an active role in these changes. Rituals have continued to transform in subsequent Mennonite migrations. Some practices fell out of use, while others gained new importance. Footwashing, for example, was part of the ritual world of early modern Mennonites but is no longer universally practiced by Mennonite churches. Some members see it as an outdated relic no longer relevant for the twenty-first century. Yet discussion continues about the rite's relevance and purpose, and it has seen a resurgence in some Mennonite churches and other communities of faith.[93] Footwashing is popular in the non-Mennonite L'Arche communities—networks comprising people considered intellectually disabled and nondisabled persons who all share their life and faith—where it creates a way of including communities of bodies at a different pace from the modern world.[94] Only when we consider footwashing as a rite that is embedded in specific contexts and understandings of the body, in material worlds and emotions, can we understand its role and its shifting meanings.

For historians, the concept of ritual has been one of its most important links with cultural anthropology. While it has been critiqued, it remains a useful way of understanding the past lives of individuals and communities, but not because we can uncover either the reality of symbolic meaning behind acts or examine an unbroken chain of repeated practices. Ritual has to be analyzed as integrally connected to questions of emotions, temporalities, and materialities; it adapts and changes, and in itself effects change, and these processes help make communities. For early modern Prussian Mennonites, ritual did more than enact worship. It also embodied communal emotions and conflicts, hierarchies, connections, and differences, and it operated at crucial points of tension between thought and feeling, the material and the spiritual, past and present. Seeing ritual in this way, not as a structure, but as a dynamic subject in the cultural worlds we inhabit, contributes to constructing meaningful accounts of the religious, social, and cultural worlds of Mennonite congregations.

Notes

1 Abraham Hartwich, *Geographisch-Historische Landes-Beschreibung derer dreyen im Pohlnischen Preussen liegenden Werdern, als des Dantziger-Elbing- und Marienburgischen* (Koenigsberg: Johann David Zancker, 1722). The title translates as "A geographical-historical description of the three *Werder* located in Polish Prussia, that is Danzig, Elbing, and Marienburg." A copy of manuscript notes for this work also is held at the Mennonite Heritage Archives (MHA) in Winnipeg.

2 Hartwich, *Geographisch-Historische Landes-Beschreibung*, Introduction: 2r.

3 Names for regions in this period are problematic. I have referred to the communities of Mennonites as Prussian Mennonites for simplicity, but Prussia itself was not one political unit. West Prussia, often used to denote the area in which Mennonites settled, was the region around the lower Vistula which became part of Royal Prussia under the Polish crown. Mennonites also settled in east Prussia, that was Ducal Prussia, former lands of the Teutonic Knights made into a hereditary Duchy. From 1773 both were named as provinces of the new Kingdom of Prussia.

4 Hartwich, *Geographisch-Historische Landes-Beschreibung*, 276–311.

5 For the beliefs of the Mennonites see Hartwich, *Geographisch-Historische Landes-Beschreibung,* 279–295. See also Peter J. Klassen, *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland and Prussia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 159.

6 Klassen, *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland*, 49–51. On the background for West Prussian Mennonites see also *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Enyclopedia Online* (GAMEO), s.v. "West Prussia," by Horst Penner and Peter J. Foth, https://gameo.org/index.php?title=West_Prussia&oldid=146338, and Edmund Kizik, "Religious Freedom and the Limits of Social Assimilation: The History of the Mennonites in Danzig and the Vistula Delta until their Tragic End after World War II," in *From Martyr to Muppy: A Historical Introduction to Cultural Assimilation Processes of a Religious Minority in the Netherlands: the Mennonites*, ed. Alistair Hamilton, Sjouke Voolstra, and Piet Visser (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994).

7 Klassen, *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland*, 23–24, 29–34.

8 GAMEO, s.v. "Elbing (Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship, Poland)," by Emil Händiges and Richard D. Thiessen https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Elbing_(Warmian-Masurian_Voivodeship,_Poland)&oldid=168581.

9 Klassen, *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland*, 39. On the Danzig Mennonites see GAMEO, s.v. "Danzig (Poland)," by John D. Thiesen, https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Danzig_(Poland)&oldid=166456.

10 Klassen, *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland*, 39.

11 On the life and career of Hansen see Harvey Plett, "Georg Hansen and the Danzig Flemish Mennonite Church: A Study in Continuity" (PhD diss., University of Manitoba, 1991). Hansen's published works include: *Ein Glaubens-Bericht fuel die Jugend: Durch sin Liebhaber der Warheit gestellt und ans Licht gebracht im Jahre 1671* (Danzig: n.p., 1671); *Einaeltige Antwort: Der Mennonisten die man Clerchen nent auf den Erforschen der Wahrheit* (n,p., 1703); *Spiegel des Levens* (Amsterdam: Brent Visier, 1705); *Ein Fundamentbuch der Christlichen Lehre welche unter den Mennoniten in Preussen, die man zu Danzig "Clerken: nennt gelehrt wird,"* (Amsterdam: Brent Visier, 1696; trans. Isaac Peter, Mennonitische Verlagsanstalt, 1893). In the Menno-

nite Library and Archives (MLA), Bethel, Kansas, there is a handwritten copy of Hansen's 1678 confession *Confession oder Kurze und einfältige Glaubensbekanntnisse derer Mennonisten in Preussen, so man nennet die Clarichen.* The work was taken by Wilhelm Lange when a group fled from Germany to Gnadenfeld, South Russia. See "Lange, William, Russian Mennonite Articles of Confession, 1675," MLA, SA-II-754. The label on record incorrectly names Russia in the title, has the date wrong, and notes Lange as the owner, though he was not the author.

12 "Questions asked of Mennonites in 1678," MLA, SA-II-750 (Box 33). See also "*Religions Puncten der Mennonisten so man die Bekümmerte nennet*," Polish Scientific Academic Library Gdansk, MS 694 and MS 973. See also Klassen, *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland*, 176–181.

13 This was titled *Glaubensbekenntniss der Mennoniten in Preussen* and was much used and reissued by Prussian Mennonites and in Russia. See for example *Glaubensbekenntnis der Mennoniten in Preußen* (Marienburg: Hans Halb. 1895). See also GAMEO, s.v. "Confessions, Doctrinal," by Christian Neff, John C. Wenger, Harold S. Bender, and Howard John Loewen, https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Confessions,_Doctrinal&oldid=162884.

14 "Sermons by Benjamin Wedel," MLA, SA-II-260 (Box 12) and "Confession of Faith" German MS, Jacob Wedel, 1787, copied in 1866, SA-II-257 (Box 12).

15 On church books see, for example, the Danzig church books, the oldest records of this kind. The originals are held by the Mennonitische Forschungsstelle in Weierhof and scans are available at https://mla.bethelks.edu/metadata/cong_310.php. Printed works include books such as the Elbing catechism, first published in 1778.

16 Przechowa, West Prussia, Membership Lists for 1715 and 1733 from the "Travel Diary of Hendrik Berents Hulshoff," trans. and ed. Glen Penner, 4–5. Available at https://mla.bethelks.edu/archives/cong_15/hulshoff.pdf.

17 *Bezweegen Broederschap. Het wel en wee van de Dantziger Oude Vlamingen te Haarlem in de eerste helft van de achttiende eeuw opgetekend door Eduard Simonsz Toens in zijn Memoriaal (1735–1749)*, ed. Piet Visser, Mechteld Gravendeel, Willem Stuve, and Sjouke Voolstra (Hilversum: Verloren, 2005).

18 Piet Visser et al., *Bezweegen Broederschap*.

19 Heinrich Donner's Chronik, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives Winnipeg, Small Archives 4355 (Box 2); Kirchenbuch der Orlofferfelde Mennonitengemeinde: Geburten, Taufen, Trauungen, Todesfälle 1727–1857, Mennonitische Forschungstelle Weierhof (hereafter MFS, KB.OR.01); Kirchenbuch der Orlofferfelde Mennonitengemeinde: Chronik (Donner), Geburten, Trauungen, Taufen, Kirchenzucht 1800–1899, Mennonitische Forschungstelle Weierhof, KB.OR.02. On the chronicle see the work of Edmund Kizik, "Die Chronik Heinrich Donners. Eine wichtige Quelle zur Geschichte der Mennoniten in Westpreussen im letzen Viertel des 18. Jahrhunderts," *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* 49 (1992): 56–72.

20 "Transcription from the Gothic script and translation of the Lehn Diary," ed. Waldemar Henry Lehn (2010). Photocopy taken from MHA, Winnipeg.

21 Hartwich, *Geographisch-Historische Landes-Beschreibung*, 290.

22 Hartwich, *Geographisch-Historische Landes-Beschreibung*, 292.

23 Merridee L. Bailey and Katie Barclay, "Emotion, Ritual and Power: From Family to Nation," in *Emotion, Ritual and Power in Europe, 1200–1920: Family, State and Church*, ed. Bailey and Barclay (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 4. For definitions of ritual and histories of interpretations see also

Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992; repr. 2009), 1–90.

[24] See for example: James Urry, "From Speech to Literature: Low German and Mennonite Identity in Two Worlds," *History and Anthropology* 5:2 (1991): 233–258; "Of Borders and Boundaries: Reflections on Mennonite Unity and Separation in the Modern World," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 73:3 (1999): 503–24; *Mennonites, Politics, and Peoplehood: Europe – Russia – Canada, 1525–1980* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2011).

[25] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995); Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (London: Routledge, 2004).

[26] For example, the very influential work of Clifford Geertz. Geertz, "Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 412–453. See other essays in this volume also.

[27] See for example Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 98; Will Coster, *Baptism and Spiritual Kinship in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2002), 45–9; Kat Hill, *Baptism, Brotherhood, and Belief in Reformation Germany: Anabaptism and Lutheranism, 1525–1585* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 103–104.

[28] Clifford Geertz, "Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example," in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 142–169. See also Joseph Errington, "On not doing systems," in *Interpreting Clifford Geertz: Cultural Investigation in the Social Sciences*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Matthew Norton, and Philip Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 33–41.

[29] Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 7.

[30] See for example Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France," *Past & Present*, 59 (1973), 51–91; Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Graeme Murdock, Penny Roberts, and Andrew Spicer, *Ritual and Violence: Natalie Zemon Davis and Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Barbara Stollberg-Rillinger, *The Emperor's Old Clothes*: *Constitutional History and the Symbolic Language of the Holy Roman Empire*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2015).

[31] Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*.

[32] Susan Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Ritual: An Interpretation of Early Modern Germany* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

[33] See, for example, Victoria Christman and Marjorie Elizabeth Plummer, eds., *Cultural Shifts and Ritual Transformations in Reformation Europe: Essays in Honor of Susan C. Karant-Nunn* (Leiden: Brill, 2020); Susan Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Feeling: Shaping the Religious Emotions in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Ronald K. Rittgers, *The Reformation of Suffering: Pastoral Theology and Lay Piety in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[34] Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[35] Renato Rosaldo, "Grief and a Headhunter's Rage: On the Cultural Force of Emotions," in *Text, Play, and Story: The Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society,* ed. Edward M. Bruner (Washington, DC: American Ethnological Society, 1984), 178–95.

[36] Barclay and Bailey, "Emotion, Ritual, and Power," 2–3. On emotional communities in the pre-modern world see Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

[37] Kiril Petkov, *The Kiss of Peace: Ritual, Self, and Society in the High and Late Medieval West* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), especially 141–42.

[38] Hill, *Baptism, Brotherhood and Belief*; Karant-Nunn, *Reformation of Ritual*.

[39] Hill, *Baptism, Brotherhood and Belief*, 98–135.

[40] Hartwich, *Geographisch-Historische Landes-Beschreibung*, 287.

[41] Plett, "Georg Hansen," 283; "Mennonite Articles of Confession," MLA, SA-II-754, 15–16.

[42] Plett, "Georg Hansen," 284–91.

[43] "Lehn diary,"48–49.

[44] "Confession of Faith, Wedel, 1787," MLA, SA-II-260, 6–7.

[45] "Confession of Faith, Wedel, 1787," MLA, SA-II-260, 223–34.

[46] "Confession of Faith, Wedel, 1787," MLA, SA-II-260, 8.

[47] See for example: Francois Soyer, "The Public Baptism of Muslims in Early Modern Spain and Portugal: Forging Communal Identity through Collective Emotional Display," *Journal of Religious History* 39:4 (2015): 506–23; Jacqueline Van Gent, "The Burden of Love: Moravian Conversions and Emotions in Eighteenth-Century Labrador," *Journal of Religious History* 39:4 (2015): 557–74; See the whole issue of this volume which is a special issue on emotions and conversion. See also Peter A. Goddard, "Missionary Catholicism" and Jacqueline Van Gent, "Protestant Global Missions," in *Early Modern Emotions, An Introduction*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017), 310–12, 313–16.

[48] Van Gent, "The burden of love: Moravian conversions and emotions," 557.

[49] In 1730, for example, Elbing council conducted an investigation into Lutheran converts to the Mennonite faith; Klassen, *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland*, 89.

[50] Klassen, *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland*, 163–64.

[51] Hartwich, *Geographisch-Historische Landes-Beschreibung*, 284.

[52] Troy Osborne, "The Bottle, the Dagger, and the Ring: Church Discipline and Dutch Mennonite Identity in the Seventeenth Century," *Conrad Grebel Review* 35:2 (2017): 114–50.

[53] "Lehn Diary," 20–21

[54] Hartwich, *Geographisch-Historische Landes-Beschreibung*, 292.

[55] Karl-Erik Frandsen, *The Last Plague in the Baltic Region 1709–1713* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010), 26. On the plague in Danzig see also Edmund Kizik, ed., *Dżuma, ospa, cholera. W rzechsetną rocznicę wielkiej epidemii w Gdańsku i na ziemiach Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1708–1711. Materiały z konferencji naukowej zorganizowanej przez Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Gdańska i Instytut Historii PAN w dniach 21–22 maja 2009* (Gdansk: Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Gdańska, 2012) and the contemporary account Johann Christoph Gottwald, *Memoriale Loimicum, Oder Kurtze Verzeichnüß, Dessen, LoimicumWas in der Königl. Stadt Dantzig, bey der daselbst Anno 1709. hefftig graßirenden Seuche der Pestilentz, sich*

zugetragen, Nach einer Dreyfachen Nachricht, aus eigener Erfahrung auffgesetzet und beschrieben (1710).

[56] "Copeij eines Schreibens aus Danzig," 1710, MHA, Small Archives, Box 1733, Folder 2. See also Kat Hill, "Death and Dreams in a Time of Plague," *Anabaptist Historians* (blog), Oct. 1, 2020, https://anabaptisthistorians.org/2020/10/01/death-and-dreams-in-a-time-of-plague/. There are parallels here with the meditations of Lutheran Johannes Christoph Oelhafen on the death of his wife, written in 1619. Ronald K. Rittgers, "Grief and Consolation in Early Modern Lutheran Devotion: The Case of Johannes Christoph Oelhafen's *Pious Meditations on the Most Sorrowful Bereavement* (1619)," *Church History* 81:3 (2012): 601–30.

[57] "Travel Diary of Hendrik Berents Hulshoff," 4–5.

[58] "Lehn Diary," 44–45.

[59] Plett, "George Hansen," 224.

[60] Monique Sheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion," *History and Theory* 51:2 (2012): 193–220.

[61] See for example Nicole Boivin, "Grasping the Elusive and Unknowable: Material Culture in Ritual Practice," *The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 5:3 (2009): 266–287; Chris Tilley, Mike Rowlands, Patricia Spyer, Susanne Kuechler, Webb Keane, eds., *Handbook of Material Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 391.

[62] See for example Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

[63] Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, "Introduction," in *Everyday Objects, Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meaning*, ed. Hamling and Richardson (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 39–40.

[64] On the different branches see GAMEO, s.vv. "Flemish Mennonites" and "Frisian Mennonites," by Christian Neff and Nanne van der Zijpp, https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Flemish_Mennonites&oldid=146426 and https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Frisian_Mennonites&oldid=145195.

[65] As there are only 150 Psalms, this probably referred to a hymn from an unnamed songbook.

[66] Hartwich, *Geographisch-Historische Landes-Beschreibung*, 291–92.

[67] Caroline Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), esp. 132–33.

[68] "Lehn Diary," 14–17.

[69] See, for example, a description of the rite in *Confession or Short and Simple Statement of Faith of Those Who are Called the United Flemish, Frisian, and High German Anabaptist-Mennonite Church*, published by the Church in Rudnerweide in South Russia, Odessa, in 1853. Trans. by Peter J. Klassen available at https://anabaptistwiki.org/mediawiki/index.php?title=Confession,_or_Short_and_Simple_Statement_of_Faith_(Rudnerweide,_Russia,_1853)#IX._Concerning_the_Footwashing_of_the_Lord. This is a later publication of Hansen's confession, recording Prussian practice.

[70] "Travel Diary of Hendrik Berents Hulshof," 5.

[71] Plett, "George Hansen," 295–99.

[72] See for example Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Will Coster and Andrew Spicer, eds., *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005);

David Warren Sabean and Malina Stefanovska, eds., *Space and Self in Early Modern European Cultures* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Andrew Spicer and Sarah Hamilton, eds., *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

73 Jacob Baum, *Reformation of the Senses: The Paradox of Religious Belief and Practice in Germany* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2018).

74 Organs did come into use but not until the later eighteenth century; Klassen, *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland*, 158.

75 Klassen, *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland*, 143–46.

76 For a short overview of cemeteries see Łukasz Kępski's contribution on the European Mennonite Network, http://www.eumen.net/en/locations/poland.

77 "Lehn Diary," 24–25.

78 Klassen, *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland*, 148.

79 "Lehn Diary," 48.

80 "Confession of Faith, Wedel, 1787," MLA, SA-II-260, Vorbericht, n.p.

81 Author observations from trip in summer of 2018.

82 Communion Cups and Wine Dispenser, Kauffman Museum, Bethel, Kansas.

83 Caroline Bynum, "Are Things 'Indifferent'? How Objects Change Our Understanding of Religious History," *German History* 34:1 (2016): 92, 111.

84 The term "thing" in material culture theory suggests the idea of the agency, life, and reality of materiality beyond human shaping and creation. See for example Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2012).

85 Joanne Begiato, "Moving Objects: Emotional Transformation, Tangibility, and Time-Travel," in *Feeling Things: Objects and Emotions through History*, ed. Stephanie Downes, Sally Holloway, and Sarah Randles(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 229–242.

86 Suzanna Ivanic, Mary Laven, and Andrew Morrall, "Introduction," in *Religious Materiality in the Early Modern World*, ed. Ivanic, Laven, and Morall (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 25. See also Anne Gerritsen and George Riello, *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connections in the Early Modern World* (London: Routledge, 2016).

87 Observed by author on visit in August 2018. See also https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/91911.

88 See for example the annual trip by the Mennonite Polish Studies Association, https://mla.bethelks.edu/information/mpsa.php.

89 *Meet the Mennonites*, dir. Mélanie van der Ende (Magnéto Presse, 2018). Available at https://vimeo.com/ondemand/meetthemennonites.

90 Lorenzo Cañás Bottos, *Old Colony Mennonites in Argentina and Bolivia: Nation Making, Religious Conflict and Imagination of the Future* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 5.

91 On dress see Daniel B. Lee, *Old Order Mennonites: Rituals, Beliefs, and Community* (New York: Burnham, 2000).

92 "Lehn Diary," 14–15.

93 Keith Graber Miller, "Mennonite Footwashing: Identity Reflections and Altered Meanings," *Worship* 66:2 (March 1992): 148–170; Bob Brenneman, "Embodied Forgiveness: Yoder and the (Body) Politics of Footwashing," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 83:1 (2009): 7–27.

94 Jason Reimer Grieg, "Being Formed in the Time of Jesus Christ: Towards a Renewal of Footwashing in a High-Speed Age," *Conrad Grebel Review* 36:3 (2018): 222–38. Thanks to James Urry for drawing this to my attention.