

# The Case of Blesy Krieg (August 29, 1527)

## Abstract

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The German Peasants' War (1524-1525) emerged out of a complex web of social and religious challenges in the early sixteenth century. Economic and political changes, including perceived threats to peasant rights, intersected with the religious concerns of the reformers and deep-seated anticlerical resentments.

Blesy Krieg's case came before the court in Oberried in the Black Forest in 1527. It highlights the legal priorities of early modern communities and the diverse impulses and actions that propelled the political and religious violence of the Peasants' War, including religious and social inversion, violent anger, and "evangelical enthusiasm." Blesy Krieg was tried by the town council, convicted, and sentenced to death for his mockery and desecration of the local monastery. Although he was also accused of a variety of other crimes, including attempted rape, the council's primary concern was to reinforce social order and discipline him for his religious blasphemies and violence against the monastery.

## Source

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On Wednesday after St Bartholomew's Day, [28 August] 1527 [...]

Blesy Krieg from Oberried confessed and testified freely and without constraint the following articles and points: Item, that he defected from his lordship to the peasants, thereby disregarding his honor and oath.

Item, in the peasants' rebellion he, along with others, entered the convent at Oberried, therein smashed the pyx containing the Host with a blacksmith's hammer; carried the Host to the altar in a monstrance, which he then also smashed; thereafter took the Host from the monstrance and laid it on the altar; apart from it there were five particles [of the Host] on a paten in a bag, which he took up to the altar and tipped out the bag. Hans, Schilt's cowherd, Seger's maid, Michel Riegk's cowherd, these four, and he took the five particles, stuffed them in each other's mouths, he [Krieg] eating his. Thereupon he donned priest's robes, sang Mass, elevated the Host which he had removed from the monstrance in mockery and contempt, displayed it to the others, who had to ring the Sanctus bells, and set it down again. Then he consumed the Host in the manner of a priest; he spilled the chrism beside the altar; and Jacob Luttenschlager, Jacob Kunig, both from Todtnauberg, and Hans Klinge in the valley carried away a monstrance.

Item, Michael Riegk's cowherd cut the bag which contained the particles into shreds, made clothes-strings from the cord, and chucked the bag at each other's heads; he still wears the clothes-strings. Blesy too wore a piece for a long time, but he has now lost it; and he carries the paten containing the particles and a prayerbook home with him, but had since returned them to the prior of Oberried.

Item, he confesses that he tore down three ropes in the convent and carries home lead and iron; also that he removed the small bell from the tower; he and others threw the books into a pile, cut them up and tore them apart.

Item, he confesses that he took two images of the Virgin and addressed [a statue of] St William thus: "What sort of warrior are you? Look at the blows [we have struck]! You must think that God's sufferings are chastising you! If you haven't enough, I'll give you another," and with that placed the other images of the Virgin Mary at his side. Then he took a stick and beat St William over the head...

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[Ten further charges of theft, gambling debts, extortion, grievous bodily harm, threatening behaviour, and attempted rape were laid against Blesy Krieg.]

Upon this sworn confession lawful judgement was passed that Blesy Krieg be delivered to the executioner, who should take him to the place of execution, cut off his head, and burn his body to ashes. Decided on Thursday after St Bartholomew's Day, [29 August] '27.

## Further reading

Tom Scott, *The Early Reformation in Germany: Between Secular Impact and Radical Vision*. London: Routledge, 2016.

Source: Robert W. Scribner and Tom Scott, *The German Peasant's War: A History in Documents*, Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, pp. 108-109.

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