



# Negotiating Stability: The Non-Reformation of Schwäbisch Gmünd 1500-1580

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The black, double-headed eagle of the Emperor and the city's coat of arms with unicorn, symbol of the close connection between city and Emperor.

### Setting the scene:

Schwäbisch Gmünd was an imperial free city, and thus only answerable to the Emperor himself rather than a territorial prince. The vast majority of imperial free cities were Reformed during the 16<sup>th</sup> century – Schwäbisch Gmünd was not. Applying a newly developed concept of 'negotiation' (Close, 2009) between imperial free cities, one can identify the importance of inter-town communications in three distinct instances.



Depiction of the beheading of Anabaptists, signifying the great religious tensions in the town



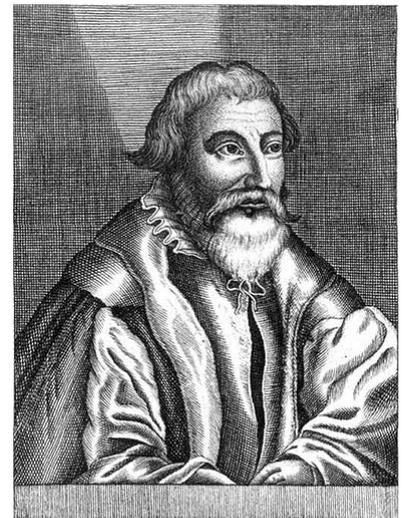
The monastery of Lorch, which was looted during the 1525 Peasant's Rebellion.

### Historiographical perspectives:

Imperial free cities have been identified as centres of the Reformation and their importance in shaping the Reform movement is recognized by historians (Moeller, 1972). There has been previous research into larger imperial free cities, like Cologne (Scribner, 1987) or those particularly linked to the Emperor, like Rottweil (Dixon, 2002), where the imperial court was based. Little attention has been paid to smaller imperial free cities, like Schwäbisch Gmünd.

### Three instances of 'negotiated non-Reformation':

In 1524 peasants who were part of 'The Peasants War' were only convinced to leave the surroundings of the town after a written condemnation by the Swabian League.  
In 1525 the Swabian League and the neighbouring imperial free city of Esslingen were able to supply the necessary troops to suppress Lutheran stirrings.  
In the 1570s and 1580s both Lutherans and Catholics called on their supporters for support but Catholic inter-town communications were more efficient.  
In all three instances links with external bodies and inter-town communications were extremely important for the failure of the Reformation.



ANDR. ALTHAMERVS,  
*Primarius Pastor Onoldinus.*

Contemporary depiction of Andreas Althamer, who led the Reform initiatives in Schwäbisch Gmünd

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