



The Tailor-King: The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Muenster

By Anthony Arthur

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He was only a Dutch tailor's apprentice, but from 1534 to 1535, Jan van Leyden led a radical sect of persecuted Anabaptists to repeated triumphs over the combined powers of church and state. Revered by his followers as the new David, the charismatic young leader pronounced the northern German city of Muenster a new Zion and crowned himself king. He expropriated all private property, took sixteen wives (supposedly emulating the biblical patriarchs), and in a deadly reign of terror, executed all who opposed him. As the long siege of Muenster resulted in starvation, thousands fled Jan's deadly kingdom while others waited behind the double walls and moats for the apocalyptic final attack by the Prince-Bishop's hired armies, supported by all the rulers of Europe.

With the sudden rise to power of a compelling personality and the resulting violent threat to ordered society, Jan van Leyden's distant story strangely echoes the many tragedies of the twentieth century. More than just a fascinating human drama from the past, *The Tailor-King* also offers insight into our own troubled times.

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Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Carnage abounds in this shocking account of the 16th-century Anabaptist revolt of M^unster, during which some 9000 residents barricaded themselves in the north German town for more than a year, proclaiming a militant, anti-Catholic theocracy. Led by the 24-year-old Jan van Leyden, a charismatic tailor's apprentice from Holland, the revolt quickly jettisoned its promise of a community united by voluntary faith, becoming instead a textbook study in extremism. The Anabaptist message, contends Arthur, was predicated on the appeal of the irrational. Signally, a zealous belief that the Second Coming would unfold in 1534 in M^unster, where the loyal Anabaptists would wage the ultimate battle between good and evil. A master propagandist, the young, self-anointed King Jan swiftly ordered all books save the Bible consigned to a bonfire and even declared a new order of marriage: mandatory polygamy. Amply serviced by his 16-wife harem, Jan then loosed what Arthur (Bushmasters, etc.) alternately describes as a reign of terror and a carnival of madness upon the town, in which pikestaffs whirled and halberds raged against unrepentant adherents of the Roman Catholic Church. Both Catholics and Protestants opposed the Anabaptists, and the sect's contempt for temporal authority of any kind made it the object of persecution by Germany's powerful princes. Students of millenarian movements will enjoy notable parallels to today's apocalyptic sects like the Branch Davidians. Vividly written and credibly researched, this book is entertaining history with implicit contemporary relevance. (Sept.)

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From Library Journal

Every revolution has a radical fringe, and the Reformation was no exception. The Anabaptists, who took over and created their own kingdom in the northern German city of M^unster, frightened even Martin Luther. Arthur (English, California State Univ., Northridge) has written an excellent account of the Anabaptist kingdom, which has not received much attention recently. His is one of the more readable academic histories in recent memory. Arthur deftly uses primary sources to craft a story that reads like a good thriller. His analysis in the final chapter is a masterly comparison of the events in M^unster to what happened to the Branch Davidians in Waco, TX. Any doubts about the importance of the bloody events of more than 400 years ago are erased by the parallels that Arthur draws. How could Waco, Oklahoma City, and Kosovo have happened? It all has happened before, with ghastly results. Highly recommended for public libraries and undergraduate collections. ARandall L. Schroeder, Wartburg Coll., Waverly, IA

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From [Booklist](#)

The sixteenth-century Anabaptist uprising in the northern German city of Munster, under the leadership of tailor's apprentice Jan van Leyden, is a fascinating story that has spawned many popular accounts in German. Its elements include the heroism, intrigue, greed, sex, and violence of a late-twentieth-century blockbuster novel, and Arthur's timing in presenting his account neatly coincides with the current bull market for apocalypticism, aka millenarianism. For the most part, Arthur draws on historical records and fictional accounts to recount the transformation of a protodemocratic uprising into a theocratic nightmare distorted on all sides by flawed and often unscrupulous leaders and followers whose hope regularly led them into gullibility. Arthur's attempts to draw explicit parallels with recent events and the Freudian framework within which he draws them are detractions, but they are restricted almost entirely to the final chapter. Although Arthur imparts little about Anabaptism, he provides a riveting story and pointers to other sources for reflection on the still important interplay of religious faith and theological and political authority. *Steven*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Michael Moore:

Information is provisions for anyone to get better life, information nowadays can get by anyone from everywhere. The information can be a knowledge or any news even a concern. What people must be consider when those information which is from the former life are challenging be find than now is taking seriously which one would work to believe or which one often the resource are convinced. If you obtain the unstable resource then you get it as your main information you will have huge disadvantage for you. All of those possibilities will not happen with you if you take The Tailor-King: The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Muenster as your daily resource information.

Rebecca Clark:

Reading can called head hangout, why? Because while you are reading a book especially book entitled The Tailor-King: The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Muenster your mind will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in each aspect that maybe unidentified for but surely can be your mind friends. Imaging every single word written in a book then become one type conclusion and explanation that will maybe you never get just before. The The Tailor-King: The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Muenster giving you yet another experience more than blown away your thoughts but also giving you useful facts for your better life on this era. So now let us teach you the relaxing pattern the following is your body and mind will likely be pleased when you are finished examining it, like winning a game. Do you want to try this extraordinary shelling out spare time activity?

Augustus Chase:

Do you have something that you like such as book? The book lovers usually prefer to decide on book like comic, short story and the biggest one is novel. Now, why not striving The Tailor-King: The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Muenster that give your pleasure preference will be satisfied by simply reading this book. Reading addiction all over the world can be said as the method for people to know world far better then how they react when it comes to the world. It can't be mentioned constantly that reading practice only for the geeky person but for all of you who wants to end up being success person. So , for all you who want to start studying as your good habit, you may pick The Tailor-King: The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Muenster become your personal starter.

George Chadwick:

In this era globalization it is important to someone to acquire information. The information will make you to definitely understand the condition of the world. The healthiness of the world makes the information simpler to share. You can find a lot of referrals to get information example: internet, classifieds, book, and soon. You will see that now, a lot of publisher in which print many kinds of book. The book that recommended to you

is The Tailor-King: The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptist Kingdom of Muenster this guide consist a lot of the information on the condition of this world now. That book was represented how do the world has grown up. The dialect styles that writer require to explain it is easy to understand. Often the writer made some exploration when he makes this book. That's why this book appropriate all of you.

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