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Confessionalization, Religious Culture, and the Rise of the State

This volume is a *Festschrift* in honor of Heinz Schilling, one of the most influential scholars in the field of early modern European history over the last twenty years, at Bielefeld, Gießen, and then after the *Wende* in Berlin. He is best known as one of the architects, together with Wolfgang Reinhard, of the “confessionalization thesis.” Confessionalization designates the cooperation between the developing states of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the established churches, particularly aimed at creating strong religious identities (“confessionalism”), which would serve as a foundation for political loyalty. The confessionalization thesis had the virtue of emphasizing parallel developments in Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism, especially in central Europe, and thus moving historians beyond the confessional polemics of the old field of Reformation studies. On the other hand, confessionalization has been criticized for simplifying religious developments, including the Reformation, by emphasizing the instrumentalization of religion by the state. Although the debate over confessionalization has grown tired in the last decade, through the 1980s and 1990s it breathed new life into the field of early modern history by drawing together religious, social, and political history.

This is a huge collection of thirty articles. If there is any unifying theme to the volume, it is a broad engagement with confessionalization. Interestingly, those articles that directly engage this thesis (particularly those by Thomas A. Brady Jr. and Etienne François) are critical of an overly mechanical application of that thesis. Many of the articles, however, have relatively little to do with confessionalization and at most have only a loose connection to the general themes of Schilling’s work, the development of religious cultures and the creation of stronger states.

This volume is a classic *Festschrift* in the sense that it brings together scholars from across Schilling’s career. The contributors—five Americans, nineteen Germans, and six other Europeans—are a distinguished group, with a predominance of men (only three contributors are women) and quite a few scholars from an older generation. This selection reflects, of course, Schilling’s long career and his importance for and influence on this field, particularly among historians working at German universities. Furthermore, the topics of these essays, mostly political history, indicate the focus of Schilling’s own work and that of his students. There are few essays that could be considered social or cultural history and even fewer that show the influence of the “linguistic turn,” which has been around for twenty years.

Several articles stand out. Etienne François’s contribution on confessional pluralism and German identity presents a nuanced picture of the development of religious identity in Germany since the mid-sixteenth century. Drawing on his outstanding research on the biconfessional city of Augsburg, François focuses on the development of confessional identity as experienced by the population at large. He presents clearly the development of distinct Catholic and Protestant religious cultures, especially after 1650, but reminds historians of the complex interplay of tolerance/pluralism and the “dynamic of intolerance.” François then traces the strength of these confessional cultures through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, speculating (cautiously) on their possible influence on the culture of exclusion that became central to German politics in the first half of the twentieth century. A strength of François’s presentation is his insistence that confessional cultures had both

great staying power, particularly due to the institutional strengths of the established churches, and that these cultures also continuously evolved. All these perspectives should be of great use to scholars looking to move in new directions in the study of religious cultures.

Robert von Friedeburg's fascinating study of the concept of the "patriot" in the early modern period is one of the few articles to examine the use of language in detail. Friedeburg's study is exceptionally erudite, ranging across northern Europe, with excursions to Holland, Britain, France, Scandinavia, and Germany. Friedeburg emphasizes the variety of ways in which the terms "patriot" and "patriotism" could be deployed. Most often, nobles and burghers used the term to demonstrate their political virtue and loyalty to their homeland when they found themselves in conflict with their monarch. The term "patriot" was increasingly valuable for "lower nobles" and educated burghers to justify their hold on positions in the army or the administration of the growing states, since those positions were now less often distributed on the basis of privilege. Friedeburg further argues that the seventeenth-century crises of war and religious conflict (the English Civil War and the

Thirty Years' War in particular) accelerated the development of this new rhetoric of patriotism, without, however, leading to a simple "dualism" between "republicanism" and "monarchy." Instead, lay elites—"patriots"—continued to serve the state "defending religion, administering justice, defending the commonwealth" well into the eighteenth century (p. 454). The rhetoric of patriotism could (and eventually did) lead to a politics of equality and democracy, but in the early modern period it was contained within a traditional social framework.

The articles by François and Friedeburg are two of the strongest and most valuable in this *Festschrift*. The range of articles is extensive—with pieces by Johannes Arendt on Calvinist preachers in the Netherlands, István Tóth on Catholic renewal in Turkish Hungary, Irene Dingel on the Nazi interpretation of Martin Luther, Georg Schmidt on Friedrich Schiller's concept of universal history, and Peter Clark on "Drinking Houses in Early Modern Europe," among others—and there are valuable contributions among them. It is perhaps unreasonable to ask for coherence in a collection in honor of a scholar of Schilling's stature. This collection does what it promises: it honors a distinguished scholar.

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