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(Review) Nails in the Wall: Catholic Nuns in Reformation Germany

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where Reformation theology and cultural practice intersected, with enormous popular impact. On the one hand, Luther and his allies attacked the celibate clergy, in part because they were allegedly liable to perverted forms of sexual practice. On the other hand, the sphere of marital sexuality was simultaneously secularized and valorized. The result, Puff argues, was that "sodomy became an even more unintelligible term," subsumed under the larger catalog of extra-marital sexual deviance (p. 172). While Puff is clear about how attributions of sodomy were important to Protestant thinkers trying to define new roles for both clergy and laity, the logic of his argument for the post-Reformation period seems inconsistent. Indeed, Puff describes this initial effort to "[argue] for matrimony's and sodomy's place in the imaginary" as a research project meant to refine existing scholarship on marriage during the Reformation. One can wait with anticipation for the results of this project, even if the current chapter raises more questions than it answers.

Puff includes innumerable specific observations that will stimulate readers from many disciplines. Whether commenting on archival practice or decoding Humanist polemics, his book enriches our understanding of the cultural and social matrix of early modern Swiss towns. He also challenges the reader to reflect on reading complex and oblique historical and literary evidence, asking when we should apply contemporary methods of reading or modern concerns about sexuality to the evidence. The book succeeds as a contribution to multiple intellectual conversations and deserves a wide readership.

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Nails in the Wall: Catholic Nuns in Reformation Germany. By Amy Leonard. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press. 2005. Pp. xiii + 218. $45.00. ISBN 0-226-47257-4.

Amy Leonard's carefully researched and elegantly written study explains how a number of Catholic convents survived the Reformation in the staunchly Protestant city of Strasbourg. This is a story about determined nuns who knew how to use their gender and their influence with the leading families of Strasbourg to preserve their convents. It is also the story of the Protestant rulers of the city, who had to consider both the desires of the Catholic Emperor and the power of the Lutheran clergy of the city, while balancing their traditional ties to the convents with their newfound evangelical beliefs.

The book contributes to our increasingly sophisticated sense of the progress of Protestantism in the first half of the sixteenth century. Like a number of other studies in the last decades, this book shows that Protestantism gained adherents slowly, that the lines between Protestantism and Catholicism were unclear for much of the sixteenth century, and that religious change could not simply be imposed from above. Leonard demonstrates, for example, that even in a staunchly evangelical city like Strasbourg, there were elite families that favored allowing Catholic convents to continue to function and even put their daughters into these institutions. Furthermore, throughout the sixteenth century there continued to be girls and women who wanted to become nuns. These facts will certainly surprise some Reformation historians.

Leonard's study focuses on the Dominican convents of Strasbourg. She presents the medieval history of these institutions, emphasizing the ties between the convents and the urban elite. These convents were profoundly affected by the monastic reform movements of the fifteenth century. The reforms led to a religious and intellectual renewal of the conventual life in many of Strasbourg's houses, while also involving the city council more directly in the regulation of the convents. The nuns in the reformed houses developed considerable self-confidence in this period, which would serve them well in the sixteenth century.

Leonard then presents the panoply of Reformation attacks on convents. Much of this discussion is well known, particularly the Protestant rejection of monastic vows as a human innovation, not found in the Bible. Leonard shows, however, that Protestants in Strasbourg had mixed feelings about convents. After all, they provided "a place for young girls to learn and be safe until marriage, offered relief to the poor, and in some cases acted as a hospice" (p. 52). Furthermore, although many of Strasbourg's monasteries and convents came to be considered "foreign" because more monks and nuns were not from Strasbourg, the Dominican convents continued to be closely tied to important Strasbourgeois families. In the end, the city government chose to convert the convents into schools. "The nuns would wear lay clothing, attend Protestant services, and teach the reformed religion to the city's children" (p. 57).

The nuns did not accept this conversion and, although they did not wear habits outside the convent, they maintained the Catholic character of the institutions. Priests came to the convents to say mass, novices entered the convents against the express prohibition of the city council, and, perhaps most surprisingly, leading Protestant families continued to send their daughters to the convents. Leonard argues that these families sometimes did not really know what was happening in the convents, but mostly they "still felt that prayers and the cloistered life were useful to the community" (p. 105). The nuns were active in this process, opening space for themselves by exploiting these views, through the astute use of familial contacts among elite families, and by outright disobedience designed to embarrass the council. In the end, as Leonard emphasizes, convents and council, nuns and the urban elite, found ways to compromise and even collaborate, a tendency that challenges our notions of confessional conflict in the sixteenth century.

Leonard then turns to developments in the middle of the sixteenth century, with an emphasis on the impact of the Counter-Reformation in Strasbourg. She correctly points out that nuns have generally been left out of the story of Catholicism in Germany. Furthermore, she argues that aggressive Catholic policies did not help Catholics in Strasbourg in their relations with local Protestants. Instead, it was compromises like the Peace of Augsburg (1555) that gave the convents, and a number of other Catholic institutions, the legal protection they needed to survive. Most importantly, Leonard shows that Catholicism in the convents thrived in the second half of the sixteenth century, but that this Catholicism was not particularly influenced by the Council of Trent. In particular, the Strasbourg convents ignored the Tridentine policy of enforcing strict enclosure on nuns that was so destructive of convent life in Italy in this period. In the particular context of Strasbourg, nuns were able to follow their own version of Catholic conventual life.

Chapter six traces the story of the closing of one convent in the 1590s. Although there was pressure in this period from Lutheran pastors to close the convents, Leonard argues that financial mismanagement, stories of sexual debauchery, conflicts among the nuns, and the arrogant attitude of the prioress were the main reasons for the closing. These were traditional issues, reminiscent of pre-Reformation conflicts between monastic houses and city governments, and they were fought out in a local context. Nuns in the other Strasbourg convents did not support the rebellious convent, though they took in some of its nuns when it closed. Leonard concludes that the nuns demonstrated more loyalty to their city and the magistrates than they did to the Dominican Order or to the Catholic Church.

This is an important book. It illuminates a little-known issue, the survival of Catholic convents in Protestant cities, while making, as all good books do, several important arguments. The Strasbourg example shows how nuns were a problem for both Catholics and Protestants, since they did not easily fit into the increasingly important "separation between public and private spheres" (p. 153). Leonard also shows how confessional conflict in Germany was fought out in local contexts that cannot be easily encompassed by simple confessional categories. Indeed, even in the middle of the "confessional age," social and familial ties often trumped religious differences, as did political considerations. Religious lines were also unclear in other ways. Strasbourg's Protestant magistrates, for example, believed that the convents were both useful and provided some valuable spiritual services. Furthermore, Leonard agrees that gender is an important category for our understanding of this period, but not just that religious reform, both Catholic and Protestant, aimed at controlling women. Nuns could and did exploit attitudes about women to keep their institutions open. The nuns were able to "successfully navigate their environment" because "the magistrates looked at the convents and saw their daughters, sisters, and cousins; if the council had seen them only as sexless nuns, they would never have survived."

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Communal Christianity: The Life and Loss of a Peasant Vision in Early Modern Germany. By David Mayes. Boston and Leiden:
Brill Academic Publishers, Inc. 2004. Pp. x + 374. $129.00.
ISBN 0-391-04225-4.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhard developed an influential "confessionalization" paradigm for the study of the Reformation in Central Europe during the century and a half following the Peace of Augsburg of 1555. The paradigm emphasized the close cooperation of church and state officials—Lutheran, Calvinist and Catholic alike—in creating more tightly integrated, territorially organized and disciplined subject populations. The confessionalization process was seen to entail a dramatic intensification of the power of central authorities in local communities, the exacerbation of religious conflicts, and the sharper demarcation of religious denominations.

Like all master-narratives, the confessionalization paradigm has prompted a host of criticisms and qualifications, of which David Mayes' fine study of Upper Hesse (i.e., those lands that became Hesse-Marburg after the partition of the original Hessian duchy in 1568) between 1550 and 1730 is a recent example. Mayes' critique is grounded in an appeal to another popular paradigm in early modern religious history, namely "communalism." Associated in particular with the work of Peter Blickle and his students, this second paradigm anchors the spirit of popular religion in the norms of the autonomous and self-governing rural commune, or *Gemeinde*. Mayes' central contention, which reprises an argument first advanced in Marc Forster's 1992 study of the Catholic Bishopric of Speyer, is that the enduring vitality of an aconfessional "communal Christianity" persistently frustrated the ambitions of "confessional Christianity" at least until the early eighteenth century.

Mayes divides his study into five chronological phases. Until the 1570s, Upper Hesse was a Protestant territory that tried to steer clear of internal disputes between Lutherans and Calvinists. After about 1576, however, Landgrave Ludwig IV launched an explicitly Lutheran renewal, thereby beginning the

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