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the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the editors of *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*

Review

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Another weakness is the simplicity of his central theme—that Africans willingly participated in the slave trade. Thornton sets up Rodney, and to a lesser extent other scholars, including myself, as strawmen to be knocked down.¹ Rodney, at least, did not argue that Europeans coerced Africans into participating in the slave trade, despite Thornton's repeated claims otherwise. The market, however, did promote the export of slaves. Furthermore, Thornton's discussion of the current technology in Africa in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is too rosy; if his analysis were accurate, there would have been little reason to import anything. Thornton often seems to be arguing his case for the whole of the transatlantic slave trade, not just the period before 1680. Many of his criticisms of other scholars fail to recognize that the experience of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries may have been very different than the period he has examined. There is no conclusion.

Paul E. Lovejoy
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Palatines, Liberty, and Property: German Lutherans in Colonial British America. By A. G. Roeber (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) 432 pp. \$49.95

John Adams compared the difficulty of getting the colonies to agree on independence at the same moment to having thirteen clocks chime the hour simultaneously. Now Roeber has added a fourteenth clock, the German-speaking immigrants who comprised more than one-tenth of the entire population and one-third of the crucial state of Pennsylvania.

The Lutherans faced a language barrier and also an immense cultural divide. They arrived in America, according to Roeber, with a definition of freedom as either the absence of religious coercion and restraint on morality or the ability to observe an inward moral code. The first came from Swabians who had learned by bitter experience to distrust government and church officials and the second from pietists who gave unquestioned obedience to rulers. Either way, the concept was apolitical.

Roeber's book describes how, through the influence of cultural brokers and church disputes, the Germans learned about neo-Whig, public political freedom linked to a defense of property. This new ideology allowed the Lutherans to understand the issues dividing the British and the Americans after 1765 and propelled the Germans into full participation in the American Revolution.

Roeber's conclusions assume the validity of the ideological interpretation of the Revolution's causes, associated with Morgan and Bailyn.¹ The great value of the book is in the proof, not the conclusions.

1 Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London, 1972).

1 Edmund Sears Morgan, *The Birth of the Republic, 1763–89* (Chicago, 1956); Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967).

Roeber marshals an extraordinary amount of evidence gathered from many archives in Germany and America. He compares peasant life in the Palatine, Wurttemberg, and Kraichgau and shows the differing impact of Hallensian pietism on each of these regions. Then he contrasts economic and religious life in German settlements in New York, South Carolina, Georgia, and Pennsylvania.

The book is difficult to conceptualize because Roeber, as if disgusted with the kind of specialization by region and evidence characteristic of most recent historical writing, sets out to prove that one scholar can integrate the kinds of data used by social, legal, intellectual, political, and religious historians. Rarely in one book does an author discuss Luther's doctrines, literacy rates, the price of land, the treatment of the poor, trade networks, inheritance patterns, and the translation of English legal terms into German. This is by far the best account of the German immigrants before and after they came to colonial America.

Roeber tailors his book to use whatever primary and secondary evidence exists for each geographical area; so there is an uneven quality in results. For Pennsylvania, where most of the Germans settled, his most important sources were traditional—the newspaper of Christopher Saur, Jr., Lutheran church records, tax lists, Heinrich Melchior Muhlenberg's reports to Halle and journals, and business letters. Even if one is unconvinced or uninterested in the overall thesis, the book should be read for the sheer quantity of new and sometimes unexpected information (for example, women's property rights were often better protected in Germany than in America).

Roeber has provided an excellent account of the transit of culture from Germany to America and the contrasting patterns of settlement. He has anchored cultural history in the social structure and shown the relevance of controversies within the Lutheran Church to political ideology. Even so, because of gaps in the evidence on colonial Pennsylvania, his central thesis about the redefinition of freedom is not persuasive.

Becker's study of Reading found German immigrants early and easily understanding English law and making use of Pennsylvania courts.² Roeber ignores the backcountry, and his primary evidence for difficulty in adjustment in the early period is literary—Saur's and Miller's newspapers and Muhlenberg's diaries. He interprets the difficulties in Philadelphia's Lutheran Church in the 1760s as primarily about property rather than an incompetent pietist preacher, arguing that the trustees and the congregation battled over the necessity of elections, like those in other churches, to protect interest.

The rhetoric used, Roeber insists, showed that Germans had transcended both the Halle and Swabian definitions of freedom and were now able to apply new concepts of freedom in the political realm. That is a heavy weight to load on church squabbles that may well have

2 Laura Leff Becker, "The American Revolution as a Community Experience: A Case Study of Reading, Pennsylvania," unpub. Ph.D. diss. (Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1978).

evaporated with a different pastor. An analysis of the Paxton march on Philadelphia, which involved many Germans, would have provided a more important episode to show the immigrants' understanding of freedom.

According to Roeber, by the 1770s the Germans' new linkage of representative government, freedom, and property meant that they wholeheartedly supported the Revolution. Yet the best known German language newspaper, run by Saur, and the most important German minister, Muhlenberg—both of whom classify as culture brokers—were not flaming patriots. The church records of the ministerial associations of Reformed and Lutheran show no early support for independence. The Pennsylvania election of June 1776, in which Quakers refused to participate, was a referendum on independence and provided no clear mandate. An overwhelming German vote for independence would have been decisive. Quakers and the British normally singled out the Presbyterians, not the Lutherans, for fomenting discord. Pennsylvania's Germans felt vulnerable to both British and radical pressures and endorsed the revolution when patriotism became prudent, not because they had arrived at a new definition of freedom.

Roeber deserves high praise for the many virtues of this book. He clearly demonstrates the advantages of being fluent in the languages of law, politics, and religion. His command of German is masterful, and the footnotes are worth the price of the book. The book breaks new ground in showing that clergy and laity came to America as pietists and that contrasting pietist images of the church and state caused turmoil. From that turmoil, some Germans gained the skills in political organization and philosophy that they were to apply in the struggle against Britain.

Roeber's conclusion is worth remembering. The German Americans in 1776 understood liberty and property, but they did not have the foggiest idea what the "pursuit of happiness" meant.

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A Field of Divine Wonders: The New Divinity and Village Revivals in Northwestern Connecticut, 1792–1822. By David W. Kling (University Park, Penn., Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993) 296 pp. \$38.50

The "field of wonders" is a cultural landscape located in a corner of Connecticut during the early republic that Kling maps in order to reexamine the period of religious revivalism called the "Second Great Awakening." Echoing Mathews' hypothesis that the Awakening arose from "social strain, ecclesiastical turmoil, and purposive leadership," the author successfully combines theological explication, rhetorical analysis, ministerial biography, ecclesiastical history, historical demography, and gender analysis to uncover both the clerical and popular dimensions of