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Joel F. Harrington. *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany.* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995. xv + 315 pp. $49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-46483-3.

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In this book, Joel Harrington, an Assistant Professor of History at Vanderbilt University, has continued the research which resulted in his 1989 University of Michigan dissertation. Using pamphlet literature and, most importantly, legal sources found in archives in Karlsruhe, Speyer, Koblenz, and Munich, Harrington attempts to reexamine the Reformation by comparing what the men he labels "Reformers" wrote about marriage, fornication, divorce, and similar issues to what the court records reveal concerning the enforcement of related ordinances and strictures. He discovers that in the period from 1555 to 1619, the enforcement of "Reformed" marriage and family ideals in the Electoral Palatinate (officially Calvinist after 1560) and the Imperial City of Speyer (officially Lutheran after 1555) differed little from the enforcement of "Catholic" ideas concerning the same matters in the territories ruled directly by the Prince-Bishop of Speyer. Harrington also concludes that the "Reformers" were most successful when they concentrated on ideological programs which echoed "the same sacral and consensual ideal of marriage that their pre-Reformation predecessors had struggled to promulgate" (p. 278).

These two discoveries lead Harrington to question tentatively the entire concept of "Reformation." Ultimately, he accepts the label as useful for historical inquiry, but only in a scaled-back sense concerning "language and form" (p. 278). Harrington's thesis is useful, particularly to those teaching within the "Renaissance and Reformation" straightjacket (or job description). As is often the case, generalizations concerning early modern Central Europe, which are based to a large degree on mid-sixteenth century pamphlets, become a bit harder to make when the piles of archival evidence are approached. It seems the contemporary administrative structures which the archival sources document reacted slowly to the ideas.

The heart of the book and its richest reading deal with the particular Palatine administrative unit whose judicial records Harrington studied most closely: Amt Bacharach, a unit of one city and three valleys, and home to approximately thirteen hundred people in 1600. Harrington points out that most higher court records from the Electoral Palatinate, including the records from the Elector's marriage and those of the supreme courts, have not survived (p. 281). The challenge which the author faced was thus was to place the rich Bacharach sources into a broader context. He chose to do so by turning to the *Tuebingen Flugschriften* microfiche collection (p. 28, n. 11).

It is here that Harrington comes most into conflict with his sources. Though "Part II: The Social Impact of Sixteenth-Century Marriage Reform" is clearly connected to an evidentiary basis, namely the abovementioned Amt Bacharach records, "Part I: The Nature and Origins of Sixteenth-Century Marriage Reform," is connected to the archival evidence in a more tenuous way. The writings analyzed in this first section of the book seem to focus on the creation of a negative image of disorderly marriage. Harrington comments on the popularity of the *Teufelbuecher*, writings which "focused on Satan as the sworn enemy of the divinely ordained institution of marriage and the family" (p. 78). He then discusses how these books illustrate the theme of "the perversion and inversion of authority relations between husband and wife" which "represented the most recurrent theme of all late sixteenth-century Protestant publications on marriage" (p. 79). His analysis and his ties to the Bacharach evidence, however, stress more abstract theological issues. These issues are then tied to broader ideas concerning marriage–ideas which Harrington points out date from at least the twelfth century. If the pamphlet evidence suggests that writers (and readers?) believed that Satanic influence served to undermine family relations, perhaps Harrington might have been better served by following that lead into his archival evidence. He might have then reappeared with a more startling and informative image of later sixteenth-century German society than one which points out that German reformers built on medieval foundations.

Harrington juxtaposes a flexible and broad definition of "Protestant Reformer" with a narrow identification of "Catholic" as defined by canons and decrees issued by the Council of Trent (1545-63)(pp. 91-93). This is problematic for the period 1555-1619 from which his evidence in Part II is drawn, and out of place for Part I, the larger context. It was only in the later sixteenth and into the seventeenth centuries in the Empire that the confessional boundaries were definitively drawn; the application of Tridentine categories to the sixteenth century in Central Europe is difficult in any case.

The second section of the book is to be lauded. Here, Harrington reveals how the general theories of the "Reformers"–whose pamphlets he studies in Part I–were constrained by contemporary administrative structures. Harrington points out how ideas must be administered and implemented, not simply stated. This is the conflict which Harrington most effectively outlines: between the day-to-day bureaucratic affairs which the archives reveal and the theories which some popular writers expounded. It is to be hoped that more historians will similarly recognize and study the conflicts between these images of an early modern past.

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