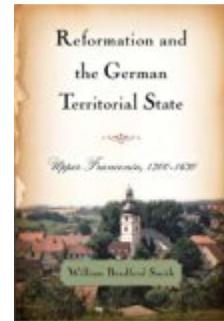


William Bradford Smith. *Reformation and the German Territorial State: Upper Franconia, 1300-1630*. Changing Perspectives on Early Modern Europe. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2008. xii + 280 pp. \$85.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-58046-274-7.

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State-Building in the Eras of Reformatio, Reformation, and Confessionalization

Historians of early modern Germany have devoted considerable attention to understanding the relationship between the Reformation and the process of territorial consolidation, and with good reason. An ambitious theoretical framework that gained prominence in the 1980s, confessionalization, posited a positive correlation between the rise of territorial states and the ability of princes to harness the loyalties of their subjects through an alliance with the emergent so-called confessional churches of the post-Reformation period (Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism). In subsequent decades, scholars have offered a series of detailed regional studies that could act as test studies of the confessionalization thesis. In one sense, William Bradford Smith's new book, *Reformation and the German Territorial State* fits within this genre. Smith's own study examines territorial consolidation in two neighboring states in Upper Franconia, the lands governed by the prince-bishop of Bamberg and the lands of the Franconian Hohenzollern margraviate in Brandenburg-Ansbach-Kulmbach. Until the Reformation, both had been part of the diocese of Bamberg, but by the early seventeenth century the first became strongly marked by the Counter-Reformation while the other became largely Lutheran. This comparative approach offers Smith a chance to address the confessionalization thesis head on.

Smith's book, however, differs from most regional case studies that precede it. Rather than define his time frame in terms of the onset of the Reformation (1517) or

the institutionalization of the territorial Reformation at the imperial level (1555), Smith steps back to consider a much wider chronological context of both territorial consolidation and religious reform. This takes him back as far as the fourteenth century, when territorial states began replacing the manorial system of the Middle Ages, and into the seventeenth century, such that his scope encompasses over three hundred years. What he finds is that, as he writes, "Confessionalization simply marks the last phase of a process that had been going on for at least two centuries before 1555, the nominal starting point for the 'confessional era'" (p. 187). The process that he describes is one in which territorial consolidation and religious reform were interrelated, indeed inseparable, processes. Further, state-building was not imposed upon the villagers, townsfolk, and nobles of Upper Franconia. Rather, it was the process of the interaction of princes and these various social groups as they formed alliances and sought legitimacy from one another relative to the princely court and the new territorial estates (*Landstände*). The result is that German state-building looks far less intentional than the confessionalization thesis once posited, and more the product of negotiation and interaction. State-building also emerges less as a result of the Reformation specifically, and more in context of religious reform more generally (medieval *reformatio*, evangelical reforms, and confessionalism).

Smith challenges two central strands of scholarship. First, for those long-term narratives of the rise of sec-

ular states, Smith demands that we return religion, and the never-ending process of religious reform, to center stage. For specialists in the Reformation and the confessional age his book offers a different and no less useful corrective. Many of the tensions characterizing the early modern period were salient features of the Middle Ages as well. Ignoring the world before 1517, warms Smith, has the potential to misrepresent the nature of the later changes.

Smith draws on extensive evidence that he collected at the Archiv des Erzbistums Bamberg, Staatsarchiv Bamberg, and the Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, as well as a rich collection of printed primary sources. The result is a source base that centers heavily on Bamberg. In addition, several archival references cited in the endnotes do not appear in the bibliography. These errors appear to be minor and do not detract from Smith's solidly researched monograph.

Smith organizes his book roughly chronologically, moving between the imperial, territorial, local, and individual levels. Chapter 1 looks at the emergence of territorial states vis-à-vis free towns, villages, manors, nobles, and the emperor in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. In this story, Smith shows that even parties who might look like victims of expanding territorial states were in fact complicit in their rise. Groups often strengthened their own political position vis-à-vis competitors (towns versus villages, for instance) by associating themselves with a stronger ally (the prince) and thus legitimizing that ally's authority over them. In this process, Smith also identifies the extent to which religious reform was a central organizing principle of political activity, a key theme that he carries through the rest of the book. Chapters 2 and 3 trace this process through the dramatic events of the fifteenth century, first in the prince-bishopric and then in the margraviate.

Chapter 4 takes the story through the early Reformation while chapter 5 takes the story to the Peace of Augsburg. The conflicts of the fifteenth century remained central, but they now overlapped with debate about Martin Luther's doctrines. The Peasants' Revolt flared in Bamberg, largely as a result of the tensions between the bishops, Cathedral chapter, states, nobles, and peasants. With fewer such tensions, the turmoil was more muted in the Hohenzollern margraviate. By the end of these chapters, Smith describes a generally Lutheran margraviate and a largely Catholic prince-bishopric, though both princes still faced serious hurdles with enforcing orthodoxy.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 turn to the confessional era. In chapter 6, Smith argues that, though the language was becoming confessionalized, the core conflicts were the same as those raging two hundred years before. In the margraviate, though a superficial Lutheranism emerged, reforms were limited by local conditions and thus varied greatly. This was a blessing in a way, because the princes faced less turmoil and resistance in the short term, though in the long term it might have actually limited the reach of the princes' authority. Chapter 7 also examines the implementation of clerical and marriage reforms. Though the central point here is not as crisp as it could be, princes in both territories faced resistance as they turned from doctrinal and liturgical reforms to the disciplinary impositions of the Reformation. Chapter 8 focuses on the emergence of an energetic Counter-Reformation in Bamberg. While in the margraviate there was considerable room for local adaptations and compromises, the Counter-Reformation demanded greater uniformity to the Tridentine model.

The last two chapters follow Smith's story into the seventeenth century. Chapter 9 follows religious reform and territorial state-building into the Thirty Years' War, ending with the Swedish invasion in 1632. Smith identifies increasingly polarized and apocalyptic rhetoric of Lutheran and Catholic leaders. In this period, the margrave faced resistance within the Lutheran *Landstände*, whose members began suspecting him of being a Calvinist sympathizer, while the prince-bishop had rendered the estates largely toothless and effectively imposed a top-down Tridentine Catholic Church. Chapter 10 examines the witch trials in early seventeenth-century Bamberg that preceded the Swedes' arrival. The craze, one of the worst in Germany, resulted in nearly six hundred executions, but had no parallel in the neighboring margraviate. Smith explains this by identifying the strength of the Bamberg regime, such that a few enthusiastic princely officials had tremendous impact. At the same time, many local officials were eager to demonstrate their loyalty to church and state, and thus readily identified threats when they saw them. Thus Bamberg experienced what Smith describes as "confessional absolutism," the culmination of the long-term processes of religious reform and state-building. Meanwhile, in the margraviate, local Lutherans (whose power centered in the estates) were more anxious about Calvinist advances in the court than they were about witches. Territorial consolidation there thus depended far more on the *Landstände*.

While some confessionalization literature focuses on more materialistic factors, Smith insists on the critical

importance of religion while still engaging seriously as a social and political historian. Still, there are places where he presents a rather confusing picture. At times, he insists that ordinary men and women understood the theological implications of their actions and warns fellow historians not to “separate ritual from idea, or to emphasize the social-communal aspects of ritual behavior apart from formal theological concepts” (p. 5). Later he posits that resistance to top-down reforms suggests that “local communities demonstrated that they already had a clearly definable confessional identity” (p. 111). It is clear enough from his evidence that many parishioners were ill-inclined to welcome princely-appointed pastors from outside waving their new church ordinances. But it is not as clear from Smith’s evidence that their behavior constitutes proof of confessionalism itself. The author all but admits as much when he describes confessional identity in both the margraviate and the *Hochstift* as “defined in local terms, in the context of the parish ‘community’ ... where noble patrons, communal officials, and parishioners cooperated to build and secure the local ecclesiastical *Gemeinde*” (p. 112). One wonders if “confessional identity” is the correct term to describe a religious sensibility that was locally determined and did not necessarily entail affiliation with a specific trans-local religious community. Smith provides plenty of examples of individuals who cared deeply about religion but did not conform to confessional models of piety (e.g., pp. 136, 145). This was also true at the level of the court. While officials in Bamberg by 1600 had adopted a confessional orientation, in the margraviate religious policies were enacted ad hoc, not dictated by an established body of law that demanded liturgical or theological uniformity but from “a dimly perceived vision of what society should look like” (p. 128). In short, though Smith presents a strong argument that we need to take religious views seriously, it is also clear that we need to be careful before assigning confessional categories to any specific act.

Though Smith’s work marks a significant contribution to the field, it also offers directions for new research. First, these two territories did not constitute contiguous states. They were, rather, a confusing and overlap-

ping patchwork, with many small jurisdictional islands of one territory surrounded by another. The complicated political landscape becomes even more so because Smith’s nomenclature to describe its constituent parts differs from that of other historians who study this region, a reflection of the fact that those terms appear to have been just as fluid in the past. To make matters more confusing, ecclesiastical jurisdictions often did not align with political boundaries. It is worth asking how this situation affected the process of “territorial consolidation.” It was certainly quite easy for religious dissenters to slip across a border to a parish where their faith was the official church. No doubt people maintained economic relationships and family ties across these boundaries as well. The question of territorial integrity raised here suggests that these lands deserve still more attention from researchers. Second, Smith offers tantalizing hints that sensitivity to the role of women could reveal significant conclusions about the gendered nature of religious reform and territorial state-building. He offers several references to women playing a prominent role in resisting the Counter-Reformation in Bamberg. He also identifies women as chief targets of the witch craze, but if there is a connection to the larger narrative here, it was lost on this reader. Future research may reveal that women were more active in shaping political institutions than previously understood. Lastly, a similarly tantalizing opportunity emerges from the fact that Lutherans continued to make up as much as 14 percent of the population in diocesan capital of Bamberg in 1596 and held 40 percent of the seats on city council in 1595. There is surely a story of confessional coexistence here worth uncovering.

In conclusion, William Bradford Smith has offered a valuable contribution to German history in the Middle Ages and the early modern era. His ability to deal at the micro and macro levels, chronologically and geographically, offers significant insights into the nature of political and religious changes in the Holy Roman Empire. While not the last word on the subject, specialists will benefit from the lessons that *Reformation and the German Territorial State* offers.

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