The impulse the confessionalization paradigm gave to local studies of Reformation-era visitations has been significant and definitive, paralleled perhaps only by the urgency Bernd Moeller's *Reichstadt und Reformation* lent to archival research on the city Reformations. As interesting as these works are, readers may be developing a sort of case study fatigue, wondering whether we will learn anything new from reading yet another. Schmidt's published doctoral dissertation adds two specific elements to the usual mix. First, it follows the repeated admonitions of the researchers who defined the confessionalization paradigm to carry out comparative work: Nassau-Dillenburg experienced a Lutheran (1530-1577) and a Calvinist (1577-1691) phase of confessionalization. Moreover, Schmidt uses this case study to address a perceived division between the major parties to the terminological debate over where the impulse toward confessionalization came from and in whose interest it was pursued. Schmidt understands confessionalization as the combination of state-building with the development process of a confession (*Konfessionsbildung*), and suggests that it began in the 1530s in this territory, "with the installation of the first superintendent, Erasmus Sarcerius" (21). The book is logically organized following a chronological structure with a theoretical introduction, a narrative first section on the history of the Reformation in the territory, an empirical chapter on each phase, and a comparative, analytical conclusion.

Nassau-Dillenburg is often considered typical for early modern confessionally-influenced state-building due to its central role in the development of its subjects' military discipline. Yet contemporary sources point to a perceived lack of discipline, and no empirical study has resolved this discrepancy. Thus Schmidt's work follows explicitly on that of Paul Münch to add the factor of normative church discipline to our knowledge of the territory's military discipline.[1] Filling areas Münch left unexamined, Schmidt analyzes church discipline from visitation and synod minutes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He is particularly interested in the question of whether Calvinism bore a special affinity to social disciplining or Max Weber's "innerworldly asceticism." Because (somewhat unusually) the territory's churches elected their pastors from below, the question of whether confessionalization...
succeeded or replaced the later fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century communalist movements is also pertinent to his study. Schmidt’s research reveals that Lutheran and Calvinist visitations were conducted largely in the same manner; indeed, Lutheran practice was heavily based upon its late medieval predecessor (the *Sendgericht*). A quantitative comparison of transgressions suggests that in contrast to scholarly assumptions, no statistically significant tightening of discipline occurred in the Calvinist period. Occasions of discipline related to marriage and sexuality fell by half during the period and were relatively unimportant as an element of all incidents, but under both Lutherans and Calvinists peasants, who were bound by the agricultural cycle, continued periodically to ignore the Sabbath. Schmidt finds very few occasions connected with matters of belief; transgressions related to communion actually fell just slightly in the Calvinist period, but in general, he suggests, one can find a growing interest around the end of the seventeenth century in questions of religious or doctrinal disciplining. A more obvious major transition is the gradually growing interest of the visitors in pursuing temporal transgressions (insults, thievery, violence), which they seem to have done in service of temporal courts. A large part of visitations was occupied with securing church and territorial property; this area was the most heavily "disciplined" of those Schmidt examines. The most meaningful alteration he finds is in education, which was built up steadily under Lutheranism but only really bloomed under Calvinist administration, although the increased presence of schools should be balanced with their frequently dreadful condition. Schmidt's attempt to compare Nassau-Dillenburg with other areas (he chooses Zweibrücken and Meisenheim, studied by Frank Konersmann, and Emden, discussed by Heinz Schilling) is too diffuse to be really telling; the different courses of their Reformations as well as the varying periodization of their operation confuse the issue hopelessly. In the conclusion of the work, Schmidt carefully notes the independent interests that pursued social disciplining in conjunction with each other - the territorial prince, territorial and local church authorities, and local populations. His answer to the dichotomy Heinrich Richard Schmidt diagnosed in confessionalization research before 1997 [2] is that these forces worked together. In the end, local communities also developed notions of appropriate behavior on the part of their clergy that they used to practice a sort of discipline in reverse. Visitations provided social glue and created instances for local participation in government, even if not on a democratic basis - they were an institution many individuals exploited creatively to their own ends. Processes of confessionalization were not dependent on the confessions in terms of their doctrine, but rather on the institutions that were set up by the territorial lord.

This last insight suggests that the conceptual framework Schmidt uses needs further consideration. In particular, it confirms a problem about "confessionalization" as a hermeneutic concept that several researchers, notably Thomas Kaufmann, have commented upon recently: the equation of confessionalization with social disciplining results in the description of a situation where no confessional peculiarities are visible. Presumably most
of the behavior that both Lutheran and Calvinist authorities expected from their subjects was similar. Confession thus is a relatively insignificant factor in Schmidt's analysis. Although he devotes the first section of the book to explaining its complicated development in a territory plagued by the divisive factors of partible inheritance and war, in the end, the confession as a system of belief was meaningless in effect in comparison to the activities of the institutions created to further it, and the disciplining effect of institutions was primarily related to the amount of money and energy a ruler could invest in them. The story Schmidt tells would thus not have been significantly different if the book's subtitle had replaced Konfessionalisierung with Sozialdisziplinierung, and indeed, the secondary literature quoted throughout is primarily focused on studies of confessionalization as social discipline. Critiques from the side of church or cultural historians are not considered.[3] In particular, the term Alltagskultur also used in the title but not carefully defined in the book seems central to understanding the development of social disciplining in Nassau-Dillenburg, because Schmidt's statistics suggest that popular behavior was remarkably consistent over time. Is the answer to the discrepancy between perceptions of strict and lax discipline in the period simply that rulers tried increasingly to discipline their populations, and populations, while trying to conform, simply persisted in actions and customs that had more to do with rural society than with efforts to conform to a confessional identity? Or was this a case of popular "indifference" to confession? Schmidt confirms the initial assertion of the confessionalization theorists that its processes moved largely in parallel - but at a certain level, such parallels imply that confessionalization was not a significant factor in the processes under discussion.

The book thus struggles interpretatively. However, the empirical chapters of this volume shine in their detail and the high quality of description. Even if much of the concrete information will appear familiar to readers of case studies of confessionalization and early modern social and cultural history, this book is extremely well-written. Schmidt employs a measured but entertaining narrative style to keep us interested in the minutiae of village transgressions and denunciations to the visitor. Readers less familiar with such details will appreciate not only his quantitative comparisons but also his solid qualitative contextualization of the actions of villagers and peasants in the law and custom of the period. I particularly enjoyed the discussion of drunken and transgressing clergymen and their treatment by the synod, as well as the clear diagnosis of cases when villagers used the visitation as an instrument to discipline unruly or dangerous elements within their own ranks. The book includes not only a useful tabular comparison of its statistics but two excellent maps that introduce the reader to the complicated political geography of the territory along with a useful chronology.

Notes:


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