David Luebke

Hometown Religion: Regimes of Coexistence in Early Modern Westphalia. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016. Pp. xi + 312. Hb, \$45.

This case study makes a compelling contribution to historical scholarship concerning the “confessionalization” thesis in early modern Europe. Based on sound, extensive archival research, Luebke argues that in the bishopric of Münster in the mid to later sixteenth century, Catholic and Protestant religious authorities routinely failed to shape their flocks into mutually antagonistic societies, communities, or blocks for the sake of bolstering and consolidating state power. In towns, villages, and parishes across the bishopric, accommodation was the norm for Catholics, Lutherans, and later Calvinists, but Anabaptists were beyond the pale, particularly after their takeover of the city of Münster in 1534 and their ensuing defeat. Religious plurality was not accepted on the basis of any higher ideal of tolerance or the primacy of individual conscience, but for the common good of civic peace and traditional privileges of self-governance. Indeed local religious leaders of the officially Catholic bishopric seem to have had a curtailed interest in pursuing a triumph for one confession over another, and the ways in which priests blurred confessional delineations were many.

The central five chapters of the book explore how the people of multi-confessional Münster approached local and imperial religious order, the sacraments, sacred spaces, concubines, books, parochial staffing, and finally burial arrangements. The bishops of Münster relied heavily on local noblemen for governance and tax collection. Eighty-five percent of cathedral canons came from the nobility. Usually assuming the office before the age of twenty, they had minimal education, and displayed limited religious inclination. They dug in when bishops and other church authorities from outside Westphalia wanted to enhance discipline and alter long standing behavioral norms. As the reader might expect, the sacraments of baptism and marriage saw the greatest latitudinarianism. Priests performed these rites for members of all confessions indiscriminately, even for Anabaptists, unless they recused themselves. Religious authorities seemed more concerned about excessive spending and beer consumption at these celebratory rites of passage than orthodoxy. The Eucharist, however, gave rise to many disagreements, and priests tempered them by offering Communion in various ways at different times, by hiring a deacon or vicar of another confession to distribute the other kind of Communion, or by allowing the Catholic part of the congregation to leave for the sermon and the Protestants to depart for the elevation of the Host. According to Luebke, “their accommodations were liturgies of dissimulation” (82).

Some bi-confessional communities attended the same church at varying times or in designated zones. As the sixteenth century drew to a close and confessional attitudes solidified, more people simply walked to the nearest church of their choice. Authorities generally winked at it, unless the act challenged the bishop or endorsed the rebellion in neighboring Dutch territory. Concubinage was the norm from the lower ranks of the clergy to the top, and attempts to separate clergy from concubines and their children usually failed. There is almost no record of the lay people objecting as long as the pastor did his job; they regarded "*pastorissa* [...]" as a conventional wife" (137). Prince-Bishop Ernst of Bavaria, who took over in 1585 and did the most to fight concubinage, availed himself of the practice. The general view seems to have been that the Catholic vow of celibacy "ruled out marriage but did not oblige priests to renounce sex or family life" (153). Burial rites and churchyard interment people regarded "as a civic function available to any burgher, male or female, by virtue of citizenship" (168). In the forty cases Luebke examines in the period 1570–1630, Catholic clerical attempts to prevent Protestants from being buried in the churchyard failed, whether through official interference or obstinate trickery. Here again accommodation was the norm. In one parish, priests officiated at Catholic burials in the morning, while Protestants buried in the afternoons, with no priest present.

In the conclusion, Luebke takes the reader beyond Westphalia into the Holy Roman Empire and explores six modes of religious accommodation present in the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, in spite of the Thirty Years' War and the process of confessionalization. The modes offer the reader an alternative hermeneutic for the evidence presented in the work.

The Jesuits make only a brief appearance when a "foreign" prince of the church, Ernst I of Bavaria, acquired the bishopric in 1585 and brought them in to set up a school, which by the way was a great success, its student numbers rising threefold to 1,100 in four years flat. The local notables in the cathedral chapter objected in vain. Luebke offers no explanation as to how the Jesuit school managed to succeed in the face of Westphalia's bi-confessional tendencies, the order's usual support of Trent's reforms, and the chapter's resistance. Perhaps the Jesuits and their mission might not have been as foreign or unwelcome as this book seems to suggest?

The book is well written in that the introduction lays out the argument clearly, the interior chapters provide a plethora of anecdotal evidence, much of it amusing and thought provoking, and the conclusion restates all aspects of the argument again in the unlikely event that the reader has missed the point after two hundred pages. Luebke's readiness to admit how much we do not know about the motives and interior thoughts of the people who appear in

his study makes him an honest historian. When he speculates, he does so with clear admission.

I recommend the work for undergraduate and graduate students examining the debate about the contours of confessionalization in early modern Europe such as they were. But there is something odd about it. In the introduction Luebke thanks his wife and notes how she “introduced [him] to her native Japan,” in particular to its “radically different, often decidedly instrumental, attitudes” about religion and rituals. He then adds, “Every page of this book bears the stamp of that experience” (xi). If this is the case, he makes not a single reference to Japan throughout the entire work. Perhaps it is just as well, because a methodological defense of connecting sixteenth-century Westphalia to twenty-first-century Japan would have been somewhat of a stretch.

Another interesting omission: nowhere in the book does the author seriously entertain the possibility that the pluralistic, tolerant Christians of sixteenth-century Westphalian towns and parishes were embracing or exercising any particular Christian virtue for its own sake, be it charity, humility, love of neighbor or peace. When they tolerated departures from Catholic, Lutheran, or Calvinist orthodoxy, they did so, Luebke argues, almost invariably for social, dynastic, civic, or emotive purposes. In a work about the lived experience of Christians, Jesus’s message has little merit in the final analysis. Indeed, the author refers to religion as a “disruptive force,” and never as one that actually humbles, mollifies, and pacifies (x). “Peace, friendship, or Christian love,” for Luebke, are “some compensatory norm” (6).

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