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(Review) Rekatholisierung, Konfessionalisierung  
und Ratsregiment: der Prozess des politischen und  
religiösen Wandels in der österreichischen Stadt  
Konstanz, 1548-1637

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Rekatholisierung, Konfessionalisierung und Ratsregiment: Der Prozess des politischen und religiösen Wandels in der österreichischen Stadt Konstanz 1548-1637. by Wolfgang Zimmermann

Review by: Marc R. Forster

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**Rekatholisierung, Konfessionalisierung und Ratsregiment: Der Prozess des politischen und religiösen Wandels in der österreichischen Stadt Konstanz 1548–1637.** Wolfgang Zimmermann. Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1994. 214 pp. n.p.

This important book successfully employs the methods of the city studies of the Reformation to examine the process of confessionalization in the city of Constance. The study is especially valuable because, like R. Po-chia Hsia's *Society and Religion in Münster* (to which Zimmermann is clearly heavily indebted), it is one of the few studies of a Catholic city in the sixteenth century. Zimmermann traces the political and ecclesiastical effects of the Austrian takeover of the Protestant Imperial city of Constance in 1548, the long decline of Protestantism in the city, and the development of Catholic confessional identity in the period leading up to the Thirty Years' War.

One of the clearly stated goals of the book is to demonstrate the interplay of political and religious goals in the policies of the three main powers in Constance: the Austrian regime, the bishops of Constance, and the city council. In the first two chapters Zimmermann carefully traces the programs of these three parties in the decades after the defeat of the Schmalkaldic League, which led Charles V to take away Constance's status as a free city. Direct Austrian rule restricted, but did not eliminate the political options of the city. While hoping to eventually restore political independence, the council worked above all to maintain social peace which meant protecting, as much as possible, Protestant citizens from an aggressive re-catholicization of the city. This policy clashed less than one might suppose with the policies of the Austrian government and the bishops. The Austrians did remove overtly Protestant magistrates and gradually installed a new Catholic elite in the city government while imposing some restrictions on the civil rights of Protestant citizens.

Generally, however, the government in Innsbruck was concerned with the political loyalty of Constance which it only sporadically linked to loyalty of the population to the Catholic Church. The bishops also exhibited little concern with the catholicization of Constance, at least until about 1580. Instead, episcopal policy focused on restoring rights and powers in Constance lost during the Reformation, while simultaneously trying to avoid the political domination of the Habsburgs. Indeed, conflicts between Austrian and episcopal interests throughout the period weakened re-catholicization at every turn. In Constance, as elsewhere, it is difficult to detect the close cooperation of church and state evoked by the concept of confessionalization.

The Counter-Reformation, Tridentine reforms, and confessionalization came slowly, late, and sporadically to Constance. In chapters 3 and 4, Zimmermann shifts the focus of the study from the political maneuvering between state, bishop, and city, to an examination of the decline of Protestantism and the rise of self-conscious, active Catholicism. The long-term success of catholicization cannot be disputed. Relatively isolated from the rest of Protestant Germany and deprived of political power, Constance Protestants declined steadily in numbers and became, by the 1620s and 1630s a true minority group. Using extensive prosopographical research, Zimmermann shows how the Protestant minority increasingly withdrew from public life, lived in its own neighborhood, and separated itself from the Catholic majority. As Protestantism became a minority religion, it became socially less diverse and essentially the confession of the city's economic elite.

As Protestantism declined, Catholic confessionalism and Tridentine reforms gradually gained ground in Constance. After almost forty years of resistance from the city government, a Jesuit house was established in 1604 and the Jesuits took over much of the preaching duties

in the city. In the same period a more energetic episcopal reform took shape, focusing on the reform of the clergy. In the decades after 1600, Constance Catholics founded an influential Marian Congregation (1615) and joined the confraternities of the mendicant orders in increasing numbers. This intense Catholic activity in Constance led, Zimmermann argues, to a closer relationship between most of the citizens and clergy and an increased loyalty to the old Church. A study of the wills of Constance Catholics in the early seventeenth century shows a revival in the traditional forms of Catholic endowments and charity, particularly in favor of donations to local monasteries and churches.

Zimmermann asserts that "public life in the city had changed under the confessionalizing pressure of the state and the bishops." It is clear, however, that this "pressure" included relatively little overt coercion against the Protestants. Instead, the gradual transformation of Constance into a Catholic city occurred as a result of the persuasive powers of Jesuit sermons and catechism classes, and because of the political advantages of allegiance to Catholicism. Furthermore, by the early seventeenth century, Constance was drawn into the wider Catholic world, both as a possession of the House of Austria, and as an economic center of an overwhelmingly Catholic part of Germany. By 1633, when a Swedish siege of the city raised some hope of the reestablishment of Protestantism, the Protestants in Constance were too weak to influence events and the city elite upheld Austrian authority and Catholicism. Yet, as Zimmermann aptly points out, confessionalism was essentially an import into the city. As late as 1635 the city government expressed a kind of "pre-confessional" attitude in informing Austrian authorities that the Protestant minority lived in "peace and unity" (*fridt und ainigkeit*) in Constance, a view that contrasted with the Austrian conception that the Protestants necessarily caused dissension and division.

Zimmermann's study is based on excellent archival research, and is a model of methodological flexibility. The discussion, for example, of day-to-day relations between Catholics and Protestants and his analysis of wills, demonstrates a real attempt to get at the mentality of early modern city dwellers. More traditionally (for a German historian), the book is strongest in discussing the political readjustment in Constance as a result of the Austrian takeover, and in analyzing the decline of Protestantism. As the author recognizes, his analysis of the appeal of Catholicism in the city is not as complete as it might be. He mentions in passing the role of processions and religious services, and of the architectural changes created by the construction of new churches in the development of Catholic culture and identity in the city, yet does not develop this line of inquiry. Furthermore, as with many German studies, the decision to end the story with the Thirty Years' War, abandons the analysis of confessionalization in midstream. It is increasingly apparent, from studies like that of Etienne François on Augsburg (*Die unsichtbare Grenze*), that confessional identities really developed after 1650. Nevertheless this is a valuable book that has much to teach historians of the Reformation, of confessionalization, of German cities, and of German Catholicism.

**Marc R. Forster** ..... **Connecticut College**

**Die Bildwerke des Mittelalters und der Frührenaissance 1200–1565.** Bernhard Decker. Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1994. 188 pp + 18 color plates and 134 b&w. DM 39,—.

The Hällisch-Fränkisches Museum in Schwäbisch Hall (Baden-Württemberg) is not among the better known art museums in Germany. Its collection, which includes many marvelous painted ceremonial shooting targets, is primarily regional in focus. Over the past