

*Bekennen und Bekenntnis im Kontext der Wittenberger Reformation*. Edited by Daniel Gehrt, Johannes Hund, and Stefan Michel. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz, vol. 128. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2019. 313 pp. €59.99 hardcover.

Most of the thirteen essays in this work stem from an interdisciplinary conference in 2015 in the Gotha Research Library. The essays, in German and English, consider various aspects of confessing and confessions in the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. Though focused primarily on the Wittenberg Reformation, its representatives, and its heirs, the essays take into account the wider religious context in Europe. Themes and approaches vary widely. It is clear that the functions of confessing and confessions include not only stating religious beliefs but also forming churches and individuals, serving political aims, and drawing boundaries between groups, among others.

Siegrid Westphal examines how the legal framework within the Holy Roman Empire affected confessional developments and was itself changed by them. While the empire was seen as an arrangement to keep peace and order within its lands—and the Reformation, therefore, as a threat to that peace and order—ways were found to keep or restore the peace that did not involve resolution of the religious questions. Peter Walter's essay reviews the meanings of the word *confessio* among Roman Catholics and the increasing use of *professio* among them on occasions when Protestants used *confessio*. Jan-Andrea Bernhard traces the development of Swiss confessions in the sixteenth century, noting their significance as moving from the local to the transnational.

Questions concerning what “confession” meant for Martin Luther are ably surveyed by Ernst Koch. Looking at writings by Luther from 1528, 1538, and 1544, Koch draws out how Luther saw confessing and confession as taking place both before God and the world. Not simply a statement of personal beliefs, for Luther a confession took up the confession of the early church and carried it forward. While Luther saw the Word of God and the act of confessing as living, active events that create and shape preaching and faith, Melancthon moved toward seeing them more as expressions of truth in the form of doctrines. Christian Peters's essay explores this move, noting the influence of humanism on Melancthon. He also discusses how Melancthon connected confession and the conduct of life.

Daniel Gehrt examines at length the confessions put forward by lay nobility, focusing on their function within inner-Lutheran controversies, imperial politics, and familial dynastic considerations. While these private confessions did not have the same status as publicly recognized confessions, they give witness to the importance of the concept of confession as well as to the theological acuity and ecclesiological concerns of those publishing them. One of the confessors examined is a lay noblewoman, and Gehrt considers how gender functioned to shape content, use, and further influence. Stefan Michel's essay on four local Lutheran confessions in central Germany in the 1550s and 1560s—that is, before the *Formula of Concord* (1577)—reminds the reader of the function of confessional works, particularly as they responded to specific political and theological challenges.

Robert Kolb succinctly traces the path Lutherans took to the consensus manifested in the *Formula of Concord* (1577) and the *Book of Concord* (1580). While noting different approaches to achieving agreement among Luther's followers, one that depended on “the

leadership and control of secular governments; the other on the leadership and control of theologians" (179), Kolb describes the key roles of Jakob Andreae and Martin Chemnitz in establishing concord. As an example of how the concordists sought to reconcile varying views, he describes the development of their views on predestination and their relationship to the correct distinction of law and Gospel. Inge Mager examines the reception of the two Kingdoms concept in Lutheran orthodoxy up to Johann Gerhard. She notes how this teaching was used in the sixteenth century to try to curb secular power over the church, but Johann Gerhard moved away from the concept, choosing instead to elucidate the functions of the three estates. Mager sees a loss of theological substance in this move.

Several essays on various aspects of reception take this volume into territory not usually addressed by books on Lutheran confessional writings. Christian Witt considers eighteenth-century views of these writings. While some criticized the confessional writings for setting up needless barriers between the confessions, others such as Johann Semler sought to understand and value them by placing them in their historical context. These latter saw themselves as finding ways for the confessional writings to continue to speak to church life. Werner Klän's essay on the confessional renaissance of the nineteenth century surveys the various directions of that renaissance and devotes particular attention to how it helped shape the independent Lutheran churches of Germany. This essay may be of particular interest to American readers as the differences in confessional understanding influenced German immigrants to America and continue to influence Lutherans in North America today.

Maria Lucia Weigel introduces the topic of confessing and confessions in artistic portrayals. The first part, considering portrayals of Luther as confessor, moves from sixteenth-century woodcuts to two famous nineteenth-century Luther statues by Schadow in Wittenberg and Rietschel in Worms. The second part considers art works with larger confessional themes, for example, the Cranach portrayal of damnation and redemption (1529) and seventeenth-century paintings portraying the reading of the Augsburg Confession and the practice of Protestant worship. Art portraying various forms of confessing itself became a part of the act of confessing.

Martin Ohst traces the legal and societal status and implications of confessions from the Middle Ages to Schleiermacher. While Schleiermacher's views would seem antithetical to any sort of confessionalism, Schleiermacher acknowledged the importance of the Reformation confessions as the starting point for all Protestants.

Dipping into a variety of issues, this is a thought-provoking survey of how confessing, the confessional writings, and particular aspects of those writings have functioned over the centuries to shape churches, individuals, and civil societies.

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doi:10.1017/S0009640720000980

***Convent Autobiography: Early Modern English Nuns in Exile.* By Victoria Van Hying. British Academy Monographs. Oxford: Oxford University Press. xxviii + 416 pp. \$110.00 cloth.**

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