THE WAGES OF WEAKNESS

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY AUSTRIA

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In medieval Western Europe, religion and politics were deeply intertwined. Roman-Catholicism gradually established itself as the sole legitimate expression of metaphysical thought. The remaining pagan hold-outs in northern and eastern Europe were converted by force, unless their political elites had sensed early enough that religious adaptation formed the only alternative to political subjugation. Polities that were dominated by non-Christians, such as the Islamic entities of the Iberian peninsula, were by definition not a part of the Western community, whose preferred self-designation was Christendom; they could, however, be seen as *terrae irredentae* to be liberated. Yet, also Christian heterodoxy was successfully suppressed or marginalized, and non-Christian minorities such as Jews could be tolerated as guests, but not as integral parts of society. Notwithstanding social and regional idiosyncrasies, Western Europe has never been more cohesive in public religious expression.[1]

At the same time, the Catholic Church exercised great influence on the political life of Western European societies. The church legitimized the Christian ruler, who in turn defined himself as defender of church and faith. Although this symbiotic interdependence was not without conflict and subject to continual adaptation, it remained a centerpiece of Western society and its power structure. As a consequence, any fundamental challenge to the religious monopoly of the Catholic Church could not but impact the very nature of European society.

Even if the Protestant Reformation disrupted this medieval unity of church and state, religion and politics remained strongly connected.[2] Monarchs and dynasties became of paramount significance for the ultimate success or failure of Protestant movements. In the southern outskirts of the continent, neither the monarchy nor the broader populace were appreciably touched by the new reli-

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1 For an introduction to late-medieval Christianity, see Rapp: *L'Église*; Swanson: *Religion and Devotion*, and Bossy: *Christianity in the West*. The regional diversity of observance can be seen in such works as Duffy: *The Stripping of the Altars*.

2 For recent overviews of the reformation era, see Cameron: *The European Reformation*; Tracy: *Europe's Reformations*; MacCullough: *Reformation*; and Lindberg: *The European Reformations*.

gious currents.[3] As the heartland of Catholicism and seat of its spiritual leader, who at the same time ruled his own not insignificant political entity, Italy did not offer fertile ground for religious upheaval. Spain and Portugal were far removed, both geographically and culturally, from the Central European cradles of the Reformation. Moreover, their political history had been shaped by protracted struggle with Islam, in which they relied on support from the papacy and Catholic allies. As was the case among the Croats along another frontier of western Christianity, Catholicism had entrenched itself in public imagery and identity.[4] The few dissenting voices were easily silenced through traditional means.

In the very north of Europe, by contrast, rulers and subjects converged on the inverse resolution. The monarchs proved decisive for the conversion of Sweden, Denmark and England to Protestant polities, but they did not act in isolation. Reformist ideas had already penetrated these countries prior to royal intervention. Not even in England, whose religious reorientation under Henry VIII in the 1530s most openly bore the mark of monarchic self-interest, did the king impose the new creed on a reluctant population. In fact, the monarch's theological standpoint remained ambiguous, and it was parliament that implemented and expanded the shift to Protestantism, which it also defended against subsequent attempts at Catholic restoration.[5] In Sweden, and even more so in Denmark, Luther's ideas had arrived via German pastors and merchants as well as Scandinavian students returning from Central European universities, long before the local kings saw it in their own best interest to back this development. There was resistance, to be sure, not only in segments of the church hierarchy, but also in more remote pockets of rural Sweden and especially in Danish-ruled Norway and Iceland. But this resistance did not articulate a popular mass rejection of the religious transformation. In northern Europe, the monarchs tended to attach themselves to a movement that was spreading rapidly in the general public, and even though official support was instrumental in crushing Catholic hold-outs, it was not the government that implanted the Reformation in the bulk of the populace.[6]

Whereas religious homogeneity and denominational congruence between ruler and ruled was largely retained on the northern and southern edges of West-

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3   For an introduction to the diverse experiences of European reform movements, see Hsia (ed.): *A Companion to the Reformation World*.

4   For the Croatian experience, see Bahlcke: 'Außenpolitik', 193-209.

5   The literature on the English Reformation is far too extensive to be presented in detail here. For an introduction to major contributions in the second half of the twentieth century, see Collinson: 'The English Reformation', 336-360. Among important modern interpretations of different actors and influences were Dickens: *The English Reformation*; Elton: *Reform and Reformation*; Haigh: *English Reformations*; Lehmberg: *The Reformation Parliament*; Starkey: *Henry VIII*; MacCullough: *The Later Reformation*; and idem: *Thomas Cranmer*.

6   For introductions to the history of the Protestant Reformation in Scandinavia, see Grell (ed.): *Scandinavian Reformation*; Larson: *Reforming*; and Brohed, Ingmar (ed.): *Reformationens konsolidering*.

ern Christianity, albeit in diametrically opposed forms, the confessional differentiation proceeded more contentiously in the core of the continent. Although similar developments occurred in other countries, notably in France, where a sizable Calvinist minority long resisted the Catholic monarchy, the archetypical expression of denominational division was found in the Holy Roman Empire and especially its Habsburg patrimony. It is there one repeatedly encounters a divergence of popular and dynastic interests and an interweaving of religious and political disagreement. The nature of this conflictual confluence of matters worldly and spiritual will be examined in this article.

REFORM ASCENDANT:
THE SPREAD OF LUTHERANISM IN THE ALPINE HEREDITARY LANDS

When the new religious currents stirred up the Holy Roman Empire in the early sixteenth century, they quickly transgressed territorial borders. More so than in subsequently thoroughly Protestantized countries such as Sweden, the Reformation in Germany started as a genuine popular movement. After all, Luther taught, preached, and published in Germany and – just as importantly – the German language. The fresh emphasis on the vernacular, which amplified the calls for religious change, gave the Reformation a more immediate impact in its cultural sphere of origin. Aided by the recently established art of printing, the arguments of Luther and his followers were distributed rapidly throughout Central Europe. With their higher rates of literacy, urban areas proved especially susceptible, and none more so than the free imperial cities, which had no territorial prince to contend with.

Within few years, the impact of the reform movement had reached the Habsburg domains, much to the dismay of the dynasty. The Catholic affiliation of the House of Habsburg was beyond doubt, even if individual members may have held more complex views.[7] This affiliation was reinforced by the historical ties between pope and emperor and the encompassing cooperation with the Spanish branch of the family, in whose core domains Catholicism not only reigned supreme, but had during the *reconquista* developed into a virtual ideology of state. But the social and cultural conditions that advanced the spread of Luther's teachings throughout the empire were no different in the emperor's patrimonial lands. In the German-speaking provinces, the linguistic commonalities provided immediate access to the ubiquitous printed sermons and pamphlets that promoted the reformist message. By 1519, approximately 250,000 copies of Luther's writings had been distributed throughout Europe; by 1525, this number had exploded to 1.7 million.[8] Even though the Habsburg authorities soon outlawed the printing and distributing of reformist publications, it proved impossible to prevent their continued import. Before long, the struggle between different scriptural inter-

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7   See Bibl: 'Zur Frage', 289-425.
8   Leeb: 'Der Streit', 160, 161.

pretations had triggered a propagandistic effort in which the printing industry demonstrated its full potential. Reformation and Counterreformation witnessed early expressions of a comprehensive struggle for control of the societal debate, of a contest for public opinion based on both the printed and the spoken word.

At a general diet in 1526, the Austrian estates moved for the toleration of Lutheran principles.[9] Although this demand remained unheeded, Lutheranism continued to proliferate in the region. It would be deceptive, therefore, to project the modern-day distribution of Catholicism and Protestantism in Central Europe back into the sixteenth century. What did begin to take root, however, was a division between territories with Catholic and territories with Protestant rulers. Considering that the compromise reached in Augsburg in 1555 invested the territorial rulers with the authority to determine the religious practice of their subjects, the stalwart Catholicism of the Habsburgs was ominous for the future of Protestantism in Austria.

During the late 1500s and early 1600s, in part even beyond, the Alpine and Danubian provinces under Habsburg rule were divided among different branches of the family. The archduchy of Austria (below and above the Enns) comprised modern day Lower and Upper Austria, while Styria, Carinthia and Carniola – together with Gorizia and parts of the Adriatic littoral – formed an entity called Inner Austria or Austria Interior, with Graz as its capital. Finally, the later provinces of Tyrol and Vorarlberg were ruled from Innsbruck, together with the old Habsburg domains in southwestern Germany; they were known as Tyrol and the *Vorlande*, or Austria Anterior.

These subdivisions also surfaced in the region's religious history. After its predominantly urban Lutheranism and comparatively strong Anabaptist movement had been suppressed, Tyrol and much of the remainder of Austria Anterior developed into a Catholic confessional territory reminiscent of Bavaria.[10] In noticeable contrast to their Austrian peers, the nobles of Tyrol never turned into a vanguard of Protestantism. Among possible explanations for this divergence, one may cite the area's geographical, political, and cultural closeness to both Bavaria and the Italian-speaking south, where reformist ideas failed to establish a lasting foothold. In general, the nobility in the Tyrolean territories was politically weak and overshadowed by the monarch; in the area that developed into modern-day Vorarlberg, it did not even form an estate of its own.[11] The violence associated with the peasant uprising of 1525, combined with the prevalence of Anabaptism and its more radical challenge to the existing social order, further reinforced the identification of Tyrolean elites with the dynasty's uncompromising denomina-

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9   See Pörtner: *The Counter-Reformation*, 21.

10 For a brief introduction to the Tyrolean experience during the confessional age, see Schindling and Ziegler (eds.): *Die Territorien des Reichs*, 87-101.

11 See Bruckmüller, Stradal, and Mitterauer: *Herrschaftsstruktur*, 4f., 179-203.

tional policy. The confessional offensive that also reached Austria Anterior in the second half of the sixteenth century could therefore focus most of its attention on the consolidation of popular piety and its adaptation to tridentine doctrine rather than on the subjugation and conversion of Protestant recalcitrants.

In the remaining subdivisions of the Habsburgs' Alpine patrimony, however, Protestantism became the majority religion, even if exact numbers are difficult to ascertain and the initial lack of a Protestant church structure delayed a clear-cut denominational break.[12] A sizeable segment of the population held interme-diary or ambivalent religious views, which bridged the theological divide. With the gradual formation of parallel ecclesiastical spheres, however, this group was shrinking.

The archduchy of Austria formed cradle and core of the hereditary lands, which gave it special significance and visibility for the dynasty. All the more no-table is the breakthrough of Protestantism in large parts of the territory. Due to the sharp edicts and prohibitions against heterodoxy, religious dissenters pro-ceeded cautiously, which made the passage from reformist Catholicism to ex-plicit Protestantism almost imperceptible. Since it occurred under the roof of the established church, doctrinal differentiation proved difficult to control, un-like the clear break with ecclesial institutions undertaken by the Anabaptists. Even if pastors openly or implicitly preached Lutheran doctrine, they formally re-mained within the existing church structure and subordinate to the sitting Cath-olic bishop. Most of them continued to define themselves as proponents of the one and Catholic church, albeit in its true and unadulterated form; at the same time, many pretridentine Catholics adopted individual symbols of reform as well. The absence of separate ecclesial structures with firm hierarchies and ordinances al-lowed broad doctrinal diversity among self-declared followers of the new creed. The resulting openness constituted both a strength and a weakness. On the one hand, it provided ample room for individual identification with the reform move-ment. On the other, it presaged the internal conflicts and fissures that weakened Austrian Protestantism in later decades, not least of all between doctrinal mod-erates and the more fundamentalist followers of Matthias Flacius.[13]

By the middle of the century, a dissimilation into separate confessional com-munities was well on its way. At territorial diets, demands to hear the pure gospel gave way to demands to legalize the Augsburg Confession.[14] In this process, most

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12 Almost all Protestants in the Austrian lands were Lutherans, so that both terms can largely be used interchangeably in this article. For an examination of the few representatives of Austrian Calvinism and their role in Protestant politics, see also Thaler: 'Conservative Revolutionary', 544-564.

13 For the Istrian-born theologian Matthias Flacius, see Olson: *Matthias Flacius*, and Preger: *Matthias Flacius*. For Flacian tendencies in Lower Austria, see Reingrabner: 'Zur Geschichte', 265-301.

14 See Reingrabner: 'Die kirchlichen Verhältnisse', 14.

nobles and municipalities of the archduchy chose Lutheranism, and at least half of the local parishes were clearly identifiable with the new creed.[15] This Protestant culture also expressed itself in well-reputed educational institutions, such as the grammar schools in Lower Austrian Horn and Loosdorf and the estates school in Linz. Conditions in Upper Austria proved especially conducive to religious reform, since the region strove to secure its independent territorial status. With an autonomous governor and diet, also geographically removed from the court in Vienna, the territory could chart its political and religious course more independently from the dynasty than the Lower Austrian heartland. In addition, the territorial estates were able to exploit the latent rivalry between the bishop of Passau, more often than not beholden to the Wittelsbach dukes in Munich, and the Habsburg administration. By the middle of the sixteenth century, Upper Austria had become so predominantly Lutheran that the local prelates appealed to Ferdinand to permit the utraquist communion and lift the celibate so as not to lose the remaining Catholic hold-outs in clergy and populace.[16]

In the German-speaking regions of Inner Austria, religious conditions resembled those in the archduchy. Whereas the Latin and Slavic districts in the south remained largely Catholic, much of Styria and Carinthia turned Lutheran. This was especially pronounced among nobles and burghers, but also among the German-speaking peasants of Carinthia and Upper Styria, even if the Reformation made some inroads among Slavophones as well.[17] Foreign Catholics repeatedly expressed their dismay at the religious conditions in these territories. At his arrival in Graz in 1580, the papal nuncio Germanico Malaspina could only name five Catholic aristocrats in the duchies of Inner Austria.[18] As late as 1604, Bishop Martin Brenner of Seckau reported that only three of Klagenfurt's permanent citizens adhered to Catholicism.[19] Even though the specifics of these alarmist assessments are open to question, the basic outlines are confirmed by other indicators, not least of all by the subsequent course of recatholization. One has to remember, however, that denominational boundaries formed in a gradual manner. The duality of Catholic ruler and predominantly Protestant estates delayed the institutionalization of religious heterodoxy. One cannot talk of a distinct Lutheran Church

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15 Schindling and Ziegler (eds.): *Die Territorien des Reichs*, vol. 1, 124, 126f.

16 Haider: *Geschichte Oberösterreichs*, 168, 169.

17 Leeb: 'Der Streit', 211; Metzler-Andelberg: *Kirche in der Steiermark*, 125; and Pörtner: *The Counter-Reformation*, 164f. For the history of a Slovenian-speaking Protestant congregation in Carinthia, see Sakrausky: *Agoritschach*. For a brief introduction to Slovenian Protestantism in Carinthia in English, see also Priestly: 'Slovene Protestants', 177-189; the volume also contains other pertinent essays on the history of Protestantism among southern Slavs.

18 Pörtner: *The Counter-Reformation*, 35.

19 Dedic: 'Der Kärntner Protestantismus', 72.

in Carinthia until 1566; in Styria, its establishment did not antedate the religious concessions of 1572 and 1578.

Even then, this institutionalization commenced on a minimalist level. In order to refute incriminations of sectarianism, the Carinthian estates commissioned a statement of belief, which 26 Lutheran pastors submitted in 1566. Since the Peace of Augsburg had restricted toleration to adherents of the Augustana, the *Confessio Carinthica* emphasized the Lutheran orthodoxy of Protestant ecclesial life in Carinthia.[20] It countered accusations of sowing discord among the faithful by defining Lutheranism as an expression of the ancient apostolic and truly catholic creed. Far from being apostates, Protestants were espousing the gospel in its original form.[21] Lutheran assemblies also began to develop a provincial superstructure, which was cemented further through the Inner Austrian church and school ordinance of 1578. This ecclesial constitution homogenized doctrine as well as ritual and devised institutional structures and procedures, including regulations for the selection and appointment of clergy. To supervise ecclesiastic life, the ordinance instituted provincial church ministries, but also the diets retained considerable influence.

Ecclesial consolidation was only possible because Austrian Protestants had secured a judicial basis for exercising their faith. At no other time during the century did conditions seem so conducive. Ferdinand I was to be succeeded by his son Maximilian in the Holy Roman Empire and the archduchy, albeit not in Inner Austria and Tyrol, which were to go to his brothers Charles and Ferdinand, respectively.[22] As a rare exception among leading Habsburgs, Maximilian II was rumored to harbor Lutheran sympathies.[23] He engaged in reformist conduct, such as the taking of the Eucharist in both kinds. He also cultivated good relations with Protestant princes in the empire, especially the new elector Moritz of Saxony. His court chaplain Johann Pfauser regularly criticized the church and moved from Catholic irenicism to a more openly Lutheran position after Ferdinand had forced his resignation in 1560.[24]

The entire dynasty was worried. The Spanish relatives kept a close eye on the heir apparent and repeatedly intervened in Vienna. Ferdinand himself may have become less uncompromising than his Iberian cousins, but he, too, was convinced that the established faith had served the Habsburgs well. Faced with intense pressure to conform to Catholic orthodoxy, Maximilian at some point contemplated

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20 The text of the *Confessio Carinthica* is printed in Barton and Makkai (eds.): *Ostmitteleuropas Bekenntnisschriften,* vol. 3:1, *1564-1576*, 39-52.

21 Ibid., 45.

22 For Maximilian II, see Fichtner: *Emperor Maximilian II*; Edelmayer and Kohler (eds.): *Kaiser Maximilian II*; as well as Edel: *Der Kaiser und Kurpfalz*.

23 For a detailed investigation of Maximilian's religious position, see Bibl: 'Zur Frage', 289-425.

24 For Pfauser, see *Neue deutsche Biographie,* s.v. 'Johann Sebastian Pfauser.'

taking refuge with Protestant princes, but the latter proved so unreceptive to a step of this magnitude that the seriousness of the plan was not put to the test.[25] In the end, Maximilian became disillusioned with the internal disunity of German Protestantism and attentive to the constraints of imperial rulership. To assuage his father, he took an oath to remain within the Catholic Church in 1562.[26] By the time he acceded to the imperial throne two years later, any inclination toward outright conversion had passed, even if he continued to question Catholic dogma and criticize the curia's inflexibility toward reform.

During the first diet of Maximilian's regency in 1564, the Protestant estates of Lower Austria invoked his father's intention to resolve the religious conflict and requested toleration of the pure and true religion of the Augsburg Confession.[27] Maximilian responded in the evasive manner of his predecessor, triggering an increasingly irritated exchange that continued for several years. By 1568, however, the emperor had begun to reconsider his stance. The war against the Turks proceeded costly and ineffectually, and the imperial court had amassed substantial debts. In the Netherlands, the coercive confessional policies of his cousin Philip had provoked open rebellion, whereas France and Poland-Lithuania were experimenting with limited tolerance for religious dissenters. Maximilian's relationship with Spain and the curia was strained, as these two most rigid proponents of Catholic orthodoxy proved more generous with uninvited advice and admonitions than with financial and military assistance.

The Protestant estates grasped the opportunity. They declared their willingness to assume Maximilian's debts to the amount of 2.5 million florins, but indicated that they expected palpable religious concessions in turn. In view of his financial calamities and the increasing elusiveness of religious rapprochement, Maximilian granted the landed aristocrats of the archduchy the freedom to practice Lutheranism on their estates and in the towns and villages subject to them.[28] In the wording of the assurance of 1571, which confirmed and specified the concessions, members of the noble estates were entitled to use the Augsburg Confession "for themselves and their households on their estates and in their palaces and houses (but not inside our own cities and towns); in the countryside and in their patrimonial churches, for their subjects as well".[29] This marked a breakthrough in the legal status of Austrian Lutherans, but it did not establish their unrestricted freedom of worship. Not only were there enough qualifications and imprecisions to leave ample room for conflicting interpretation. In a step that

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25 Fichtner: *Emperor Maximilian II*, 42.

26 Ibid., 44.

27 For the prehistory of the religious concession of 1568, see Bibl: 'Die Vorgeschichte', 400-431.

28 There were separate but corresponding decrees for the estates of Lower and Upper Austria. The latter had to provide a substantial financial contribution as well.

29 Bibl: 'Die Vorgeschichte',429.

proved ominous for the long-time preservation of religious privileges, Maximilian had already separated the urban curia from the other estates in 1566.[30] Thus, the territorial towns and market towns of Lower Austria were not covered by the privileges granted to the nobles and subsequently served as convenient launching grounds of recatholization.

In Inner Austria, legalization encountered even more resistance. Archduke Charles II was a committed Catholic who personally opposed concessions to religious heterodoxy; his marriage to a Wittelsbach princess linked him to the Bavarian heartland of Catholic restoration. Yet Charles, too, suffered from a chronic shortness of funds, which only the estates could remedy. The latter had closely followed the historic developments in the archduchy; it was no coincidence that matters came to a head in Graz shortly after Maximilian's assurance of 1571. When the archduke invoked his prerogatives as delineated in the Peace of Augsburg, the Inner Austrian estates pointedly cited the concessions in the archduchy. If the emperor had granted the nobles of Upper and Lower Austria the right to practice Lutheranism, they could see no reason why they themselves needed to be treated differently.[31] Faced with a massive opposition, Charles had to relent and make comparable concessions to the nobles of his domains in what came to be known as the Pacification of Graz.

Based on their improved legal status, the estates started to establish a separate Lutheran church structure. And since the archduke's financial liabilities quickly increased again, he had to confirm and slightly expand his concessions at the diet of 1578.[32] During this territorial assembly in the Styrian city of Bruck, the archduke not only assured the estates that they and their subjects would not be prevented from exercising their Lutheran faith on their patrimonial lands, but that he had no intention of expelling Lutheran preachers and schools from the provincial capitals of Graz, Klagenfurt and Ljubljana or the city of Judenburg.[33] Charles refused to confirm his declaration in writing, however, and before long divergent versions of its content were in circulation. As in Lower Austria, the disagreements primarily concerned the status of urban communities that lay directly under the monarch. In many of them, a majority of the inhabitants subscribed to the new creed, but their legal position remained vulnerable. In the end, content and meaning of the pacification came to be determined more by the respective distribution of power than by its original wording.

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30 Maximilian prohibited the urban curia from acting in unison with the other estates by defining the territorial towns and market towns as regalian property.

31 Loserth: *Reformation und Gegenreformation*, 183f.

32 For a closer examination of the Pacification of Bruck and its prehistory, see Loserth: 'Die steirische Religionspazifikation', 1-57.

33 Loserth: 'Die steirische Religionspazifikation', 23. The assurance used the then prevailing German designation Laibach for the capital of Carniola.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK:
CATHOLIC REFORM AND COUNTERREFORMATION IN AUSTRIA

The Lutheran ecclesiastical structure in the Alpine hereditary lands was formalized at a time when its Catholic equivalent had recovered and laid the foundations for a counteroffensive. In the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Church faced a profound challenge, which it met in different ways. In the beginning, the curia tried to squelch dissent with the instruments historically applied against heretics. Lacking the power to directly enforce its prescriptions, it depended on secular rulers. In this respect, however, the religious reform movement of the 1500s differed from its predecessors, since important princes refused to execute papal bulls against the new teachings and their protagonists. A troubled church hierarchy watched with dismay as a growing number of monarchs came out in support of the religious rebellion.

Yet outright rejection of the reformers was not the only course available. Within the clergy, too, there was an awareness of spiritual and structural deficits. The need for ecclesial reform was not only raised from the outside, but had many champions within the church. In fact, the founding fathers of Protestantism originated within the Catholic Church and initially saw it as their mission to reform their established spiritual home. Long after the deep chasm between Protestant reformers and Rome had become unmistakable, there were still those who hoped that moderate concessions, such as the dispensing of communion in both kinds, could facilitate the eventual reintegration of break-away forces into the Catholic Church. Emperor Charles V, who had a compelling personal interest in pacifying the emergent conflict within his realm, promoted these efforts, which were also supported by such influential clerics as the Venetian-born cardinal Gasparo Contarini.[34]

In the end, the Catholic leadership chose a different path. At the Council of Trent, it promoted doctrinal purity and refused to compromise with the reform movements.[35] When it was first conceived, the great council of the church reflected a different ambition. It was Charles V who hoped that this assembly could assuage the calls for a national council that were sounding throughout Germany and resolve the religious schism that had torn western Christianity apart. Therefore, the council was to be held on imperial soil and strive for reconciliation within a reformed Catholic Church. By the time it finally opened in 1545, however, much of the impetus for rapprochement had faded. Protestants were no longer interested in negotiating under the leadership of the pope, and the curia had given up any hope for an amicable return of the heretics to the fold. Even though the council convened within the borders of the Holy Roman Empire, it was dominated

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34 For Contarini, see Gleason: *Gasparo Contarini*.

35 The classic study of the Council of Trent continues to be Jedin: *Geschichte des Konzils von Trient*.

by clerics from Italy and southern Europe. Its agenda was set by the curia, which called for a reaffirmation of Catholic doctrine and its demarcation from heresy. Protestantism was to be confronted head-on by a reinvigorated Catholicism rather than appeased through concessions. At the same time, the council fathers strengthened church discipline and the centralizing tendencies of the Holy See.

Thus, the Council of Trent became an important milestone in the organizing of a Catholic countermovement against the Protestant Reformation. Another crucial impulse emanated from a new breed of activist and highly disciplined orders, exemplified most visibly by the Society of Jesus.[36] These monastic congregations were not established primarily to combat heresy, and in countries without a significant Protestant presence, they pursued and reinvigorated traditional pastoral and charitable activities. In central and northern Europe, however, the new orders formed spearheads of Catholic reassertion vis-à-vis religious dissenters. Capuchins provided spiritual support to Catholics under Protestant rule, not least among them the Irish. Jesuits established successful schools, in which the children of not always freely converted burghers and noblemen were reintegrated into the Catholic sphere, and established academies that trained missionaries for the reconverting of apostate populations all the way to Scandinavia.[37] Thousands of graduates from Jesuit institutions of learning subsequently staffed the higher echelons of the church hierarchy, successfully implanting the spirit of tridentine Catholicism throughout Europe. At the same time, many members of the society also served the papacy in their capacity as princely confessors and confidants, with unique access to the hearts and minds of increasingly absolutist rulers.

The latter half of the sixteenth century has therefore been widely designated as the onset of a counterreformation. In its broader meaning, the term denotes Catholic efforts to revitalize their own church and reverse the progress of Protestantism. As such, it was coined in the late 1700s and introduced into the historical debate during the subsequent century to characterize the period that followed the initial advance of reformist thought. Its semantic connotation as a mere reaction to external challenges as well as its widespread association with the suppression of dissent induced a number of Catholic scholars to take exception to the wholesale subsumption of a historical era under this term, however. They considered it more appropriate to divide the phenomenon into two complementary aspects. There existed an external and political effort, which was typically executed in cooperation with local governments. For this aspect, the term Counterreformation has also been accepted by decidedly Catholic interpreters, even if some of them originally preferred the wording of Catholic restoration. In their

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36 For the new religious orders of the period, see DeMolen (ed.): *Religious Orders*. For the origins of the Society of Jesus, see O'Malley: *The First Jesuits*. For a history of the Jesuits in the German-speaking countries, see Duhr: *Geschichte der Jesuiten*.

37 See, for example, Garstein: *Rome and the Counter-Reformation*.

eyes, however, the internal process of Catholic reform was more important for understanding the eventual consolidation of the Church.[38]

Both the Catholic Church and its Protestant counterparts defined their spiritual essence ever more sharply and demarcated themselves from the denominational Other. The ensuing formalization of creeds and doctrines finalized the division of western Christianity and is also known as the process of confessionalization. This term was introduced into the debate by the German historians Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhard, building on Ernst Walter Zeeden's postwar concept of confession-building.[39] Whereas Zeeden primarily strove to transcend the conceptual juxtaposition of Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counterreformation by highlighting the similarities of religious reorientation in early modern Europe, his successors broadened the comparative approach in line with a renewed German focus on social history, as expressed in the Bielefeld school and its history of society. Schilling diagnosed a continued integration of religion and politics during the confessional period. Thus, matters of church were at the same time matters of state, and the concept of confessionalization tried to join religious and societal dimensions.[40] The interpenetration of these spheres surfaced most visibly in the parallel development of confessional churches and early modern states, with confessionalization regularly serving as a precondition for the closer integration of European polities.[41] The theoretical linkage was provided by Gerhard Oestreich's concept of social discipline, in which the German historian described the absolutist state's attempt to govern all aspects of human life.[42] Social control expressed itself, *inter alia*, in an increased bureaucratization and militarization of society, as well as in more invasive legal and behavioral codes, which subjected formerly private aspects of life to public regulation. Since contemporary confessional bodies provided many of the guidelines and legitimizations of this societal transformation, in which they also participated as agents of supervision and enforcement, Wolfgang Reinhard defined confessionalization as the

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38 For an introduction to the Counterreformation and its extensive literature, one may consult Lutz: *Reformation*; Luebke (ed.): *The Counter-Reformation*; Hsia: *The World of Catholic Renewal*; and Bireley: *The Refashioning of Catholicism*. For the terminological development, see also Elkan: 'Entstehung und Entwicklung', 473-493; and Jedin: *Katholische Reform*. For a collection of significant primary sources, see also Luttenberger: *Katholische Reform*.

39 See Zeeden: *Die Entstehung der Konfessionen*; Reinhard: 'Zwang zur Konfessionalisierung?', 257-277; Schilling: 'Die Konfessionalisierung',1-45. See also Reinhard and Heinz Schilling (eds.): *Katholische Konfessionalisierung*, and Schmidt: *Konfessionalisierung*.

40 Schilling: *Religion, Political Culture*, 208.

41 Schilling: *Religion, Political Culture*, 209. In very similar words, Wolfgang Reinhard described confessionalization as a remarkably regularly occurring early phase of modern European state-building. See Reinhard: 'Zwang zur Konfessionalisierung', 257.

42 Oestreich: 'Strukturprobleme', 329-347.

first step in Oestreich's process of social disciplining.[43] In a symbiotic relationship, the confessional churches drew on the resources of the government to implement their religious standardization, which in turn provided a crucial foundation of political centralization and state-building. Regardless of their doctrinal intent, Catholic restoration as well as Lutheran and Calvinist confession-building also functioned as important agents of modernization.

As the concepts of Counterreformation and Catholic reform before, the paradigm of confessionalization also encountered criticism. Next to objections to its periodization and its implicit leveling of confessional differences, there were several challenges to its fundamental approach.[44] Winfried Schulze doubted the preeminence of confessional cultures and emphasized the rise of religious tolerance and coexistence, which prepared the way for the subsequent secularization of society.[45] Other scholars pointed to the success of state-building in multidenominational and religiously tolerant polities such as the Netherlands, thereby questioning the linkage of confession- and state-building, and to the feasibility of confessionalization from below.[46] In general, the most severe criticism of confessionalization as an explanatory concept was directed at the central role it seemed to assign to the state. Based on his research on church discipline in the Reformed Swiss canton of Berne, Heinrich Richard Schmidt ascribed the success of social control not so much to governmental institutions, but to local communities.[47] Schmidt saw the fatal flaw of the paradigm in the superimposition of Oestreich's model of social-disciplining, specifically developed for matters of politics, onto Zeeden's focus on ecclesial bodies. Rather than introducing a broader social history approach to the study of early modern religious cultures, the concept of confessionalization had therefore reintroduced a state-centered history from above. Both Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling emphatically rejected this assessment, however. In response to Schmidt, Reinhard described a one-dimensional opposition of government and populace as theoretically unproductive and cited the Swedish Reformation as an example for the symbiosis of communal and governmental confessionalization. Rather than juxtaposing micro- and macrohistorical approaches, researchers ought to combine them.[48]

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43 Reinhard: 'Zwang zur Konfessionalisierung?', 268. For the application of the concept of social discipline in the study of early modern confessional conditions, see also Hsia: *Social Discipline*, and Winkelbauer: 'Sozialdisziplinierung', 317-339.

44 See, for example, Klueting: *Das Konfessionelle Zeitalter*, which already displayed its divergent periodization in the title, and Schindling: 'Konfessionaliserung und die Grenzen', 9-44.

45 See Schulze: 'Konfessionalisierung als Paradigma', 15-30.

46 See, for example, Mörke: 'Konfessionalisierung', 31-60, and, with a somewhat different focus on parallel state-sponsored and popular confessionalizations, Lotz-Heumann: *Die doppelte Konfessionalisierung*.

47 Schmidt: *Dorf und Religion*.

48 See his comments in Völker-Rasor (ed.): *Oldenburg Geschichte*, 302f.

These continuing controversies demonstrate that the scholarly debate about Counterreformation, Catholic reform, and confessionalization is far from exhausted. On some level, all three terms have competed for primacy in the description of the overall phenomenon.[49] Strictly speaking, however, they prioritize different aspects. In the current article, the focus lies on the political aspects, that is, on the cooperation between church and rulers in the restoration of Catholic hegemony in the territories of Catholic monarchs and thus on the Counterreformation in the narrow sense of the word. There is no doubt, however, that these political steps were paralleled by an internal rejuvenation, which tried to restore the moral spirit of the church and reaffirm its core values.

After the Habsburgs had failed in their initial attempts to bar Protestant inroads into their territories, Lutheranism expanded in a relatively quiet and inconspicuous manner. Still facing the opposition of the dynasty, which after 1555 was able to invoke the Peace of Augsburg, Protestants had to tread lightly. They had to forego many public manifestations of their creed and wrest individual concessions from successive rulers. These concessions were frequently secured through large financial contributions; at the same time, they provoked a backlash among the Catholic hierarchy both inside the Habsburg Monarchy and beyond. Encouraged by the successful placating of Lutheran imperial princes, the promising example of the Bavarian Wittelsbachs, and the renewed vigor of international Catholicism, both clergy and dynasty became increasingly determined to stop and reverse the progress of Lutheranism in the hereditary lands.

In Inner Austria, the 1578 Pacification of Bruck marked a turning point in denominational relations. On the one hand, it represented the as of then most comprehensive affirmation of Protestant religious rights in this section of the Habsburg patrimony by granting at least preliminary freedom of conscience to a large part of the populace. On the other, it triggered the clandestine Munich Conference of the following year, in which Charles II of Inner Austria, Ferdinand II of Tyrol and William V of Bavaria agreed on a program for the recatholicization of Inner Austria. The religious concessions of the pacification needed to be cancelled "fein tacite und per indirectum", as the German-Latin original emphasized, that is, in an inconspicuous and indirect manner.[50] The strategy was developed in greater detail in the introductory remarks which established that these privileges should not be sustained, but rescinded as soon as this seemed feasible. So ambitious an objective could not be accomplished through an official revocation but through a prudent strategy that bypassed the diet. The focus should be on actions

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49 This is expressed in a very straightforward manner by Wolfgang Reinhard, who described confessionalization as an "alternative socio-historical concept for the phenomenon that from a perspective of ecclesiastical and political history used to be called the Counterreformation". See Völker-Rasor (ed.): *Oldenburg Geschichte*, 299.

50 Loserth (ed.): *Acten und Correspondenzen*, 38.

rather than words and on gradual progress rather than on an immediate and all-out assault.[51]

The program established at Munich was symptomatic for the early phase of recatholization in the hereditary lands, and it proved highly successful. Even though Charles began to implement its principles, primarily by investing reliable Catholics with public offices and curtailing the exercise of Lutheranism in urban communities, it remained up to his successor, the later emperor Ferdinand II, to fully execute it. Ferdinand, who was the son of a Wittelsbach princess and educated by Jesuit teachers in Bavarian Ingolstadt, considered it a moral duty to restore Catholic hegemony in his domains. To him, this represented more than a political necessity; he also regarded it his duty as a monarch to assure the eternal salvation of his subjects.[52] His confessor reported that Ferdinand

> often asserted both in writing and orally that he would much rather and more readily renounce his provinces and kingdoms than wittingly miss an opportunity to extend the faith; that he would rather live on bread and water alone, go into exile with his wife and children equipped only with a staff, beg his bread from door to door, and be cut and torn to pieces than suffer any longer the harm done to God and the Church by the heretics in the territories under his rule.[53]

No matter the rhetorical hyperbole of emperor and biographer, confessional policy in Central Europe had undoubtedly entered a new phase.

The more stringent tone in religious matters already surfaced during the negotiations that preceded Ferdinand's accession. Traditionally, these negotiations presented a window of opportunity for the estates to secure special rights and privileges from the ruler. In December 1596, the Styrian estates formulated their standpoint in petitions to the successor designate. They beseeched Ferdinand to resolve outstanding denominational conflicts according to the religious pacification of 1578 and argued that they were not bound to swear allegiance until the monarch had affirmed their traditional liberties.[54] The young archduke had enjoyed ample time to prepare his response, however, and steadfastly refused to

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51 Ibid., 36. In its complete form, the German-Latin original stated as follows: "Erstlich, dass es bei denen *taliter qualiter* beschechnen concessionen kaineswegs bestehen künne noch müge, sondern dass die höchst unvermeidenliche notturft erfordern wolle, solche *concessiones* mit ehister müglichkait z w a r n i t o f f e n t l i c h *per contrariam revocationem*, welches dann I.[hrer] F.[ürstlichen] D.[urchlauch]t in mehr weg schwärlich fallen wurde, *sed cum modis et formis*, das ist, *indirecte*, ausser eines landtags, auch nit *verbis sed factis*, item nit under ainsten und *fulminanter sed pedetentim et gradatim* zu annullieren und aufzuheben."

52 In his testament, he defined it as his foremost obligation to preserve his domains in the Catholic faith. See Bireley: *Religion and Politics*, 13.

53 See Lamormaini: *Ferdinandi II.*, 15f.

54 See Loserth(ed.): *Akten und Korrespondenzen*, 1:213-220.

confirm his predecessors' religious concessions.[55] In his view, the estates owed him unconditional homage; if they held grievances, they could subsequently appeal to him for redress. The delegates persisted, but Ferdinand had nothing more to say. In order to break the stalemate, the Styrian estates decided to interpret this silence as tacit approval. On 12 December 1596 they paid homage to their new prince; the subsequent day they informed their Carinthian and Carniolian peers and assured them that all their privileges had been upheld.[56] In early 1597, Carinthians and Carniolians followed suit.

It would not be long before the estatist interpretation proved an illusion. In September 1598, Ferdinand ordered the curial officers to abolish the church and school ministry in Graz and Judenburg as well as his other municipalities; the attached pastors were banned from the country.[57] A month later, the turn came to the Protestant teachers and ministers in Carniolian Ljubljana.[58] A torrent of protests and supplications accomplished nothing. With undisguised irony, the archduke wondered why the Protestant nobles felt violated in their freedom of conscience. Had not their preachers denied the sanctity of rites and proposed the universal priesthood of believers? If they yearned to receive the genuine sacraments, however, they could always turn to their proper Catholic priests.[59]

The estates did not shrink from using their sharpest weapon, the temporary withholding of revenues, but Ferdinand unwaveringly stayed the course. In June of 1600, he felt confident enough to extend his proscriptions to Carinthia, the most Protestant of his provinces. By that time, however, the removal of preachers and ministers no longer sufficed. The Inner Austrian Counterreformation reached an early climax in the campaigns of reformation commissions, whose leadership was entrusted to the Swabian-born bishop of Seckau, Martin Brenner.[60] Accompanied by a military detachment, these commissions assembled the inhabitants of towns and villages, appealed to them through sermons, and ordered them to return to Catholicism. In the course of a two-month campaign through Carinthia in the fall of 1600, four churches and their cemeteries were destroyed, 27 pastors and teachers expelled, 1500 heretic books burned and thousands of Protestants outwardly converted.[61] The burghers in the regional centers of Villach and Klagenfurt lost their ecclesial institutions as well. Four years later, however, Bish-

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55 For some of the advice he relied on, see ibid., 1:141-149.

56 Ibid., 1:222f.

57 Ibid., 1:309f.; 1:344f.

58 Ibid., 1:376f.

59 Ibid., 1:350f.

60 For Brenner, see Schmid: *Bischof Martin Brenner*, and Schuster: *Fürstbischof Martin Brenner*. The diocese of Seckau comprised parts of Styria.

61 Loesche: *Geschichte des Protestantismus*, 249. The most detailed contemporary source of the reformation campaign--from a highly sympathetic perspective--is Jakob (baptized Johannes) Rosolenz: *Gründlicher Gegen Bericht*. This report by the Augustinian abbot of Stainz proved so controversial that it triggered a heated dispute in the Styrian diet.

op Brenner was forced to revisit Klagenfurt, and in remote mountain districts of Styria and especially Carinthia, Protestantism was merely driven underground.

Ferdinand's policy vindicated the careful gradualism that had been recommended to his father at the Munich Conference and impressed on the new archduke by Georg Stobäus, the sitting bishop of Lavant in Carinthia.[62] Not all of its progress can be based on the successful concealment of long-time objectives. Individual nobles in Inner Austria harbored no illusions about their monarch and predicted that he would ultimately rescind the religious privileges of the aristocracy, notwithstanding his initial focus on townspeople and peasants.[63] Nonetheless, the estates restricted their resistance to petitions, protests, and requests for support from sympathetic princes and corporations. Although the increasingly annoyed archduke repeatedly informed them that he would rather risk all his possessions than change his confessional policies, the estates did not give up hope.[64] Indeed, the Lutheran nobility was able to obstruct and delay the progress of recatholization temporarily. This may explain why a Protestant was elected mayor of Klagenfurt as late as 1622 and the governmental religious edicts did not unfold their full impact on the Carinthian peasants of Paternion as long as they were subject to Lutheran lords.[65] Such acts of defiance did not alter the fundamental course of events, however. In the end, the Khevenhüller seigniors had to emigrate und surrender Paternion to an avid proponent of the Counterreformation, and the audacious election in Klagenfurt only resulted in an annulment and a severe admonition by the archduke, who reminded the city magistrates that no-one could be admitted to citizenship, not to mention public office, unless he was strongly committed to the Catholic faith.[66] By 1630, Catholicism had been restored as the public religion of Inner Austria.

It was the dynasty that had initiated the recatholization of the Inner Austrian provinces. The local clergy was weak and needed substantial reinforcement from abroad. Of pivotal importance was the contribution of the Jesuits, whom Archduke Charles invited to his patrimony in the early 1570s.[67] In 1573, he commissioned a Jesuit college in Graz, which was regularly expanded until it finally became the basis of a newly founded university in 1585. This educational offensive

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62 Loserth (ed.): *Akten und Korrespondenzen*, 1:297. See also ibid, 1:140-149.

63 See the minutes of the diet in Graz of 30 April 1601 in Loserth, (ed.), *Akten und Korrespondenzen*, 2:185.

64 So, for example, on 17 January 1610; see Loserth (ed.): *Akten und Korrespondenzen*, 2:560-564.

65 See Loserth (ed.): *Akten und Korrespondenzen*, 2:741f., and Meir: 'Der Protestantismus', 311-343.

66 See Meir: 'Der Protestantismus', 311-343, as well as Loserth (ed.): *Akten und Korrespondenzen*, 2:741f.

67 For an introduction to the role of the Jesuits in the Inner Austrian Counterreformation, see Heiss: 'Die Bedeutung', 63-76. For a broader examination beyond Inner Austria: Heiss: 'Die Jesuiten', and idem, 'Princes, Jesuits', 92-109.

was expressly directed against the flourishing grammar school of the Protestant estates. Even though its initial success was limited, the university brought forth a number of leading protagonists of recatholization and finally achieved a monopoly on higher education after the dissolution of the Protestant church ministry in 1598.

In the archduchy, local clerics and lay activists played a much stronger role. To be sure, the accession of Maximilian's son Rudolf to the throne in 1576 also marked a caesura in the confessional policies of the Austrian heartland. The young monarch had spent the formative years of his adolescence in Spain and displayed none of the confessional ambiguities of his father. Indeed, within two years he had abolished the Lutheran center in the diet building and thus effectively banished Lutheran services from the confines of Vienna.[68] The government also installed a Catholic city administration, prohibited the estates from distributing Lutheran literature and supported the revival of Corpus Christi processions. In 1585, the acquisition of citizenship in Vienna was tied to taking confession and communion in the Catholic Church, and Protestant services became illegal in municipalities throughout Lower Austria.[69] Having removed Protestant worship from the territorial towns, the government was able to concentrate on the surrounding rural estates, which had turned into attractive alternatives. By requiring ministers to bar non-members from their services, the government struck a severe blow at Lutheran church attendance among commoners.

These initial steps were skillfully coordinated between Rudolf, who had made Prague his imperial residence, and his younger brother Ernst, whom he had installed as viceregent in Vienna. The imperial siblings avoided open breaches of sworn accords while pushing their reinterpretations of potential legal ambiguities to the limit. Protestant nobles and burghers showered them with protests, only to be sent back and forth between Vienna and Prague with mutually contradictory accounts of the origins of individual pieces of legislation and the appropriate venue for redress. As a consequence, Protestant resistance exhausted itself in a futile burst of undirected activism.

In the long run, the emperor's absence and increasing seclusion diminished his personal involvement in denominational conflicts. Yet in Lower Austria, at least, Catholic restoration was also able to draw on forces other than the dynasty. The importance of Catholic laymen is exemplified by the jurist Georg Eder.[70]

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68 For the course of events, see Bibl: 'Erzherzog Ernst', 576-579. The *Landhaus*, which has been translated as diet building, was the political and administrative center of the territorial estates. It was home to the diet, but also to other estatist institutions such as archives, libraries, schools and administrative offices.

69 Csendes & Opll (eds.): *Wien,* vol. 3, 327; and Leeb: 'Der Streit', 252.

70 Eder has recently received his first thorough treatment in English through Fulton's *Catholic Belief*. For his extensive correspondence, especially with the court in Munich, see also Bibl: 'Die Berichte', 67-154, and Schrauf (ed.): *Der Reichshofrath Dr. Georg Eder*.

Born in 1523, Eder hailed from an impeccably Catholic background in Bavaria. The Wittelsbach duchy had not only developed into a bulwark of Catholic orthodoxy in its own right, but it also provided a much-needed contingent of German-speaking activists for the early Counterreformation in the Habsburg lands. In the 1540s, Eder's studies at the University of Cologne brought him into contact with the Society of Jesus, which was just beginning to gain a foothold on German territory. Most importantly, Eder became acquainted with Peter Canisius, one of the foremost theologians of the order. The connections established in Cologne proved useful for both sides. Eder evolved into a pivotal Catholic lay activist, who could always rely on the patronage of the Jesuits, with whom he identified intensely.[71] As a doctor of law with a thorough understanding of theology, he was a valuable asset, above all in public positions that were closed to religious orders.

After a short period as headmaster in Passau, Eder completed his legal studies in Vienna between 1550 and 1551. Upon graduation, his career took off quickly. Eder's arrival in the Austrian capital all but coincided with the founding of the city's first Jesuit college. But the predominantly foreign brethren, without a sufficient knowledge of German, were seriously impeded in their initial outreach. Not so Eder, who held increasingly more prestigious posts, culminating in 1563 when Ferdinand I appointed him to the imperial aulic council. Notwithstanding its name, which evoked its origins as an advisory body, this institution also served as one of the two high courts of the Holy Roman Empire. Whereas the imperial cameral court largely remained the domain of the imperial estates, the monarch fully controlled the aulic council.[72] Yet Eder also joined the University of Vienna, over which he presided as rector for 11 terms.

Even more important than lay supporters were forces within the church. The local Catholic hierarchy was able to provide inspiration and leadership, even if it relied on the government to subdue Protestant resistance. The leading protagonist of this new ecclesial activism was Melchior Klesl. In telling contrast to the Bavarian Eder, the Viennese Klesl was born into a Lutheran family in 1552.[73] He was raised in his parental faith and still professed it into early adulthood, until he turned to Catholicism under the influence of the Jesuit theologian Georg Scherer. The young convert exchanged the University of Vienna for the local Jesuit college; he subsequently finished his theological studies at the preeminent German seminary of the order in Bavarian Ingolstadt.

In more ways than one, Klesl carried on the work of Georg Eder, even if his position was different and his impact more formidable. Upon his colleague's re-

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71 See Fulton: *Catholic Belief*, 68.

72 The official German designations of these bodies were *Reichskammergericht* and *Reichshofrat.*

73 For a comprehensive biography of Klesl (also spelt Khlesl), one still has to consult Hammer-Purgstall: *Khlesls des Cardinals*. See also Kerschbaumer: *Kardinal Klesl*, and Rainer: 'Der Prozeß', 35-163.

turn to his country of birth, Klesl replaced him as religious *éminence grise* at the university, where he served as chancellor and subsequently also rector, and even continued the well-established correspondence with the Bavarian court.[74] Klesl did not enter Bavarian service, to be sure, but he, too, considered it beneficial to establish good contacts to the powerful vanguard of Catholic restoration in the empire. The Wittelsbachs could not only support him at the courts of Vienna and Prague, where Protestant and irenicist councilors impeded stricter policies, but also use their authority over Bavarian exclaves in the archduchy in favor of re-catholization.[75]

Like Eder before him, Klesl combined confessional zeal with personal ambition. Soon after his graduation and ordination to the priesthood, he was appointed provost of St. Stephen's Cathedral and high-ranking official of the diocese of Passau, whose ecclesial jurisdiction included the archduchy. He subsequently rose to court chaplain and bishop of both Wiener Neustadt and Vienna. At the same time, he also held expressly political offices, such as privy councilor and special emissary of the emperor in sensitive international matters.

Klesl's foremost objective, however, was the restoration of Catholic supremacy in the hereditary lands. In his eyes, the internal rejuvenation of the Catholic clergy formed a prerequisite for any successful offensive against Lutheranism. As the diocese's vicar-general for Lower Austria, Klesl was well-positioned to initiate reforms. He encountered substantial resistance, however, not only from the clerics whose conduct he reprimanded but also from his superiors in Passau, who advised him to show patience and proceed more cautiously. Not even the concubinate could be eradicated, complained Klesl to William of Bavaria, because suitable replacements for dismissed clerics were in short supply.[76]

In 1590, Rudolf II appointed Klesl reformer general of Lower Austria, formally entrusting him with the recatholization of the territory. This promotion also marked a subtle but significant change in governmental policy. The publicly confirmed concessions to the nobility remained in force, but only in the narrowest interpretation possible; the numerous decrees against religious transgressions were strictly enforced. Klesl delineated his strategy in a memorandum to the vice regent, Archduke Ernst.[77] Since he considered it impossible to immediately rescind the religious privileges of the noble estates, he advised to concentrate the initial efforts on non-protected groups. Most important was the final eradication of heterodoxy in Vienna and other municipalities by preventing the attendance of Lutheran services in surrounding communities. To accomplish this objective, Klesl not only suggested stricter punishments, but also the repossession of key

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74 For this correspondence, see Bibl: 'Briefe Melchior Klesls', 640-673.
75 Ibid., 668-670.
76 Ibid., 657.
77 The memorandum is printed in Bibl: 'Eine Denkschrift', 164-171.

estates such as Vösendorf and Hernals.[78] Once the urban population had been returned to Catholicism, the nobles should be admonished to restrict their religious services to themselves and their households. If they respected these ramifications, religious conditions in Austria would improve considerably. If they refused, they would bear the blame for a revocation of the concession.[79]

These recommendations echoed the principles established at the Munich Conference and closely mirrored policies in Inner Austria. During the initial phase of recatholization, it was more promising to isolate the nobility in society than to challenge its confirmed privileges. Through the large-scale removal of ministers and the conversion of townspeople and peasants, Lutheranism was to lose its popular foundation. In the end, the remaining religious liberties would degenerate into an empty shell, to be pushed over at will.

CONCLUSION

The Protestant Reformation spread rapidly in the Habsburgs' hereditary lands. It was popularized by itinerant preachers, by personal contacts with the early centers of the reform movement, and not least of all by an encompassing literature, which acquainted the literate segment of the population with the new tenets. From the very beginning, it was interconnected with wider social and political issues. The peasant wars of 1525/1526 visibly displayed the interpenetration of spiritual and political impulses.

The new religious ideas touched broad segments of the Austrian populace. Only in the westernmost provinces could this development be interrupted early, aided by the successful suppression of the locally strong Anabaptist movement and its joint demand for social and spiritual reform. In the remaining provinces, Lutheranism seemed destined to establish itself as the majority religion, especially among the societal elites in aristocracy and urban patriciate.

Yet religious conditions in Austria were determined by the firm adherence of the ruling dynasty to the old church. As was the case throughout much of Europe, the ruling monarchs decisively shaped religious conditions in their domains. The Peace of Augsburg symbolized a development in which the Protestant estates of the Holy Roman Empire acknowledged the emperor's religious authority over his patrimonial subjects in exchange for securing autonomy for themselves. Thus, a religious reform movement that had reverberated throughout most of the empire was ultimately restricted to those territories in which the rulers had embraced it as well.

Church and dynasty subsequently embarked on returning the imperial hereditary lands to Catholicism. This process took time, however, because the Habsburg territories were so diverse and geographically disjoined that the authorities

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78 Ibid., 166.
79 Ibid., 168-170.

had to contend with divergent laws, traditions, and political systems. Moreover, Protestantism had not only taken firm roots in large segments of the populace, but had made particular progress among the territorial nobles, the monarchy's main contenders for political power. Therefore, the struggle for religious authority increasingly merged with the struggle for political preeminence. In this conflict, the Habsburg dynasty was able to use its superior international connections to suppress its internal rivals and establish full control of both the political and the religious sphere. The Austrian estates preserved most of their social and economic privileges, but they never reassumed their position as alternative centers of political power.

The final outcome of this conflict was determined by the military superiority of the imperial armies and their allies in the early phases of the Thirty Years' War. The defeat of the Bohemian opposition and its Austrian supporters gave Emperor Ferdinand II the opportunity to rescind almost all remaining religious liberties in his hereditary lands. Yet the revocation of noble privileges only marked the conclusion of a drawn-out process, which had already accomplished decisive victories several decades earlier. By establishing their legal authority in spiritual matters and gradually confining religious dissent to tolerated aristocratic enclaves, the Habsburgs had fundamentally secured the ultimate reversal of their domains to Catholic orthodoxy. Once formidable Austrian Protestantism was restricted to underground hide-outs until its modest remains were legalized by the Edict of Toleration of 1781.

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ABSTRACT (UK)

The Wages of Weakness

The Rise and Fall of the Protestant Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Austria

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This article examines the initial expansion and subsequent demise of Lutheran Protestantism in early modern Austria. Although the Protestant Reformation disrupted the medieval unity of church and state in western Europe, religion and politics remained strongly intertwined. Monarchs and dynasties became of paramount significance for the ultimate success or failure of Protestant movements. On the northern and southern edges of Western Christianity, religious homogeneity was largely retained, albeit in diametrically opposed forms. In the core of the continent, confessional differentiation proceeded more contentiously. The archetypical expression of denominational division was found in the Holy Roman Empire and especially its Habsburg patrimony. It is there one repeatedly encounters a divergence of popular and dynastic interests and an interweaving of religious and political disagreement. These conflicts also decided the fate of Austrian Protestantism.