Thinking About Religion and Society in the 17th and 18th Century : confessionalization, the History of Toleration, and Beyond

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Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte = Revue suisse d'histoire religieuse et culturelle = Rivista svizzera di storia religiosa e culturale**

Band (Jahr): **101 (2007)**

PDF erstellt am: **19.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-130406

Thinking About Religion and Society in the 17th and 18th Century. Confessionalization, the History of Toleration, and Beyond

Philip Benedict

In the past fifteen years, the center of gravity of research about the religious history of early modern Europe has shifted dramatically toward what English-speaking scholars used to call «the late Reformation era», i.e. the late sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. From the beginning of the twentieth century until about 1990, the initial years and decades of the Reformation attracted the lion's share of scholarly interest, with first the figure of the young Luther, then the dynamics of Protestantism's early explosive growth, cast variously as the «the Reformation in the cities» or the «Reformation of the common man», emerging as particular foci of research and debate. The only large groups of active researchers who stood as exceptions to this concentration on the early Reformation were those historians of Catholicism touched by the influence of French religious sociology, who developed a rich tradition of local studies of the long term consequences of the Tridentine reforms, and English religious historians, whose attention was always drawn toward the years from 1560 to 1660 by the importance of Puritanism within the nation's political as well as religious history.

The recent growth of interest in the years from 1560 to 1800 has had two major causes, one internal to the field of Reformation history, the other external. The first is the stimulus generated by Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling's articulation of what I have called elsewhere the «strong theory of confessionalization» and by their effective campaign to place this theory at the center of dis cussions about the German and European Reformations.[1] In arguing that the

[1] In order to keep the footnotes to this essay to manageable proportions, only the most essential titles within an immense bibliography relevant to the broad themes discussed here will be cited. Key statements of Reinhard and Schilling's view of *konfessionalisierung* include Wolfgang Reinhard, Gegenreformation als Modernisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalters, in: Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte, 68 (1977), 226–252; Wolfgang Reinhard, Zwang zur Konfessionalisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalters, in: Zeitschrift für historische Forschung, 10 (1983), 257–277; Wolfgang Reinhard, Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the Early Modern State. A Re-

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Lutheran, Calvinist, and Catholic Reformations alike served to mold disciplined populations for the benefit of a stronger and more interventionist state, these historians provoked a younger generation of scholars to look afresh at the long-term, «modernizing» consequences of the Reformation and to question *idées recus* about the distinctive characteristics of each post-Reformation confession. The second is the upsurge of religious conflict around the globe and the emergence of significant Muslim minorities within Europe. This has bestowed an urgent topicality on the questions of how to understand the causes of religious violence and of successful inter-confessional coexistence, which in turn has reinvigorated interest in a topic that previously seemed stale and old-fashioned and for which the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were always rightly seen as central: the history of toleration. The appearance within the title of the Lucerne *Tagung* of the words «*Konfessionskulturen*» and «*Koexistenz*» clearly indicates that this event was located at the intersection of these trends.

I have also spent the better part of the past quarter century investigating problems within the religious history of the seventeenth century from perspectives rooted in social and cultural history, but my research followed a path that only led me into explicit dialogue with the themes of confessionalization and coexistence once it was well advanced. I began my archival research on the seventeenth century seeking to understand whether or not the «embourgeoisement» of seventeenth-century French Protestantism – that is to say, the clear sociological tendency for merchants to bulk ever larger within the Huguenot community as the century advanced – was an illustration of the nexus between Calvinism and capitalism as classically explicated by Max Weber. Since few others had previously studied the social and cultural history of the Huguenots in this period, a great deal about their social composition and cultural practices had to be reconstructed from scratch, which forced me to search for both the sources and the methods most appropriate for doing this.[2] I subsequently began to divide my attention

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assessment, in: Catholic Historical Review, 75 (1989), 383-404; Heinz Schilling, Die Konfessionalisierung im Reich – religiöser und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Deutschland zwischen 1555 und 1620, in: Historische Zeitschrift, 246 (1988), 1-25; Confessional Europe in Thomas A. Brady/Heiko A. Oberman/James D. Tracy (Ed.), Handbook of European History 1400–1600. Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation, Vol. 2 Visions, Programs, Outcomes, Leiden 1995, 641–681. Collections of both of their essays are now available: Wolfgang Reinhard, Ausgewählte Abhandlungen, Berlin 1997; and Heinz Schilling, Ausgewählte Abhandlungen zur europäischen Reformations- und Konfessionsgeschichte, Berlin 2002. Landmarks in the dissemination and discussion of their theses about confessionalization include Heinz Schilling (Ed.), Die reformierte Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland – Das Problem der ‚Zweiten Reformation', Gütersloh 1986; Hans-Christoph Rublack (Ed.), Die lutherische Konfessionalisierung in Deutschland, Gütersloh 1992; and Wolfgang Reinhard/Heinz Schilling (Ed.), Die katholische Konfessionalisierung, Gütersloh 1995. I discuss these theories critically and trace the advance of the concept across national and linguistic boundaries in Confessionalization in France? Critical Reflections and New Evidence, in: Philip Benedict, The Faith and Fortunes of France's Huguenots 1600–1685, Aldershot 2001, 309–317, and Raymond A. Mentzer and Andrew Spicer (Ed.), Society and Culture in the Huguenot World, 1559–1685, Cambridge 2002, 44–52. A fuller international assessment of the theory may be found in Focal Point/Themenschwerpunkt: Confessionalization and Social

between this archival research and the problem of writing a synthetic history on a pan-European scale of one of the three great post-Reformation confessional traditions, the Reformed, covering both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Undertaking this project had the beneficial effect of forcing me to read widely across national historiographic traditions. It also led me to elaborate a structure for making sense of the long-term development and impact of a confessional tradition across national boundaries that borrowed eclectically from what I found most helpful in several historiographic and theoretical approaches and that stood outside the developing paradigm of confessionalization.[3] This experience offers me, I think, a relatively independent vantage point from which to evaluate the recent literature around the topics of confessionalization and coexistence, as well as to highlight other themes within the history of the late Reformation era worthy of further research.

In the interest of being provocative, and at the risk of being blunt, I will lay out my views succinctly in five points.

1. Reinhard and Schilling's *étatiste* version of confessionalization probably applies better to the princely states of the Holy Roman Empire, where the *Kirchenordnungen* of the Reformation opened the way to a steadily growing intervention of territorial rulers in the day-to-day regulation of the lives of their subjects,[4] than it does to any other portion of Europe. Even here, however, it questionable whether the secular rulers were consistently the most vigorous agents promoting the establishment of new systems of church discipline; whether the virtues that these systems worked hardest to inculcate once they were established truly assisted the construction of stronger or wealthier states; and whether Reformation teachings consistently favored the emergence of larger, more coherent territorial units.[5] On a broader European canvas, it would appear that the only generalization possible about the long-term political consequences of the rise of confessional identification and attachment is that this strengthened the state, except where it weakened it. In France, the sudden emergence around 1560 of two rival, clearly delineated confessions provoked the most serious crisis of the

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Discipline in France, Italy, and Spain, in: Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte, 94 (2003), 276–318. Harm Klueting, ‹Zweite Reformation› – Konfessionsbildung – Konfessionalisierung. Zwanzig Jahre Kontroversen und Ergebnisse nach zwanzig Jahren, in: Historische Zeitschrift, 277 (2003), 309–341, reviews the German literature and debates.

2 My research in this domain can be followed through the essays collected in Benedict, Faith and Fortunes (see footnote 1).

3 The end product of this effort is Philip Benedict, Christ's Churches Purely Reformed. A Social History of Calvinism, New Haven 2002.

4 Persuasively traced by Marc Raeff, The Well-Ordered Police State. Social and Insittutional Change through Law in the Germanies and Russia, 1600–1800, New Haven 1983.

5 The most important critique of the *étatiste* elements of the strong theory of confessionnalization is Heinrich Richard Schmidt, Sozialdisziplinierung? Ein Plädoyer für das Ende des Etatismus in der Konfessionalisierungforschung, in: Historische Zeitung, 265 (1997), 639–682. All too often overlooked in German reviews of the relevant literature is Paula Sutter Fichtner's subtly but powerfully corrosive early contribution to the discussion, Protesantism and Primogeniture in Early Modern Germany, New Haven 1989.

French monarchy between the Hundred Years' War and the French Revolution. In much of Switzerland, fractions within the clergy and communal elites were the chief promoters of confessional structures and identities; as these advanced, the secular trend was toward greater conflict within and between units of the Confederation.[6] The functionalist logic that undergirds the strong theory of confessionalization also tends to obscure rather than to illuminate the conscious motives of those engaged in the activities covered by the concept. For all these reasons, while the reorientation of scholarly energy toward the late Reformation era provoked by this theory deserves to be hailed, the heuristic value of the strong theory of confessionalization is rapidly diminishing. Its applicability to Swiss conditions seems especially dubious. A growing body of literature testifies to an increasing awareness that we need to look beyond the initial formulations of this thesis to make good use of the concept of confessionalization. We also need to explore other paradigms for making sense of this period.[7]

2. In the domain of the «history of toleration», recent research has taken an important step forward by showing that, at least up until some point in the eighteenth century, it is more illuminating to focus upon the legal arrangements and social practices that permitted several religious groups peacefully to «coexist in intolerance» than to privilege the history of ideas about toleration and to suggest a gradual advance of tolerance from the Reformation to the Enlightenment, as the older paradigm of «the rise of toleration» tended to do.[8] Until the turn of the eighteenth century, those who advocated a general freedom of worship or of conscience were rare and marginal. The word «tolerance» itself had few positive connotations; it meant simply putting up with evils that could not be eliminated. Nevertheless, the manner in which the events of the Reformation played themselves out led to the *de facto* or *de jure* establishment of situations of confessional pluriformity in many European territories, even if their inhabitants would have ideally liked to see the entire territory reunited in the one true religion, their own. Over time, often only after long and bloody conflicts, they also frequently worked out legal mechanisms to maintain the status quo peacefully. A number of exemplary studies over the past quarter century have illuminated the different manners in which this kind of coexistence in intolerance was organized and the

[6] Ulrich Pfister, Reformierte Sittenzucht zwischen kommunaler und territorialer Organisation. Graubünden, 16–18 Jahrhundert, in: Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte, 87 (1996), 287–333; idem, infra, 000–000.

[7] Marc R. Forster, Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque. Religious Identity in Southwest Germany 1550–1750, Cambridge 2001; Kaspar von Greyerz et al. (Ed.), Interkonfessionalität – Transkonfessionalität – binnenkonfessionelle Pluralität. Neue Forschungen zur Konfessionalisierungsthese, Gütersloh 2003. To his credit, Schilling himself was one of the first to express second thoughts. See his Die Konfessionalisierung von Kirche, Staat und Gesellschaft – Profil, Leistung, Defizite und Perspektiven eines Geschichtswissenschaftlichen Paradigmas, in: Wolfgang Reinhard/Heinz Schilling (Ed.), Die katholische Konfessionalisierung (see footnote 1), 1–49.

[8] The phrase «coexistence in intolerance» was launched by the special issue of the Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français dedicated to the Edict of Nantes 144 (1998), also published as a book by Labor et Fides of Geneva.

way in which it was experienced by those who lived in such situations.[9] Much more investigation of this theme, unquestionably one of the most exciting current areas of research into the religious history of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, is now underway. As it advances, it is also highlighting two further issues in need of investigation and clarification. First, how are we to understand and explain the shift in mentalities that occurred around 1700 that gave new meanings to terms such as tolerance and fanaticism, transforming the latter for the first time into a positive virtue? Second, what accounts for the considerable time lag that separates this shift at the level of the history of ideas from the first significant wave of legal measures that instituted broader regimes of religious toleration in the name of Enlightened values, which only came late in the eighteenth century?

3. Change within major religious traditions is generated by tensions internal to the tradition as well as by transformations in the surrounding political, economic, and social milieux. Historians eager to trace long-term religious changes must consequently attend to the internal dynamics within religious traditions as well as to their external circumstances, especially if they hope to avoid reducing religious change to a simple epiphenomenon of putatively deeper forces or phenomena.

What internal combustion engines drove religious change between 1560 and 1800? One was unquestionably the situation of permanent debate between the confessions generated by the Reformation's division of western Christendom into rival camps. The context of constant controversy encouraged a quest for new arguments and historical evidence that could weaken the enemy – but that could also alter each confession's own theology, or even threaten the foundations of all Christian belief.[10] This is a theme that must be explored first and foremost from the vantage point of the history of ideas, but it also has implications for the mind-set and group consciousness of ordinary believers, insofar as elements of controversial theology were communicated to them via the clergy or through their own reading.

[9] Studies I have found particularly illuminating include: Etienne François, Protestants et catholiques en Allemagne. Identités et pluralisme, Augsbourg 1648–1806, Paris 1993; Gregory Hanlon, Confession and Community in Seventeenth-Century France. Catholic and Protestant Coexistence in Aquitaine, Philadelphia 1993; Olivier Christin, La paix de religion. L'autonomisation de la raison politique au XVIe siècle, Paris 1997; Randolph Head, Religious Coexistence and Confessional Conflict in the Vier Dörfer. Practices of Toleration in Eastern Switzerland 1525–1615, in: John C. Laursen/Cary J. Nederman (Ed.), Beyond the Persecuting Society. Religious Toleration before the Enlightenment, Philadelphia 1997, 145–165; Keith Luria, Separated by Death? Burials, Cemeteries and Confessional Boundaries in Seventeenth-Century France, in: French Historical Studies, 24 (2001), 185–222; Benjamin J. Kaplan, Fictions of Privacy. House Chapels and the Spatial Accommodation of Religious Dissent in Early Modern Europe, in: American Historical Review, 107 (2002), 1031–1064. Benjamin J. Kaplan, Divided by Faith. Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe, Cambridge Ma, 2007 is a new synthesis that exemplifies this approach.

[10] As is suggested by Jacques Solé, Les origines intellectuelles de la Révocation de l'Edit de Nantes, Saint-Etienne 1997; Alan Charles Kors, Atheism in France, 1650–1729, Vol. 1 The Orthodox Sources of Disbelief, Princeton 1990.

Another was the re-systematization of theology that occurred in the generations following the establishment of magisterial Protestantism and the closing of the Council of Trent, as theologians felt the need to transmit a new system of doctrine coherently to successive generations and rediscovered the tools of scholastic logic well suited to doing this, abandoning as they did the more direct critical engagement with the Bible of the first generation of reformers. This re-systemization of theology soon generated internal disputes within each confession over more and more complex points of doctrine that in certain instances led to schism. Again, this is a theme in intellectual history with potentially broader implications where schisms developed within local churches.[11]

A third is the tension that developed within many territorial churches between the actually existing practices of these churches as they emerged from the messy process of institutional change during the initial phases of the Reformation and the principles epitomized by the writings of the internationally most prestigious theologians and/or the operation of the «best Reformed churches». From the resulting perception that a given territorial church had failed to live up to the highest ideals of the Reformation grew movements that advocated further reformation. In some instances a *reformatio vitae* was sought to complete the already accomplished *reformatio doctrinae*. In others, a transformation of liturgical practices was demanded. In still others, the alteration of church institutions stood at the center of debates. Under what conditions, and at what moments, did such movements of «Puritanism», «pietism» or «further Reformation» develop within some Protestant churches? What were the connections – and the differences – between and among them in different national contexts? Why did they generate schism in some countries and not others? Does Jansenism represent a kindred phenomenon within Catholicism, or did it grow from different roots in different contexts? Here are still other important questions of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century religious history not to be overlooked. In investigating these last questions, it is imperative to look beyond the labels such as «Puritanism» or «pietism» so freely bandied about in different national contexts, since the critical examination of these concepts reveals that they were born in polemics and denoted a shifting set of phenomena over time.[12] Instead, attention needs to be ruthlessly focused on the specific goals and methods of the different movements for further reform. It is only at this level that genuine understanding and useful comparison become possible.

[11] See here especially A. T. van Deursen, Bavianen en slijkgeuzen. Kerk en kerkvolk ten tijde van Maurits en Oldenbarnevelt, Assen 1974, a model study of mass participation in an internal doctrinal battle.

[12] The historiography of English Puritanism is exemplary here. For particularly important and useful steps in the rethinking of the concept, see Patrick Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement, London 1967, 22–28; idem, Towards a Broader Understanding of the Early Dissenting Tradition, in: idem., Godly People. Essays in English Puritanism and Protestantism, London 1983, 527–562; Basil Hall, Puritanism. The Problem of Definition, in: Basil Hall, Humanists and Protestants 1590–1900, Edinburgh 1990, 237–254; John Spurr, English Puritanism, New York 1998, 17–27.

4. Even before Reinhard and Schilling started to emphasize functional similarities between the three major post-Reformation confessions, historians of Catholicism such as H. E. Evennett, Jean Delumeau, and E.W. Zeeden had begun to call attention to the parallels that could be observed between the «two Reformations», Protestant and Catholic, and to highlight the ways in which changes within Catholicism encouraged modernizing tendencies similar to those long imputed exclusively or predominantly to Protestantism.[13] As a result of this work, the rival confessions now look more and more like brothers under the skin. Historians see that they deployed similar methods to reform the clergy and undertook parallel attempts to purge folk culture of elements deemed superstitious, lascivious, or diabolical. Their most widely disseminated works of spirituality often contained very similar prayers, spiritual counsels, and guidelines for living a properly Christian life. What it may now be time to ask is whether or not the emphasis on the similarities between the rival confession has not been carried so far that it is in danger of obscuring certain very real differences between them. We need more studies that carefully compare the attitudes and behavior of different confessional groups with regard to specific issues, both those linked closely to religious life, such as practices of prayer, the experience of communion, and the contents of and audience for the most widely disseminated devotional works, and those where religion enters into play with wider social ramifications, such as education, attitudes toward magic and witchcraft, and consumption. We especially need more studies that examine what we might call the religious psychology of different groups in an explicitly or implicitly comparative fashion, so that we can better answer the question: in what ways and to what extent was the lived religious experience of the members of the different post-Reformation confessions truly similar in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and in what ways and to what extent did it diverge according to confessional affiliation?

Here a caveat must also immediately be added. In order to make truly useful comparisons *between* confessions, we also need to understand the range and geography of variation *within* each major post-Reformation confessional family. This is necessary so that we can be sure that the local examples chosen for investigation within such comparative studies are more broadly typical of the confession they are taken to represent – or, if there was no one typical form of a given confession, so that we can situate the instance studied with reference to the range of forms and practices found within the confession. One of the most important lessons I learned from my work on European Calvinism is that the experience of being a member of a Reformed church in the seventeenth century was very different in France from what it was in England. It was different again in Hungary, in Switzerland, or in Scotland. *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed*

[13] H. Outram Evennett, The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation, Cambridge 1968; Jean Delumeau, Le Catholicisme entre Luther et Voltaire, Paris 1971; Ernst Walter Zeeden, Die Entstehung der Konfessionen. Grundlagen und Formen der Konfessionsbildung im Zeitalter der Glaubenskämpfe, Munich-Vienna 1965; idem, Konfessionsbildung. Studien zur Reformation, Gegenreformation und katholischen Reform, Stuttgart 1985. This theme was further developed in the work of John Bossy and Louis Châtellier.

is in large measure an attempt to map and account for the differences that exist within a single confessional tradition.[14] Comparable overviews of post-Reformation Lutheranism and Catholicism would greatly advance our ability to select appropriate cases for comparative study and to interpret the results of comparative studies once these have been carried out.[15]

5. The simplest questions often yield the most illuminating findings. This is especially true of questions that demand quantitative answers, since these often reveal previously unsuspected trends or phenomena, generating in turn new questions. For my work on the Huguenot minority in the seventeenth century, some of the questions that took me the farthest were such simple ones as: How many Huguenots were there? How did their numbers change over time as their legal and political situation deteriorated? What books did they read? For a group whose religious culture was previously little known, and whose vitality prior to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was debated, these questions served to reveal the basic building blocks of group identity and a high degree of fidelity to the cause marked by some surprising regional and chronological variations. Older works such as Michel Vovelle's *Piété baroque et déchristianisation en Provence* (1973) and Richard Kagan's *Students and Society in Early Modern Spain* (1974) and *Lawsuits and Litigants in Castile, 1500–1700* (1981) provide still more eloquent reminders of how simple questions that lend themselves to quantitative answers can bring to light important long-term changes whose precise chronology and geography offers a jumping off point for investigating the causes of these changes.

The defense of simple questions seems important at a moment when historians are perhaps more aware than ever before of the necessity of interrogating the concepts they use, when young researchers may feel pushed to affiliate themselves with a distinctive theoretical or methodological approach even before they have advanced very far into their research, and when for these reasons it is easy to fear that asking questions that seem too simple can stigmatize one as theoretically naive or even – horror of horrors! – positivist. The defense of questions that lend themselves to quantitative answers is important at a moment when the «cultural turn» has made the kind of serial, quantitative history that was all the rage a generation ago appear *démodé* in many corners of the historical profession, and when some leading young religious historians are arguing that the only appropriate way to study religion is through a hermeneutic that seeks to understand believers in terms and with categories that they themselves would have understood.[16] Future work on situations of religious pluriformity in early modern

[14] For a more specific comparative study focused upon religious psychology see my Two Calvinisms, in: Benedict, Faith and Fortunes (see footnote 1), 208–228.

[15] R. Po-Chia Hsia, The World of Catholic Renewal 1540–1770, Cambridge 1998 offers a short survey of Post-Reformation Catholicism attentive to regional and national variation.

[16] See especially Brad S. Gregory, Salvation at Stake. Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe, Cambridge Mass. 1999, esp. 8–15; idem, The Other Confessional History. On Secular Bias in the Study of Religion, in: History and Theory, 45 (2006), 132–149. For somewhat different, and in my view more convincing, takes on the applicability to pre-modern religion

Europe can only benefit from more attempts to answer questions such as «how did the ranks of the different confessions change over time?» or «what books did the members of each group read?», questions that are indeed simple to formulate, but are not always easy in practice to answer. The more firm quantitative elements of information we possess about the sociology and culture of different religious groups in different situations of uniformity and pluriformity, the better we will be able to understand the dynamics of religious coexistence and confessional identity-formation, the points of similarity between the members of different religious groups, and the extent and implications of the differences between them.

The variety and complexity of Ancien Régime Switzerland's political arrangements, as well as the closeness of the governing authorities to the population, make the Confederation a fascinating laboratory within which to study early modern religious and cultural history. Some of the earliest attempts to negotiate Catholic-Protestant coexistence in Europe took place here. The challenge of adapting to religious pluriformity had to be met at the level of individual communities, the cantons or territories, and the Confederation as a whole. If a dichotomy was soon established between the confessional homogeneity of the great majority of sovereign cantons and a complex variety of situations of pluralism in the joint dominions and allied territories, no solution was immune from further testing and renegotiation over the subsequent centuries. The multiplicity of territorial churches meant that, even within this small compass, some of the same variety that can be observed among the different Reformed churches of Europe also marked the region's Reformed churches. Pietism took root in parts of the Confederation. Few corners of Europe lend themselves better to comparative studies of Catholic and Protestant religious life and behavior within a shared socio-economic landscape. For all these reasons, the observations offered in this essay apply with special force to the Swiss case.

The same elements of variety and complexity that make Switzerland such a fascinating laboratory for early modern religious history can also encourage the proliferation of inward-looking local histories conceived within a narrow cantonal or regional framework. To exploit this laboratory's exceptional potential to the fullest, and to ensure that the results of research about Swiss religious history obtain the wide international audience that the subject merits, awareness of, and engagement with, the international literature is essential. So too is engagement with the largest and most promising questions and paradigms relevant to one's chosen topic. To say this is not to say anything that the best students of the subject have not already understood, but it offers a justification of these brief remarks.

of some contemporary analytical categories drawn from the social sciences, see Fritz Ringer, Max Weber's Methodology. The Unification of the Cultural and Social Sciences, Cambridge Ma. 1997; Philippe Buc, Dangereux rituel. De l'histoire médiévale aux sciences sociales, Paris 2003, esp. 290–292; Jonathan Sheehan, Sacred and Profane. Idolatry, Antiquarianism and the Polemics of Distinction in the Seventeenth Century, in: Past and Present, 192 (2006), 35–66, esp. 65.

Thinking About Religion and Society in the 17th and 18th Century. Confessionalization, The History of Toleration, and Beyond

The focus of research activity within the broad field of Reformation history has recently shifted from the initial years of the Reformation to the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Two topics have especially captured the attention of researchers and account for this trend: 1. the confessionalization thesis of Heinz Schilling and Wolfgang Reinhardt; and 2. the renewed interest in what was once called «the history of toleration» and is now likely to be conceptualized as the study of confessional co-existence. This essay offers a brief critical appraisal of the gains and limits of each of these foci of research and then seeks to suggest a number of equally important topics or themes in the history of the long Reformation era that have not yet attracted the attention they deserve.

Gedanken über Religion und Gesellschaft im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert. Konfessionalisierung, die Geschichte der Toleranz und darüber hinaus

Das Augenmerk der Forschungstätigkeit im breiten Spektrum der Reformationsgeschichte hat sich in letzter Zeit von der Untersuchung der Anfangsjahre der Reformation zum späten 16. und 17. Jahrhundert hin verschoben. In erster Linie zwei Themen haben die Aufmerksamkeit der Forscher erlangt und zeugen für diesen Trend: 1. Die Konfessionalisierungsthese von Heinz Schilling und Wolfgang Reinhardt und 2. das erneuerte Interesse, was die früher genannte «Toleranzgeschichte» betrifft und nun unter dem Konzept der konfessionellen Koexistenz gefasst wird. Dieser Beitrag bietet eine kurze Beurteilung des Nutzens und der Grenzen dieser Forschungsschwerpunkte und möchte eine Anzahl wichtiger Themen in der Geschichte der Reformation nennen, die noch nicht die Aufmerksamkeit erhalten haben, die ihnen gebührt.

Pensées sur la religion et la société aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles: Confessionnalisation, l'histoire de la tolérance et au-delà

Dans le large spectre de l'histoire de la Réforme, l'objet de la recherche a récemment glissé des premières années de la Réforme à la fin du XVIe et au XVIIe siècles. Deux thèmes ont spécialement attiré l'attention des chercheurs et représentent cette tendance: 1. la thèse de la confessionnalisation de Heinz Schilling et Wolfgang Reinhardt; et 2. l'intérêt renouvelé pour ce qui fut appelé «l'histoire de la tolérance» et qui devrait désormais plutôt être conceptualisé comme l'étude de la coexistence confessionnelle. Cet essai offre une brève évaluation critique des apports et des limites de ces objets de recherche, puis tente de proposer quelques thèmes ou sujets tout aussi importants pour l'histoire de la longue période de la Réforme qui n'a toujours pas reçu l'attention qu'elle mérite.

Keywords – Schlüsselwörter – Mots clés

Confessionalization – Konfessioanlisierung – confessionalisation, confessional co-existence – konfessionelle Koexistenz – coexistence confessionnelle, toleration – Toleranz – toleration, pietism – Pietismus – piétisme, further reformation – lange Reformation – longue période de la Réforme, puritanism – Puritanismus – puritanisme

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