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Matthias Pohlig. *Zwischen Gelehrsamkeit und konfessioneller Identitätsstiftung: Lutherische Kirchen- und Universalgeschichtsschreibung 1546-1617.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007. 589 S. EUR 99.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-16-149191-7.

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History and Identity

This book is an extensive, fascinating examination of a complex but extremely important topic. It brilliantly navigates notions of history and religious identity at an extremely important point in German history. Matthias Pohlig asserts that historical writing in this period–and I might add in all periods–was about more than a narrow narration of events; it was not separated from the author's (confessional) self-description and examination of his own past. As a result, Pohlig asks two basic questions: How and why did Lutherans of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries write history and to what extent was their historical writing related to their "confessional identity"? Pohlig focuses his attention specifically on the development of Lutheran identity within this broad historiographical understanding, from Luther's death in 1546 until the first Reformation anniversary in 1617.

Pohlig asserts that, apart from some individual studies, little research has been conducted on the historiography of the Reformation period. Pohlig very wisely locates historiography in early modern Germany in a broad tradition of any text that engaged the past, allowing him to examine a wide range of sources, which he divides into two broad categories: universal histories, such as chronicles, chronological treatises, academic speeches or collections of lives, as well as martyrologies and sermons; and church historical writings, including exegetical literature.

Pohlig provides a broad background to scholarly discussions of confessionalization, with particular attention to the role of identity and historiography, broadly speaking. He also discusses the meaning of the designation, "Lutheran," and points out that the initial descriptor was inveighed negatively as a part of religious polemic. (The term, he argues, was first used in a positive sense in Gnesio-Lutheran circles and among adherents to the Book of Concord.) Here, Pohlig asserts that memory is one among other factors (including theology and dogma) by which the identity of a group is constituted. He suggests that in the conceptualization of an evangelical identity sixteenth-century reformers had to balance the action of drawing boundaries to other confessions at the same time with continued engagement with a broader past that represented a lost ideal and that could not simply be rejected out of hand. Here and throughout Pohlig

has done an excellent job reviewing the growing scholarship on history and memory.

The volume also includes an extensive discussion of the expanding nature and function of historiography in the later Middle Ages and the sixteenth century, particularly the role of study in the humanities. Such a humanities orientation did not disappear in the sixteenth century. Rather, it was in a sense co-opted in confessionalization and functionalized to help produce religious identity. Pohlig correctly notes that in the seventeenth century, schools and universities were not primary areas of historical negotiation. History in the sixteenth century often drew from biblical models and moral exemplars. This general orientation informed Luther's writing about history, and even that of Philip Melanchthon. As such, Luther's conception of history was not systematic (and certainly not source-critical in the modern sense) and, Pohlig argues, must be approached from multiple points, which both affected and were played out in succeeding generations of Lutheran writers. For Luther, all history was a battle between uneven principles–God and the devil; the true and false churches; the city of God and the city of earth–with a real apocalyptic stamp.

As one test case of the role of history, Pohlig traces the presentation of Luther as both a charismatic founding figure and an individual of the past, focusing on representations of Luther as saint, preacher, and prophet. Here Pohlig musters a wide range of sources, including numerous images, sermons, and martyrologies from the early sixteenth century. Pohlig also traces the development of a broader, self-memorialization of the Reformation as a result of the 1617 anniversary, which built upon models of both Catholic and university jubilees. An important point reiterated in the publications associated with the jubilee was that the Reformation did not lead to a new religion, but that it was a restoration of the old religion.

In section 3, Pohlig provides an illuminating discussion of the evolving differences between universal and church historical writing, and consequently the relationship between spiritual and worldly spheres, distinguishing particularly the approaches of Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer, and eventually Jean Calvin on the one hand and Lutherans on the other. He compares Protestant and Catholic universal histories and reviews an impressive array of texts. In this context, Pohlig devotes a good deal of attention to Melanchthon's notion of history, as well as to several other historians, including Leipzig history professor MatthÃ¤us Dresser and Strasbourg theologian Johannes Pappus. In each case, Pohlig evaluates the relationship of secular and religious history, the place of the Reformation, and attitudes toward broader church history and the papacy. Pohlig provides a comparative look at the historiography of Sebastian Franck, whose somewhat new conception of universal history he contrasts with the traditional orientation of some of Melanchthon's successors.

Pohlig directs some attention to the moral use of historical writing and particularly to the use of collections of exempla in historical writing. He also explores Lutheran imperial histories and biographies (often with a very clear national impetus). Similar national orientations are revealed in hero books as well, such as the *Heldenbuch* of Heinrich Pantaleon (1567).

Church history, according to Pohlig, played an important role in helping to define Lutheranism–true teaching and ceremonies–and set its boundaries by delineating heretics and schismatics, even when boundaries between orthodoxy and heterodoxy were dissolving in some Lutheran circles. One related purpose of Lutheran church historical writing was to describe the rise and fall of the papacy and to chart its connections with the Antichrist and the apocalypse.

In this context of church history Pohlig discusses a wide range of sources. Hagiographies and martyrologies, for example, helped to strengthen faith, while providing examples of God's grace and the way to lead one's life. Again, Protestant examples of such texts walked a fine line between co-opting figures and events from the common Christian past while returning to genuine Christian practice and separating Lutheran from Catholic practice. In some cases, late medieval figures such as Jan Hus and Girolamo Savonarola were raised to the level of martyrs for challenging the corrupt church, though both of these cases could be complicated by their antagonism to the German emperor. Calendars and almanacs represent another rich genre that addressed a wide range of topics, including prognostications as well as various historical themes. The calendar genre continued to be expanded to include various aspects of universal history, and it increasingly served to establish confessional identities. In part such tasks were accomplished by selecting certain (positive or negative) historical events to narrate. Finally, Pohlig considers commentaries on the biblical book of Revelations as a form of church historical writing. For Pohlig, discussions of the "last times" and the "antichrist" were ubiquitous throughout sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Lutheran historical and exegetical writing. This theme allows Pohlig to consider

the broad relationship between exegesis and history.

This rich, informative book adds a great deal to our thinking about history and raises some very significant questions about confessional identity. Its evaluation of sources by genre does lead to some repetition and at times it misses the opportunity for broader cohesion and integration; nevertheless, the volume is well organized and it includes a helpful summary conclusion. In the end, this volume explores a rich range of sources. It is a much-needed study that contributes a great deal to the evolving scholarship on early modern historiography.

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