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Catholic Confessionalism in Germany after 1650

Marc R. Forster

German Catholicism developed in several different directions after the Thirty Years' War. The basic institutional structures of the imperial church, the Reichskirche, characterized by the secular authority of prince-bishops and many abbots, remained very stable for at least the century after 1650. Most Catholics continued to live in confessional states in which church and state were closely linked. At the same time, both church and state moved away from militant confessional politics and activist intervention in local religion. The confessional state, even in its most developed forms in Austria and Bavaria, became more bureaucratic in practice, while turning more and more to propaganda and education in its efforts to influence and guide the religious life of the people.

This article will focus on these developments within church and state institutions. At the same time, it is important to recognize that these institutional changes occurred in the context of the full flowering of Baroque Catholicism and under the influence of important changes in the character of the clergy. German Catholicism was characterized by the development of a vibrant religious practice and a baroque culture that transcended social and regional differences. Catholics across German lands embraced pilgrimages, confraternities, the cult of the Virgin Mary, and an increasingly elaborate liturgy, most of it practiced within the framework of the approved church practices. Meanwhile, the development of devotional literature, church music, schools, and the building of churches and monasteries spread baroque culture to all levels of society. Catholic culture developed its own characteristic forms, often in contrast to Protestantism, but its most important structures after 1650 were its dynamism, its continued regional diversity, and its churchliness, that is the predominantly church-centered nature of popular practice. Because of the dynamism of Baroque Catholicism, the close church-state ties that characterized the territorial confessional state and the stability of church institutions did not lead to a rigid orthodoxy in popular practice.

Widespread Catholic confessional identity developed after 1650 in the context
of this dynamic and elaborate Baroque religiosity. This was a new stage of confessionalization with a different focus from that in the decades before the Thirty Years' War. In the earlier period, Catholic leaders focused their attention on reforming the clergy and reorienting elite religious practices. This effort was characterized, as all scholars of confessionalization emphasize, by close cooperation between state officials and church authorities. After 1650, this state sponsored confessionalization became far less important, as church and state authorities turned more to bureaucratic and routinized methods. By 1700, confessional identity and a sense of churchliness among German Catholics had become anchored among the wider population through the religious practices of Baroque Catholicism. This was, in important ways, a confessionalization from below.

The clergy evolved in new ways within this religious culture. As a consequence of new educational institutions, more stable career paths, and better financial conditions, the professional performance and social status of parish priests improved markedly. The role of the religious orders within German Catholicism also evolved. On the one hand, the older orders like the Benedictines claimed a place as important elements in rural religion, especially in southern German lands. On the other hand, the Jesuits declined in importance in many places, often losing influence to the Capuchins, who especially benefited from the explosion of pilgrimage piety.

The Reichskirche

The Peace of Westphalia stabilized the constitutional structure of the Holy Roman Empire and secured for the next century and a half the continued existence of the institutions of the imperial church. Stability and security, together with the decline of religious conflict with Protestantism, led in turn to a sense of confidence and even self-satisfaction at the higher levels of the church in Germany. The sense of crisis and the fear of further Protestant gains that energized Catholic leaders in the decades around 1600 faded after 1650. Furthermore, the fear of secularization by the large territorial states declined, at least until the middle of the eighteenth century.

The constitutional and institutional stability of the empire was especially important for the ecclesiastical states. These states were not inconsequential. In the early eighteenth century, 65 ecclesiastical princes governed 3.0 to 3.5 million subjects (about 12 per cent of the population of the empire), and about 14 per cent of the land. Some of these states were important middle-

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1 Gerhard Benecke, "The German Reichskirche," in William J. Callahan and David Higgs, eds, Church and Society in Catholic Europe of the 18th Century (Cambridge, 1979), 80. For comparison, secular princes governed 22.5 million subjects, imperial cities and secular lords one million each, imperial knights 0.5 million.
sized territories, like the Electorate of Mainz, which had 300,000 inhabitants. Other ecclesiastical principalities were tiny, like the many monasteries of the southwestern part of the empire whose territories were really clusters of villages with a few hundred to a few thousand inhabitants. Stability and complacency led to two somewhat contradictory developments in religious affairs in these states. On the one hand, ecclesiastical rulers saw less need to impose the kind of disciplinary measures designed to “clean up” local religious practices. On the other hand, these states, following the lead of the secular states, worked to build more active and efficient secular administrations.

The incubator of the Old Reich permitted particularism to dominate the imperial church, thereby enhancing the local character of German Catholicism. Tridentine reformers, especially the papal nuncios and the Jesuits, had tried to counter this tendency by pushing the German church to adopt the Tridentine model of church reform. If this effort had some success before the Thirty Years’ War, after 1650 few German bishops modeled themselves after Carlo Borromeo, and cathedral canons, abbots and abbesses, monks and nuns were much less inclined to accept the need for far-reaching reform measures. The secular clergy, both among the non-noble officials in episcopal and state service and among the parish priests, was the one group that continued to look to the Council of Trent as a guide for their personal and professional lives.

German prince-bishops did not completely abandon the ideal of the pastoral bishop, but most found the role of secular ruler more amenable. Some became quite active in imperial politics after 1650. This trend began during the Thirty Years’ War, when in 1632 the Archbishop-Elector of Trier, Philip Christoph von Sötern, abandoned the Catholic-Imperial coalition to form an alliance with France. Von Sötern feared the expansion of Habsburg power and believed the French would be a useful counter-force in the empire. He should perhaps not be overly criticized for underestimating the long-term French threat; furthermore, his policy was a clear failure and in 1635 the archbishop was captured by imperial forces and spent twelve years in prison.

Von Sötern’s foray into European and Imperial politics was taken up (with more success) after 1650 by Johann Philip von Schönborn, the Archbishop-Elector of Mainz. Called by his admirers the “German Solomon” for his successes in the negotiations that produced the Peace of Westphalia, von Schönborn was the founder of an ecclesiastical dynasty that would give its

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name to the whole period of German church history. After 1648, he worked to organize the smaller and middling states of the empire into a “third Germany” that could serve as a political balance between France and Austria. Von Schönborn initially feared Habsburg power and organized a “Rhine Union” in 1658 that included France, but after 1661 he reversed course, supporting the Habsburgs against the ever more threatening Louis XIV.

Johann Philip’s influential nephew, LotharFranz von Schönborn, was also active in Imperial politics. As bishop and ruler of Bamberg and Mainz from the 1690s until his death in 1729, von Schönborn kept a number of clear goals in mind. A primary concern remained to maintain the empire in its current configuration, as a federal union of independent territories. The prince-bishop was also convinced that warfare was the greatest danger to the smaller states of the empire. By the 1690s, of course, France constituted the greatest military threat, although von Schönborn continued to fear the Protestant powers as well. Like his uncle, Lothar Franz believed that associations of smaller states were needed to prevent the destruction of the empire and, furthermore, that the ecclesiastical principalities should take the lead in such groupings. His success in organizing these associations contributed to the revival of various regional imperial institutions like the imperial circles (Kreise) that were so important to the survival of the empire through the eighteenth century.

Of course the Schönborns had a familial interest in the survival of the empire and the imperial church. Indeed, the von Schönborn family is one of the great success stories of the German church. This Franconian noble family exploited its connections with the church to expand its wealth and landholdings until it was one of the richest noble families in Germany. Along the way, the von Schönborns achieved first free imperial status and then were made counts in 1701. Members of the family held 33 positions in various

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cathedral chapters and 12 of these men became bishops, and one, Damien Hugo, was made cardinal. Alfred Schröcker has shown in depth how the von Schönborn bishops used their patronage – control of appointments to administrative positions in the Hochstifte (prince-bishoprics), influence in the elections of bishops and even emperors – to secure property and wealth for the family and positions in the church for nephews. In particular, the von Schönborns cultivated ties with other noble families that were active in the imperial church in order to divide the spoils and secure control over the key episcopal sees.

Developments in the cathedral chapters also reflect the security and even complacency of the imperial church. The Domkapitel had always been predominantly aristocratic – the cathedral prebends in Cologne and Strasbourg were reserved for counts, those along the Rhine and Main for free imperial knights – but over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the chapters systematically excluded non-noble canons. Furthermore, the chapters became more reluctant after 1650 to admit members of princely families like the Habsburgs and Wittelsbachs. The canons no longer felt the need for princely protection, as they had in the period 1580–1620, when a number of princes were elected bishops. Noble canons also entered the chapters at ever younger ages, in violation of church statutes and the decrees of the Council of Trent. In the knightly chapters in the west new canons were often thirteen or fourteen years old and in the other noble chapters twenty-two to twenty-four. Canons also and increasingly held benefices in two or more chapters. Few canons performed the ecclesiastical or liturgical functions associated with their positions, leaving those duties to middle-class clerics. These trends are all signs that there was little concern with Tridentine decrees about age or clerical qualifications for canons.

As they had for centuries, cathedral chapters continued to fill two roles. They were Versorgungsstätten des Adels, that is, institutions that provided well-endowed benefices for sons of noble families and allowed them to live a lifestyle appropriate to their rank. It was even possible, with good planning, the application of patronage, and a little luck, to be elected bishop and thereby achieve princely status. Cathedral chapters also had a political function in the ecclesiastical states, where they functioned as a kind of estates, with the duty to help the bishop govern the territory, while also restraining his power. Both these functions gained in importance after 1650, for several reasons. The competition for positions in the chapters intensified as some noble families

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9 Hersche, *Das deutsche Domkapitel*, esp. vol. II.
10 The knightly chapters were those along the so-called Pfaffenpass ("priests’ alley") that is Bamberg, Würzburg, Mainz, Trier, Speyer, and Worms where only men from families of free imperial knights were elected.
converted to Catholicism, while others had larger numbers of children, which meant more young men competed for a fixed number of positions. At the same time, stability in the empire meant a declining interest in church reform and reduced the canons' already limited interest in spiritual matters. The chapters' social and political functions, together with a growing tendency to recruit canons from the regional aristocracy, also meant that the cathedral chapters contributed forcefully to the particularism of the German church.

The heavy engagement of prince-bishops in Imperial politics and in the administration of their states was mirrored at the regional level by the smaller ecclesiastical princes. The great abbeys, commandaries of the Teutonic Knights, and the collegiate chapters were increasingly well organized in defending their "liberties." In Swabia, for example, the abbots of the richest monasteries were active in the affairs of the Swabian Circle, which helped them work with the neighboring secular lords to protect their independence.12 Leaders of the imperial church of the seventeenth and eighteenth century generally withdrew from engagement with wider notions of reform within the Catholic Church and instead immersed themselves in German and regional politics. This focus led them to develop the administration of their own principalities and brought them into more conflict with the increasingly organized secular states.

Confessionalization after 1650

Catholics living in the larger states, secular and ecclesiastical, had to deal with increasingly efficient and well-organized states. As before the Thirty Years' War, princes and their officials embraced "confessionalization," that is policies aimed at creating religious unity, a disciplined clergy, a financially solvent church, and a pious and obedient population. The difference between the policies of Catholic leaders of the later seventeenth century and those of the princes in the decades around 1600, like Julius Echter von Mespelbrunn the (in)famous Bishop of Würzburg, was first of all one of tone. The urgency and sense of crisis that marked the Counter-Reformation era were gone, replaced by a sense of security and a bureaucratization of the confessional state.13 Furthermore, after 1650, this new atmosphere led Catholic leaders to turn away from policies oriented toward social discipline and to give priority to methods of persuasion, propaganda, and representation.

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12 Vann, The Swabian Kreis, esp. 43-6. See also Konstantin Maier, Die Diskussion um Kirche und Reform im schwäbischen Reichsprälatenkongress zur Zeit der Aufklärung (Wiesbaden, 1978).

The Catholic Church, because of its status as an international organization and its historically based immunities and privileges, could never be fully incorporated into the state, as was the case in Protestant principalities. However, in the ecclesiastical territories, especially the larger Hochstifte, prince-bishops held both secular and ecclesiastical authority. In these territories there could be a real unity of purpose between church and state. Some prince-bishops attempted to take advantage of this congruence of power and authority.

Christoph Bernhard von Galen, the Prince-Bishop of Münster from 1650 to 1678, followed policies designed to create a model confessional state. Von Galen was an energetic and ambitious ruler who embraced both state-building and church reform. Because Münster had not experienced much reform before the war and because of the destruction of the 1630s and 1640s, the bishop had to start from the beginning. He began by working to remove occupying Protestant troops from the towns of the Hochstift followed by a concerted effort to root out Protestant inhabitants, especially in the city of Münster, where he ordered Protestants to be excluded from public office.

Von Galen considered himself a Tridentine bishop of the Borromean model, and began his episcopate by publishing the decrees of the Council of Trent. In classic fashion, he followed the publication of the decrees with a series of "reform synods" where the bishop often personally admonished the clergy to obey Trent. As Manfred Becker-Huberti points out, reform synods were quite unusual in the late seventeenth century, but von Galen held them twice a year for 28 years! The synods were backed up by episcopal visits. Between 1654 and 1656, the bishop personally visited 54 of the larger parishes in his diocese (about 1/3 of the parishes visited), while his officials visited all the rest of the diocese. This was one of the few times a German bishop personally conducted visitsations and it apparently had considerable impact on local people.

Von Galen also attempted to put institutions in place that would ensure the continuity of reform. Here he was less successful because he faced considerable
opposition from the cathedral chapter in Münster and from the archdeacons. The latter had traditionally exercised ecclesiastical jurisdiction at the local level, for example investing new priests and adjudicated marriage cases. As required by Trent, von Galen attempted to take these powers away from the archdeacons. In this he failed, as the archdeacons had the support of the cathedral chapter; instead he tried, with a bit more success, to keep the archdeacons in place but subordinate them to the bishop.\footnote{Becker-Huberti, \textit{Die tridentinische Reform im Bistum Münster}, 57–67.} Furthermore, in an attempt to bypass the archdeacons, von Galen revived a moribund clerical council (\textit{geistliche Rat}), but it never gained any real authority.\footnote{Becker-Huberti, \textit{Die tridentinische Reform im Bistum Münster}, 68–77.} Von Galen also failed, despite a variety of plans, to find the financial resources to open a seminary.

The example of Münster shows that in many ways little had changed since before the Thirty Years' War. The impact of Tridentine reform depended on the person of the bishop. An activist like von Galen might make a considerable impact on the lives of the clergy, and perhaps even the population as a whole. On the other hand, even the combination of secular and episcopal power in the hands of a prince-bishop could not overcome the power of cathedral chapters and great monasteries and many essential Tridentine institutions could not be created. The structure of the imperial church continued to limit the development of the ideal confessional state. In most of Catholic Germany there was little of the kind of reform pushed by Bishop von Galen.

\textbf{Cologne}

Although they were all members of the Bavarian Wittelsbach family, the archbishop-electors of Cologne did not create a well-developed confessional state in their territory. It is revealing, for example, that the decrees of the Council of Trent were only incorporated into diocesan law in 1662 and that an episcopal seminary was not created until the eighteenth century.\footnote{Thomas Paul Becker, \textit{Konfessionalisierung in Kurköln} (Bonn, 1989), xiv–xv.} Nevertheless an effort to restart Tridentine reform occurred in Cologne and, as in many German dioceses, a 1662 diocesan synod attempted to inspire a new reform impulse.

Church authorities used regular visitations as their primary method of controlling and reforming local Catholicism. Over the course of the seventeenth century, however, the visitations became increasingly bureaucratic. Around 1700, for example, diocesan officials developed a printed list of questions, allowing the visitor to fill in the results of his investigation. Furthermore, the forms were often sent in advance to parish
priests so they could fill them in before episcopal officials came to visit. As Thomas Paul Becker points out, episcopal archivists loved the printed forms and carefully saved them: “To be sure, this improved archiving is a sign of the tendency to change the visitation from a ceremonial act to a bureaucratic act.”

The secular authorities in Cologne did little to help visitors. Any absolutist tendencies on the part of the archbishop-electors were undermined by the powerful cathedral chapter, and this weakened the state. The recommendations and decrees inspired by visitations were ignored and the punishments imposed were often minimal. If there occurred little confessionalization here, at least relations between episcopal visitors and those they investigated (parish priests and the local population) were cordial and relaxed. Again, as Becker puts it: “... in a small state with weak central authority, neither the behavior of the population nor the pressure from the authorities was of the kind to give rise to strong emotions [about religious practice].”

Visitations in Cologne, and elsewhere, increasingly focused on the material and financial condition of parishes, a further indication of the bureaucratization of the confessional state. This new focus came at the expense of concern about heretics and meant fewer questions about the quality and work of the clergy as well. In a sense, as many scholars argue, the interest in buildings, decoration of churches, and finances is a sign that the confessionalization process had (logically) reached an advanced stage. In the 1650s, to be sure, a concern with material conditions was necessary in the wake of the Thirty Years’ War.

Würzburg

Developments in the Franconian bishopric of Würzburg followed a similar pattern. Here again, bishops attempting to strengthen the ecclesiastical state faced entrenched resistance from the cathedral chapter. The canons played a role in the appointment of many important state officials, approved new taxes, and governed the Hochstift in the absence of the bishop. In this context, the power of the bishop depended on “the personality, the desire for power

20 Becker, Konfessionalisierung in Kurköltn, 9–12, quote 12.
21 Becker, Konfessionalisierung in Kurköltn, 24–6, quote 25.
(Machtnanspruch), and the tactical ability of each individual bishop.” Some administrative rationalization took place in Würzburg in the late seventeenth century, particularly in the financial bureaucracy. Overall, however, the Hochstift was relatively decentralized and under-administered, having, for example, no intermediate officials between the central government and local officials.

Under these conditions, church reformers could not expect the consistent and effective support of secular officials. In any case, Bishop Johann Philip von Schönborn (ruled Würzburg 1642–73) was not inclined to re-institute the aggressive anti-Protestant policies of the pre-war period. Von Schönborn was known for his willingness to compromise with the Protestants and even devised plans for the reunification of the confessions. Within the dioceses he governed (Mainz and Worms, as well as Würzburg) von Schönborn clearly preferred persuasion to force. He did produce a new church ordinance for Würzburg in 1668, based on the 1584 rural statutes of the Counter-Reformation bishop Julius Echter von Mespelbrunn, but most of von Schönborn’s policies emphasized revitalizing the liturgy. The bishop wrote and published new hymns and advocated a preaching style based on scripture. Like many bishops of this era he also ordered the publication of new liturgical books. After 1650, the Hochstift Würzburg was certainly a confessional state in a formal sense, which meant that Protestant inhabitants were not tolerated and church attendance was mandatory, but neither the church nor the state showed much interest in extensively regulating (or disciplining) local religion.

Similar developments took place in the smaller ecclesiastical territories in western and southwestern Germany. The bishops of Augsburg, for example, demonstrated little interest in church reform and the small Hochstift they governed was lightly administered and dominated by a powerful cathedral chapter. Several mid-eighteenth-century episcopal decrees demonstrate the focus of church policy. The bureaucratic impulse is reflected in a 1749 decree ordering parish priests to submit statistics about the number of confessions heard and the number of masses said. In 1764 priests were admonished to preach each Sunday and holiday, hold catechism lessons, and keep proper parish registers.

In the southwest, the bishops of Constance continued to send episcopal visitations into the countryside. This regular activity is a sign that the Tridentine impulse remained important after 1650. As in Münster, church officials, especially in the clerical council in Constance, continued to invoke the decrees of the council and lament the ways in which the local church did not measure up to Tridentine models.\(^{28}\) The reports produced by the visitors were, in contrast to the reports from the period around 1600, usually remarkably terse lists of benefices, priests, confraternities, and financial resources. Here too there was a tendency to make the work of church administration bureaucratic and routine.

Even the largest Catholic secular states, Bavaria and Austria, moved away from religiously oriented politics. Bavaria remained a deeply Catholic confessional state, but, as Alois Schmid puts it, “in the period of court and enlightenment absolutism the religious basis of politics was no longer as dominant as it had been in the early period of confessional absolutism, when the church gave goals and direction to the state.”\(^{29}\) Indeed, princes and officials in Bavaria now saw Catholicism almost exclusively as a tool for strengthening loyalty to the state. This shift was most obvious in foreign policy, where the Bavarian electors found themselves caught between France and Austria. In the 1740s, Elector Max III Joseph even abandoned the traditional French alliance to fight with the Protestant powers, England and Holland.\(^{30}\)

Ecclesiastical structures in Bavaria were further stabilized in the century after 1650. The clerical council, which had exerted considerable influence over policies before the Thirty Years’ War, developed an increasingly bureaucratic character. The membership of the council was stabilized at seven ecclesiastical and three secular members. In the early eighteenth century special sub-committees (Spezialdeputationen) were created, with a panel for converts, a deputation for administering the “Turkish taxes,” and a censorship committee. Soon thereafter, the council organized its own chancellery and archives. Founded to promote and manage church reform, the clerical council had become a normal, indeed unremarkable, part of the central administration in Munich.\(^{31}\)


Although the Bavarian state continued to seek the creation of an exclusively Bavarian diocese, it also strengthened its position vis-à-vis the eight bishops who exerted ecclesiastical authority in Bavaria. A series of agreements, called Resesse, were negotiated regulating the Concordat of 1583; in most cases these agreements strengthened the hand of state officials and limited church privileges.\textsuperscript{32} Conflicts between church and state were never of course put to rest, but there was a certain ritualistic character to the disputes over taxes and jurisdiction.

As the Bavarian state became more bureaucratic – and correspondingly less active and interventionist – the court and the ruling Wittelsbach family continued to develop and promote a particular Bavarian religious style.\textsuperscript{33} The Pietas Bavaria owes much to Archduke Maximilian I (ruled 1598–1651), whose personal piety became legendary after his death. Maximilian and his successors promoted Marian devotions of all kinds, symbolized by the Mariensäule (Marian column) on the Marienplatz in Munich, which was copied in other Bavarian cities and towns. Pilgrimage shrines, especially the Bavarian “national” shrine at Altötting were another central feature of the Pietas Bavaria. The Wittelsbach promotion of these practices was very public: the princes and their families went on pilgrimage, participated in processions and public church services, joined confraternities, and named their daughters – and sons – Maria. They also gave financial and political support to particular practices, funding, for example, the importation of relics from Italy and the construction of new monasteries at pilgrimage shrines. Most visibly, the Bavarian state supported the construction and reconstruction of many churches and monasteries, above all in Munich, but also in the countryside. In the long run, the promoters of the Pietas Bavaria aspired to move beyond the court and the city of Munich and hoped to influence the Bavarian population as a whole.

The decisive impulse came from the princely court, which was inspired by the conviction that religion is not at all a personal or private affair of princes, but rather that it had a political and statist dimension. For this reason, the court consciously took its religiosity into the public space, in order to encourage similar behavior among the subjects.\textsuperscript{34}

Here again, we see late seventeenth-century princes and state officials showing a preference for persuasion and propaganda, rather than disciplinary measures


in religious matters. Along the same lines, the Bavarian state supported the extensive Jesuits missions to the countryside in the first half of the eighteenth century. These missions were oriented around preaching, confession and communion, and incorporated dramatic theatrical displays. The confessional state did not relinquish its dominance over religious matters in the century after 1650, but it turned to new, less rigorous methods of promoting Catholicism.

**Austria**

In the Habsburg lands, state officials continued to be very active in religious affairs, at least in the first decades after the Thirty Years' War. Habsburg officials in Silesia, where there was a large Lutheran population, continued to resort to the traditional Counter-Reformation methods that they had perfected in Bohemia during the war. “Reformation commissions” were sent into the region where they ordered the expulsion of Lutheran ministers, forced the appointment of Catholic priests, closed Protestant churches, and even ordered the quartering of soldiers to pressure the population into abandoning Lutheranism. The Habsburgs, like most other rulers in this period, continued to consider religious uniformity an important characteristic of a strong state.

Despite the persistence of a militant tendency, Catholic authorities in Austria also turned increasingly to persuasion and propaganda. The activities of the Jesuits well illustrate this trend. Although they participated in the Reformation commissions and served as missionaries to Protestant regions, the Society focused its efforts on the urban population and the nobility. Jesuit schools and universities dominated Catholic education in the Habsburg lands and generations of urban patricians as well as the aristocracy of this multinational empire experienced this practical yet deeply Catholic education. Robert Bireley points out that Catholic political theorists reinforced this trend by arguing for

...patience in the process of winning over people and underlined the positive measure to be employed: clergy of high moral quality, effective preachers, genuine care for and adaptation to the people, and education.°

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Furthermore, as in Bavaria, the Austrian state was increasingly characterized by the commitment of the ruling family to particular forms of religious practice rather than the use of repression against dissenters. The *Pietas Austriaca* of the Habsburgs was, in fact, a close cousin to the piety of the Wittelsbachs; it was also an integral part of Baroque Catholicism in Austria. 39 When the leading Jesuit playwright Nicolaus Avencini produced a play in Vienna in 1659 called *Pietas victrix sive Flavius Constantinus Magnus de Maxentio Tyranno Victor* ("Piety Victorious or Flavius Constantine the Great, Victor over the tyrant Maxentius"), he was of course equating the Habsburgs with the great Christian emperor of the fourth century. 40 At one level, the message of the play was simple: the piety of the Habsburgs was the virtue that brought them victory. Somewhat more profoundly, the *Pietas Austriaca* also reflected the political theory of the time, especially that of Justus Lipsius (1547–1606), who argued that an absolute monarch would only succeed if he maintained popular support, or reputation, which owed much to the personal piety of the ruler.41 Jesuit plays and political theorists presented the Habsburgs as models of pious princes who had earned the loyalty of their subjects through their religious virtue.

The *Pietas Austriaca* may have functioned to justify the power of monarchy and the imperial family, but it was also a clearly defined ensemble of religious practices.42 As in Munich, the Viennese court practiced an ostentatious piety oriented around the cults of the Eucharist and the Virgin. The Corpus Christi processions in Vienna became major displays of court ritual in the seventeenth century. Marian devotions owed much to the Bavarian example. The Austrians, for example, copied the *Mariensäule* that were so popular in Bavaria. Emperor Leopold was particularly known for his devotion to the Immaculate Conception and several generations of Habsburgs supported and developed the national shrine at Maria Zell. As Wolfgang Zimmermann points out,

The idea that the rule of the Habsburg family was a result of the piety, of the *pietas Austriaca*, and thus grounded in God’s grace, did not remain limited to a matter of theoretical reflection in court circles. Instead, it became a form of dynastic

40 Zimmermann, "Die 'siegreiche' Frömmigkeit des Hauses Habsburg." 166–9.
propaganda ("dynastischer Kultpropaganda"), an award of praise ("Lobpreise") for the emperor directly appointed by God, which was passed on and thus popularized.⁴⁴

The piety of the royal family served as a model for all of Austria, spreading from the court to ever widening parts of the population. The Pietas Austriaca was not, however, static. In his study of Jesuit theater Jean-Marie Valentin identifies a major transition in the Pietas Austriaca in the decades after 1650; as reflected in the plays presented in Austria, especially in Vienna.⁴⁵ The Jesuits were certainly mainstays of the Pietas Austriaca, supporting and developing the notion of the special religious and imperial mission of the Habsburgs. Avancini and his colleagues wrote and produced a series of plays known as the Ludi Caesari ("Plays for the Emperor"). The prince of these plays is "a soldier of God who refuses to compromise with the adversaries of Christ, and who wants nothing but the happiness of his subjects." In the conflict between good and evil, the good prince is conscious of his choices and his ability to sin, yet he fights (and usually wins) the good fight. The pietas of the good princes (always equated with the Habsburgs) wins out over the impietas of the tyrants, increasingly linked to the Turks.⁴⁶ If some of this myth dated back to the sixteenth century, Valentin sees the "pietas austriaca of the reign of Leopold and the Austria gloria of the baroque" as something new in the late seventeenth century. No longer focused on Germany and the Protestant threat, Austria was turning east in preparation for defeat of the Turks and the conquest of the Danubian basin.⁴⁷

Conclusion

The transition from a policy of confessionalization characterized by the use of disciplinary measures to a milder form of state sponsored religious persuasion was never complete. Both aspects of confessionalization remained important in Catholic Germany well into the eighteenth century. The well-known expulsion of the Protestant farmers of the alpine valleys above Salzburg in 1732 by the Catholic archbishop-prince shows that princes could still resort to force.⁴⁸ Nevertheless the tendency to employ the tools of persuasion and propaganda, combined with increased bureaucratization, reduced the forcefulness of confessionalization, especially as experienced at the local level.

⁴⁴ Zimmermann, "Die 'siegreiche' Frömmigkeit des Hauses Habsburg." 166–8.
⁴⁶ Valentin, Les Jésuites et le Théâtre, 668–71, quote 669.
⁴⁷ Valentin, Les Jésuites et le Théâtre, 687.
After the Thirty Years' War confessionalization, in the form of state policies aimed at enforcing religious conformity and guiding popular religion, declined. This did not mean, however, that the "Age of Confessionalism" was over. Local and regional studies make it clear that the century after 1650 saw the maturation of popular confessional identity. The invisible border (die unsichtbare Grenze), that cultural boundary between the confessions, highlighted in Étienne François' study of Augsburg, ran through all the German lands. Furthermore, in Catholic Germany in this period it was the interplay of political and confessional stability, political and religious particularism, and a dynamic Baroque religiosity with strong elements of popular participation that caused confessional loyalties to be internalized by the wider population. While the elites moved toward a more tolerant and open view of religion, peasants and townspeople came to be imbedded in confessionalized communities and Catholic culture. This situation would remain an important characteristic of German society until the middle of the twentieth century.