
Introduction

For those scholars scanning the religious topography of central Europe for signs of religious accommodation, the second half of the sixteenth century seems an odd period at which to begin. It is not without reason that historians have dubbed this period the Confessional Age.¹ In the Catholic domains of Germany this era was crucial for the reconquest of this region. The Counter-Reformation gained critical momentum in this half century. The on-again, off-again Council of Trent was finally concluded in 1563. Under the leadership of Peter Canisius the Jesuits made substantial inroads in central Europe. The Wittelsbachs of Bavaria unwaveringly rejected the Reformation and pursued an enthusiastic program of Catholic reform. Protestantism was decisively defeated in Cologne after the flight of its apostate archbishop, Gebhard Truchsess von Waldburg.

At the same time the Lutheran community went through its own process of radicalization. The tireless efforts of the fierce Croat Flacius Illyricus eventually bore fruit. In 1574 the moderate Philippists were expelled from Saxony. A more dogmatic form of Lutheranism took root. With the adoption of the Book of Concord in 1580 the divide between Lutheranism and the wider European Protestant community was deepened.² The third of these confessional groups, the Calvinists, also made substantial gains in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Elector Frederick III of the Palatinate adopted their creed, and the margrave of Brandenburg would eventually embrace this faith in 1613. From both a Catholic and Lutheran perspective the Empire's Calvinists were viewed with fear and

¹ Of particular importance is E.W. Zeeden's book, *Konfessionsbildung: Studien zur Reformation, Gegenreformation und katholischen Reform* (Stuttgart, 1985). Also critical in this respect is the work of Heinz Schilling, "Die Konfessionalisierung im Reich. Religiöser und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Deutschland zwischen 1555 und 1620," *HZ* 246 (1988), 1–45, and Wolfgang Reinhard, "Konfession und Konfessionalisierung in Europa," in *Bekennnis und Geschichte*, ed. Wolfgang Reinhard (Munich, 1981), 165–189. R. Po-Chia Hsia offers an English summary of this historiographical discussion in *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe 1550–1750* (New York, 1989). Marc Forster's *The Counter-Reformation in the Villages: Religion and Reform in the Bishopric of Speyer* (Ithaca, 1992) studies confessionalism on the local level and poses a provocative challenge to traditional studies of the Counter-Reformation.

² Concerning the 1574 coup in Saxony see August Kluckhohn, "Der Sturz der Kryptocalvinisten in Sachsen 1574," *HZ* 18 (1867), 77–127. For the significance of the Book of Concord see *Sixteenth Century Journal* 8 (1977). Though the contributors to this volume salute the Book of Concord as an important document ending the cleavages within the Lutheran community, they do not discuss its more negative effect of curtailing genuine dialogue with the Calvinists.

Cambridge University Press

0521027128 - The Quest for Compromise: Peacemakers in Counter-Reformation Vienna
Howard Louthan

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

distrust, and it cannot be denied that the Palatinate pursued an aggressive foreign policy in the second half of the sixteenth century.³ Considered together, the division of central Europe into three inflexible and hostile religious factions contributed to the overall destabilization of the region.

When examining the progress of confessionalism from the imperial perspective, however, a more nuanced picture emerges. On the one hand Vienna was an important center of Catholic reform. Our general period of consideration, the 1550s to the 1580s, spans the reigns of three Habsburgs: Ferdinand I (1556–1564), Maximilian II (1564–1576) and Rudolf II (1576–1612). Formally, these three emperors retained their allegiance to Rome and their commitment to Catholicism. Though a moderate on many issues, it was Ferdinand who invited the Jesuits to the Austrian lands. He also appointed a new archbishop of Prague, a position that had gone unfilled since the beginning of the Hussite period, and under his leadership a number of prominent Austrian families converted back to Catholicism. Maximilian II, Ferdinand's successor, was a wayward Catholic who eventually returned to the faith before assuming the imperial mantle. Rudolf II, on the other hand, was brought up at the court of his stern cousin Philip II in Madrid, and at the beginning of his reign he championed the more rigorous policies of Rome.

At the same time, however, there was also an Erasmian dynamic operative within Vienna. General studies of toleration have noted in passing the efforts of both Ferdinand and Maximilian to secure a meaningful settlement with their Lutheran subjects.⁴ In his broad survey investigating the religious and intellectual aftermath of the Reformation Friedrich Heer has highlighted what he calls a

³ Voicing a popular sentiment, the Catholic publicist Kaspar Schoppe argued, "Calvinists are the Holy Roman Empire's worst enemies for they seek to overthrow its current constitution and . . . turn Germany either into a 'tyrannical oligarchy' or 'revolutionary democracy'." Cited in Bodo Nischan, "Confessionalism and Absolutism: The Case of Brandenburg," in *Calvinism and Europe: 1540–1620*, ed. A. Pettegree, A. Duke and G. Lewis (Cambridge, 1994), 181.

For the impact of Calvinism in this period see the aforementioned volume and the older collection of essays, *International Calvinism 1541–1715*, ed. Menna Prestwich (Oxford, 1985). Specifically on Heidelberg and the Palatinate see Claus-Peter Clasen, *The Palatinate in European History 1559–1660* (Oxford, 1963). For the imperial perspective on the Palatinate at the beginning of Maximilian's reign see Albrecht Luttenberger, *Kurfürsten, Kaiser und Reich: Politische Führung und Friedenssicherung unter Ferdinand I. und Maximilian II.* (Mainz, 1994), 277–282.

⁴ For general studies on tolerance one can start with Roland Bainton's dated but classic work *The Travail of Religious Liberty* (Philadelphia, 1954). Also important is the work of Joseph Lecler (*Toleration and the Reformation*, 2 vols. [New York, 1960]) and Henry Kamen (*The Rise of Toleration* [London, 1967]). More recently see William Monter's intriguing approach to this topic, *Ritual, Myth and Magic in Early Modern Europe* (Athens, Ohio, 1983). For the late sixteenth century see Gerhard Güldner, *Das Toleranz-Problem in den Niederlanden im Ausgang des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Lübeck, 1968). The most recent work is the collection of essays *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, ed. Ole Peter Grell and Robert Scribner (Cambridge, 1996). Best on the very little material for Germany and central Europe is a collection of essays edited by Heinrich Lutz, *Zur Geschichte der Toleranz und Religionsfreiheit* (Darmstadt, 1977). In this collection see especially H.R. Guggisberg's article, "Wandel der Argumente für religiöse Toleranz und Religionsfreiheit," 455–481.

Cambridge University Press

0521027128 - The Quest for Compromise: Peacemakers in Counter-Reformation Vienna

Howard Louthan

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

“third force” at the Austrian court, an adiaphoristic or tolerant spirit that eschewed confessional extremes.⁵ R.J.W. Evans has examined the late humanist world of RudolFINE Prague and has demonstrated the vitality of irenicism at this venue.⁶ It is Maximilian II, however, who is the critical figure in any discussion of this topic. Though Counter-Reform projects continued during his reign, Maximilian was far more ambivalent concerning his own religious sentiments. In a 1560 conversation with Bishop Stanislaus Hosius he asserted that he considered himself neither a Protestant nor a Catholic but a Christian.⁷ Reflecting these Erasmian sentiments, his court attracted those who advocated policies of reconciliation and not confrontation between Protestants and Catholics.

Though historians have investigated Maximilian’s equivocal religious convictions,⁸ scant attention has been paid to his court and its setting – the city of Vienna. It must be remembered that the imperial court of the late sixteenth century was far different from the one of Mozart’s Vienna. In terms of personnel the courts of Ferdinand and Maximilian were modest employing between 400 and 500 people. By the second quarter of the eighteenth century the Habsburg *Hofstaat* had quadrupled in size.⁹ But more important was the actual evolution of the city. The baroque glory of eighteenth-century Vienna could hardly have been imagined two hundred years earlier. When Ferdinand began to govern the Empire in the early 1520s, Vienna was in a period of decline. Though the city flourished under the energetic leadership of Duke Rudolf IV (1358–1365) with the founding of the university and a gothic expansion of St. Stephen’s, this relative prosperity proved short-lived. The expansion of the Ottoman Empire threatened Vienna’s livelihood. The Turkish mastery of the Balkan peninsula pushed traditional European trade routes westward leaving this once important commercial entrepôt an isolated outpost on the eastern edge of Christian Europe. Its Habsburg patrons also looked elsewhere. Emperor Frederick III (1440–1493) used Wiener Neustadt as his principal residence, and his son Maximilian I (1493–1519), whose political interests focused on Italy and Germany, preferred Innsbruck.

⁵ Friedrich Heer, *Die Dritte Kraft* (Frankfurt, 1960), esp. 429–433.

⁶ It should be noted, however, that though Evans discusses irenicism in *Rudolf II and his World* (Oxford, 1973), it is not the major theme he highlights. He is more concerned with the hermetic arts. If there is any organizational principle to this encyclopedic study of the intellectual activity of Rudolf’s court, it is magic and mannerism. Also useful on the RudolFINE court is Nicolette Mout, *Bohemen en de Nederlanden in de zestiende eeuw* (Leyden, 1979).

⁷ Viktor Bibl, *Maximilian II, der rätselhaftige Kaiser* (Hellerau bei Dresden, 1929), 98.

⁸ Maximilian’s enigmatic convictions prompted a lively debate among historians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The best historiographical overview of this debate can be found in Hans Neufeld’s dissertation, “Studien zum Tode Maximilians II,” University of Vienna (1931), 106–127. Also helpful are the entries in Manfred Rudersdorf’s bibliography of Maximilian II in *Die Kaiser der Neuzeit 1519–1918*, ed. A. Schindling and W. Ziegler (Munich, 1990), 474–475.

The best recent treatment of this issue is Grete Mecenseffy, “Maximilian II. in neuer Sicht,” *JGGPÖ* 92 (1976), 42–54. Also useful is Otto Mazal, “Ein Gebetbuch Kaiser Maximilians II in der Herzog-August-Bibliothek,” in *Miscellanea Codicologica* (Ghent, 1979), 529–534.

⁹ John Spielman, *The City and the Crown* (West Lafayette, 1993), 59.

Cambridge University Press

0521027128 - The Quest for Compromise: Peacemakers in Counter-Reformation Vienna

Howard Louthan

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

The year 1526 was critical for the future of the city. South of Buda in the swamps along the Danube Louis II of Hungary had been killed as advancing Ottoman troops destroyed his army. Though the battle of Mohács was a disaster for the Hungarian nation it was a windfall for the Austrian Habsburgs. Married to Louis's sister, Ferdinand would be elected to the thrones of both the Bohemian and Hungarian kingdoms. Vienna regained its strategic importance as the Habsburgs faced their new eastern frontier. There had been a recent history of tension, however, between the city and the imperial house. Upon the death of Maximilian I in 1519 the provincial estates had appointed their own council to run the city. When three years later Charles V officially commissioned Ferdinand as his governor in the Empire, Vienna revolted. Though Ferdinand quashed the uprising and deprived the city of its traditional liberties, he could not suppress the new Lutheran movement which was growing rapidly throughout all of Lower Austria.

It had begun through the work of charismatic individuals like Paul Speratus, a former Swabian priest who had converted to the new faith and had come to Vienna. He electrified large audiences through his preaching, and the city rapidly became Protestant.¹⁰ Lutheran printers spread the word with their *Flugschriften*, and large Protestant crowds would frequently gather to ridicule religious processions of the Catholics. Though Luther's teachings found fertile ground in Vienna, the city's Catholic authorities responded almost immediately. A number of prominent Anabaptists including Balthasar Hubmaier were executed outside of the city. Following Ferdinand's advice, Rome appointed two bishops who aggressively fought the spread of Lutheranism in the Viennese diocese – Bishops Johannes Fabri (1530–1541) and Friedrich Nausea (1541–1552). Both actively engaged their Protestant opponents. Additionally, the great hero of the Catholic Reformation in Bavaria, Martin Eisengrein, began his career in Vienna. Here he was converted and ordained a priest. By 1560 he was launching his polemics against the Protestants from Vienna's most important pulpit, St. Stephen's Cathedral.¹¹ But Ferdinand's most strategic move in these early years of the Austrian Counter-Reformation was bringing the Jesuits to the Habsburg *Erblände*.¹² Peter

¹⁰ Theodor Wiedemann, *Geschichte der Reformation und Gegenreformation im Lande unter der Enns*, vols. I–II (Prague, 1879), vol. I, 24–29.

¹¹ For Eisengrein see Luzian Pfleger's biography, *Martin Eisengrein (1535–1578). Ein Lebensbild aus der Zeit der katholischen Restauration in Bayern in Erläuterung und Ergänzungen zu Janssens Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, ed. Ludwig Pastor, vol. VI, pt. 2 (Freiburg i.B., 1908).

¹² I should briefly comment on my decision to use the term "Counter-Reformation" in my title. Scholars have traditionally argued that Vienna's Counter-Reformation began during the reign of Rudolf II. (For one example see the work of Grete Mecenseffy – *Evangelische Lehrer an der Universität Wien* [Vienna, 1967], 19ff, and *Geschichte des Protestantismus in Österreich* [Vienna, 1956], 50ff.) Though it cannot be denied that Counter-Reform activity accelerated in the early years of the Rudolfine era, we can find its beginnings with Ferdinand reflected in these initial steps taken to combat Vienna's Protestant movement. This early version of Catholic reform was not as coordinated or successful as efforts at the end of the century, but none the less it was an important dynamic during the reigns of both Ferdinand and Maximilian.

Cambridge University Press

0521027128 - The Quest for Compromise: Peacemakers in Counter-Reformation Vienna
Howard Louthan

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

Canisius and his successors would help reinvigorate the Catholic leadership of the city.

Maximilian and his court need to be understood in this urban context. It has been estimated that despite the efforts of Fabri, Nausea and Canisius four-fifths of Vienna was Lutheran by the time Maximilian acceded to the throne in 1564.¹³ Responding to this situation, the new emperor learned to work more cooperatively with his Protestant subjects and so began a reign that scholars have long noted was characterized by compromise and conciliation. But this Habsburg *via media*, which actually began in the later years of Ferdinand's tenure, must be viewed from a broader perspective. It was more than a handful of imperial decrees passed down to ease religious tension. Although the impulse to escape the increasing demands of rigid confessional standards was certainly most noticeable in public grants of toleration, this stimulus also affected a wide range of cultural and intellectual activity at the imperial court. The artist's workshop and the prince's library could reflect the same ideals that were articulated in the more visible domains of religion and politics. Thus to understand irenicism in this setting we must scan the intellectual and cultural landscape with a wide-angle lens. Accordingly, I have selected four figures who are illustrative of developments in the arts, politics, religion and the humanist world of learning. We will chart the course of the Austrian middle way through the activities of these courtiers.

The Italian, Jacopo Strada, introduces a discussion of important artistic developments in this period. Born in Mantua in the early part of the sixteenth century, Strada was from a family of minor nobility whose connections facilitated his professional ambitions.¹⁴ In the early days of his artistic training Strada worked with Giulio Romano and the Bolognese artist Francesco Primaticcio. After continuing his education in Rome, he moved north to Germany, and by the early 1540s he had settled in Nuremberg. Strada's first important patron was the Augsburg patrician, Hans Jakob Fugger. Later he would forge links with the Bavarian court of Albert V, but his most important connection was with the Habsburgs. Strada's first contact with the imperial house came on a recommendation from his friend, the goldsmith Wenzel Jamnitzer. In 1556 the Italian began work for the younger son of Emperor Ferdinand I, Archduke Ferdinand, who at that time resided in Prague as governor of Bohemia.¹⁵ Strada eventually won the favor of Emperor Ferdinand himself and was appointed architect of the imperial

¹³ Franz Loidl, *Geschichte des Erzbistums Wien* (Munich, 1983), 58.

¹⁴ Strada's family descended from a certain Lorenzo of Brescia who had been appointed *podestà* of Mantua in 1228. Dirk Jansen, "The Instruments of Patronage," in *Kaiser Maximilian II. Kultur und Politik im 16. Jahrhundert*, vol. XIX, *Wiener Beiträge zur Geschichte der Neuzeit*, ed. Friedrich Edelmayer and Alfred Kohler (Vienna, 1992), 195.

¹⁵ D. Schönherr, "Wenzel Jamnitzers Arbeiten für Erzherzog Ferdinand," *MIÖG* 9 (1888), 290. Strada was to have designed an elaborate fountain for Ferdinand. Due to insufficient silver for the project the work was never completed.

Cambridge University Press

0521027128 - The Quest for Compromise: Peacemakers in Counter-Reformation Vienna
Howard Louthan

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

court in 1560. As an artistic advisor, he served Maximilian and Rudolf until his death in 1588.

A soldier, statesman and diplomat, Lazarus von Schwendi was an important advisor of the Austrian Habsburgs. Born in the Swabian village of Mittelbiberach in 1522, Schwendi was the illegitimate son of a local landowner of minor nobility.¹⁶ After studies in Basle and Strasburg Schwendi joined the cause of Emperor Charles V at the outbreak of the Schmalkaldic War in 1546. As an envoy, diplomat and soldier, he served Charles and his son Philip II until 1561. This year marked an important shift in Schwendi's career. After a series of complicated negotiations, he was sent on permanent loan to the Austrian Habsburgs. For Maximilian Schwendi helped lead an international coalition of forces in a campaign against the Turks and the sultan's ally, John Sigismund Zapolya of Transylvania. After this disappointing venture he retired from active military service. From his estates in southwest Germany Schwendi wrote a series of memoranda to Maximilian and later to Rudolf. In these *Denkschriften* he addressed pressing military and political problems facing the Empire. His counsel and advice were characterized by an irenic commitment to compromise and conciliation.

Johannes Crato opens the discussion of religion in Habsburg Vienna. At first glance this choice may seem inappropriate. Crato was not a religious leader but a doctor, not a Catholic but a Protestant. Born in Breslau in 1519, he was educated in Wittenberg and actually lived in Luther's house for six years.¹⁷ After this Saxon interlude he continued his studies in Padua with the Galenist Giovanni Battista da Monte. Returning to Breslau, he worked for the city and won local fame for his efforts combating the plague. His medical reputation reached Vienna, and despite his religious affiliation he was appointed personal physician of Emperor Ferdinand. The affable Crato also won the trust of Maximilian and Rudolf who retained his services during their reigns.¹⁸ A counterweight to the

¹⁶ Two years later Charles V legitimized his birth through an imperial order. *ADB*, vol. XXXIII, 382.

¹⁷ To accommodate his young pupil Luther actually had a room (*Craffis Stüblin*) added to his house. *Luthers Werke-Briefwechsel*, vol. IX (Weimar, 1941), 582.

¹⁸ Concerning his relationship with Ferdinand T.G. von Karajan has commented, "Er war sein vertrauter Rathgeber, und nicht selten mag der Arzt manchen in der Hitze des Augenblicks gefassten Entschluss des Regenten gemildert, manche Thräne in jener traurigen Zeit seinen vielleicht getäuschten Brüdern erspart haben." T.G. von Karajan, "Krato von Kraftheim," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichts- und Staatskunde* 1 (1835), 146. Philip Melancthon also recognized Crato's dual role with his Habsburg patrons as he saluted his friend's work as a doctor of both physical and spiritual ailments. Melancthon to Crato, 1556?, *Melancthons Briefwechsel*, ed. Heinz Scheible, vols. I–VII (Stuttgart, 1977–1993), vol. VII, #8071, 529.

Maximilian named Crato a member of the Privy Council and granted him the honorific title *Pfalzgraf*. *ADB*, vol. VI, 568. Also see Paul Pfothhauer, "Schlesier als kaiserliche Pfalzgrafen und schlesische Beziehungen zu auswärtigen Pfalzgrafen," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Geschichte und Alterthum Schlesiens* 26 (1892), 319–363.

For the melancholic Rudolf Crato remained an indispensable fixture at court. The Silesian, who had returned home to Breslau after the death of Maximilian, was called back to court by Rudolf, and during the emperor's first physical/psychological crisis (1578–1580), Crato was his principal medical attendant. Evans, *Rudolf II and his World*, 89.

Cambridge University Press

0521027128 - The Quest for Compromise: Peacemakers in Counter-Reformation Vienna

Howard Louthan

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

Catholic court preachers of late sixteenth-century Vienna, Crato was an influential advocate for the Protestant estates of the Empire and an important representative of the Melancthonian spirit.

The Dutchman, Hugo Blotius, highlights the world of humanist learning. This unlikely courtier was born in a small village outside Leyden and led the wandering life of the student until he secured a position in Johannes Sturm's academy in Strasburg. He later attracted the attention of two important Viennese officials, the Hungarian bishop János Liszti and the emperor's *Feldherr*, Lazarus von Schwendi. These two Catholics helped this Calvinist scholar win a position at the Viennese court. With their assistance he was appointed imperial librarian.¹⁹ Though under constant attack from his Jesuit critics, Blotius used the library to express an alternate vision to the confessional extremes of the day. Through his reform of this imperial institution he fostered an irenic atmosphere of learning and scholarship in Vienna.

These four figures offer a microcosmic view of cultural and intellectual developments at the imperial court during the second half of the sixteenth century. The Habsburg residence was a magnet that attracted an army of avid aspirants seeking patronage from the emperor or his important officials. They came from across the continent creating a cosmopolitan atmosphere in this eastern outpost of Christian Europe. Here a Catholic artist from Italy, a Lutheran doctor from Silesia, a Catholic soldier from southwest Germany and a Calvinist librarian from the Netherlands could mix freely.

An intricate web of relationships connected these four men together. Two of Blotius's most important allies in his bid for the position at court were Crato and Schwendi. His voluminous correspondence attests to the friendship he had with both the doctor and the soldier. There was also a lively epistolary exchange between Crato and Schwendi.²⁰ Like many of his contemporaries Schwendi had a collection of coins and medals, and it was in this context that he had contact with Jacopo Strada, Vienna's antiquarian *par excellence*.²¹ But perhaps the most distinguishing feature of this circle was its success. From a host of competitors they had won the coveted prize, imperial patronage. By exploring their cultural and intellectual contributions we can begin to discern the contours of Viennese renaissance.

¹⁹ Best on Blotius and the library is *Geschichte der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, ed. Josef Stummvoll, vol. I (Vienna, 1968), 81–124.

²⁰ For Blotius's correspondence in general see the important collection in the Austrian National library – ÖNB, HSS, CVP 9737z (14–18). There is a useful index to these five volumes of correspondence. For Schwendi's wife Crato composed a practical medical handbook intended to assist the poor on his estates. J.F.A. Gillet, *Crato von Crafftheim und seine Freunde*, vols. I–II (Frankfurt, 1860), vol. II, 215. The manuscript division of the University Library of Wrocław possessed sixty-nine letters Schwendi wrote Crato between 1566 and 1581. Unfortunately, most of this correspondence has not survived.

²¹ *Beiträge zur Geschichte Herzog Albrechts V und des Landsberger Bundes 1556–1598*, ed. Walter Goetz (Munich, 1898), Hans Jakob Fugger to Duke Albert, letter #365, 19 February 1569, 441.

Cambridge University Press

0521027128 - The Quest for Compromise: Peacemakers in Counter-Reformation Vienna
Howard Louthan

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Introduction

This monograph is organized chronologically around these figures. Covering the late years of Charles V's reign through the succession of Maximilian II, Part I examines the emergence of an irenic court. The first chapter opens with the Schmalkaldic War and closes with the Peace of Augsburg. It traces the early career of Lazarus von Schwendi exploring how he ultimately came to reject an older vision of the Empire championed by Charles V. The new perception of the Reich articulated by Schwendi and embraced by Ferdinand had a significant influence on these Austrian Habsburgs and their quest for a middle way. Chapter 2 investigates in more detail developments at the Viennese court during a critical transitional period in the late 1550s and early 1560s. Austrian irenicism was a product of an urbane and cosmopolitan environment. Jacopo Strada helped transform a more provincial Habsburg court into a sophisticated and international center of artistic activity.

Part II studies the apex of this irenic phenomenon that roughly corresponds with the reign of Maximilian II. The section is loosely organized around the fateful year 1572 – a high point of religious tension in the late sixteenth century. In France it culminated in the bloody denouement of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, and to the north the Dutch struggle against Catholic Spain entered a new phase with the capture of Brill by the Sea Beggars. Many of the subsequent developments at Maximilian's court were reactions to the massacre in France and the spread of confessional violence across the continent. Chapter 3 considers Blotius's appointment as curator of the imperial library. This chapter outlines the intellectual foundations of Austrian irenicism by charting the rise of a Calvinist scholar to the dizzy heights of a nominally Catholic court. Chapter 4 continues with Blotius and investigates the universal and utopian vision he expressed through the reorganization of the imperial library. Chapter 5 explores the issue of religion at the Viennese court through the work of Johannes Crato for the *Unitas Fratrum*, a small Bohemian Protestant sect. Chapter 6 rounds out the survey of this irenic movement as it examines concurrent developments in the world of diplomacy and statecraft. For this investigation we return to Schwendi and an analysis of his administrative reforms – specifically three memoranda he wrote for Maximilian in 1570, 1574 and 1576.

Part III moves beyond Maximilian and considers the failure of Viennese irenicism. Chapter 7 studies the opposition that arose to our conciliatory cast of courtiers. The chapter is specifically devoted to their religious antagonists. This Catholic faction became more active during the early years of the 1570s. Open confrontation with the imperial court came in 1573 with the publication of the *Evangelische Inquisition*, an inflammatory tract aimed at the religious moderates of Maximilian's circle. This struggle intensified after the emperor's death. Chapter 8 investigates Maximilian's funeral – an event that reveals the inherent weakness of irenicism and the appeal of Tridentine Catholicism. Chapter 9 analyzes the political failure of irenicism in central Europe. Our focus here will be

Cambridge University Press

0521027128 - The Quest for Compromise: Peacemakers in Counter-Reformation Vienna
Howard Louthan

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

Archduke Matthias's misadventure in the Low Countries during the early years of Rudolf's reign. Matthias's principal advisor in this vain quest to bring peace to the Netherlands was Schwendi. The mission's collapse was a setback for the Austrian Habsburgs and their diplomacy of compromise. The Conclusion glances ahead to the seventeenth century. Though the influence of irenicism affected Rudolf's remarkable entourage in Prague, the strength of this dynamic was ebbing. Increasing factionalism paralyzed the Habsburg court. Clerical influence was in the ascendancy, and the Bavarian model of rule would soon be followed by the Habsburgs themselves.²² Ferdinand II would play a critical role in this transition and redefine the nature of the Habsburg dynasty.

Before we begin to investigate the various dimensions of the Austrian middle way, a few comments should be made about terminology. The imprecision of the English language and the somewhat fuzzy contours of the Austrian *via media* make this phenomenon a very difficult one to name. I avoided this problem in the title by using a broad descriptive phrase, "the quest for compromise." But within the study I have resorted to a neologism. Irenicism is the best term I know to describe what was happening at the imperial court.²³ Though there is some ambiguity as to the exact meaning of this word, irenicism generally refers to a peaceful attempt to reconcile theological differences between various confessional parties. Its roots can be found in the Christian humanism of Erasmus. The movement itself became more distinct as the middle ground between Catholics, Calvinists and Lutherans began to disappear in the second half of the sixteenth century.

A slight distinction should be drawn between irenicism and two related concepts – toleration and the *politique* position. Tolerance is a broader concept. An advocate of toleration such as the Dutch playwright Dirck Coornhert could argue for the freedom to believe in no God. An irenicist would have considered atheism far too extreme. The term *politique*, on the other hand, has stronger political connotations and is normally connected to the French context. The *politiques* sought a political solution to the problem of religious division and conflict. Scholars have not always maintained the precise distinctions between these three terms, and indeed there are permeable boundaries between

²² Even during Maximilian II's reign one can see the contrast between his loose and more traditional style of rule and that of his brothers, Charles in Graz and Ferdinand in Innsbruck. Both of the archdukes followed the lead of the Wittelsbachs who pursued policies of confessional and territorial consolidation. See Volker Press's comments in this regard: "The Imperial Court of the Habsburgs from Maximilian I to Ferdinand III, 1493–1657," in *Princes, Patronage and the Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age*, ed. R.G. Asch and A.M. Birke (Oxford, 1991), 299.

²³ Older dictionaries contain the adjectival form of this word, irenic or irenical, but the noun itself is conspicuously absent. The Dutch scholar, G.H.M. Posthumus Meyjes, argues that it was Pope Pius XII who actually coined the substantive in his 1950 encyclical *Humani Generis*. G.H.M. Posthumus Meyjes, "Protestant Irencism in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *The End of Strife*, ed. D. Loades (Edinburgh, 1984), 77.

Cambridge University Press

0521027128 - The Quest for Compromise: Peacemakers in Counter-Reformation Vienna
Howard Louthan

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

them.²⁴ None the less, I believe that irenicism is the word that best fits the Viennese context. A part of the same intellectual generation, our four courtiers worked within the Erasmian world of Christian humanism. Schwendi is the one individual who can also be placed in the *politique* category, but even here his analysis of the Empire's political situation was well grounded in an understanding of the classical past and a sincere desire for Christian unity.²⁵ Though irenic and *politique* may not be exact synonyms, they are related phenomena. As confessional boundaries became more rigid in central Europe, Vienna's peacemakers accelerated their search for compromise and accommodation in a wide range of cultural, intellectual and political activity.

The reader should note that this study is neither a detailed investigation of the Austrian *Hofstaat* in late sixteenth-century Vienna nor a close analysis of imperial policy as it reacted to confessional pressure.²⁶ At the same time it is not an exhaustive examination of Habsburg irenicism. As the Epilogue indicates, there are still other facets of this fascinating movement that have yet to be fully explored. Instead it sets out more modestly to examine a subject that has been traditionally viewed from a narrower religious perspective. Strada, Schwendi, Blotius and Crato serve as gateways to the world of the arts, politics and humanist learning. Reflected through their travels and extensive correspondence, they also show us that Austrian irenicism was not simply an *Austrian* dynamic but one that was clearly connected to a wider international context. In some ways then this study has been constructed as a series of snapshots providing us a glimpse of what Heer's "third force" would look like from the vantage point of an artist, an imperial advisor, a humanist librarian and a religious leader. The photos do not show us the entire scene, nor are they presented in a fashion that gives us an uninterrupted panorama of the religious landscape, but they are intended to broaden our understanding of a phenomenon that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries.

²⁴ For an example of a scholar conflating the concepts of toleration and irenicism see H.A. Enno van Gelder, *The Two Reformations in the Sixteenth Century* (The Hague, 1961). In Robert Evans's magisterial study of the Rudolphine court there are also occasions where he seems to use the word *politique* and irenic as exact synonyms. For one such case see his *Rudolf II and his World*, 101.

²⁵ As I illustrate in chapter 6, almost all scholars who have studied Schwendi have examined his military or political contributions. Indeed my treatment of him also highlights this facet of his career. But I do argue that Schwendi belongs in this world of irenic humanism. One of his first teachers was a former colleague of Erasmus himself, Oecolampadius. Oecolampadius had actually assisted Erasmus with his edition of the Greek New Testament. Schwendi also corresponded with Philip Melancthon. *Melancthon's Briefwechsel*, ed. Scheible, vol. VI, #6342, 266. The one scholar who does recognize this component of Schwendi's character is Kaspar von Greyerz. See his article, "Lazarus von Schwendi (1522–1583) and Late Humanism in Basel," in *The Harvest of Humanism in Central Europe*, ed. Manfred Fleischer (St. Louis, 1992), 179–195.

²⁶ Two recent studies of Maximilian II should be mentioned. Maximilian Lanzinner pieces together imperial policy from archival sources in his *Friedenssicherung und politische Einheit des Reiches unter Kaiser Maximilian II* (Göttingen, 1993). In a similar vein is Luttenberger, who follows a parallel trajectory. Also important is the work in progress of Paula Fichtner who is completing a biography of Maximilian II.