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James Van Horn Melton

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## Part I



### Cultural and religious forces

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## I

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 Popular schooling in early modern Prussia  
and Austria

Di quem oderunt, aut scribam aut ludimagistrum fecerunt.

Whom the gods despise, they make a scribe or a schoolmaster.

European proverb

The Reformation legacy

To understand the peculiarities of popular education in early modern Prussia and Austria, one must keep in mind that primary schooling, like the Old Regime itself, was not a coherent “system.” Primary schooling consisted of a variety of discrete institutions, possessing little or no organizational relationship to each other or to higher educational institutions.<sup>1</sup> During the Middle Ages, relatively few options were available to those families desiring basic schooling for their children. To be sure, churches in larger towns and cities had begun to establish parish schools as early as the thirteenth century. But these served primarily to train future priests and sacristans, or to provide choral singing for festive and ceremonial occasions. Those who could afford it hired private tutors or sent their sons to a Latin school. Located in towns and cities, *Latteinschulen* (also called *Stadtschulen*) provided the Latin instruction necessary for university study and a clerical or legal career. As such, they served primarily the sons of respected and established burghers. Girls, if they received any education at all, were instructed by tutors or by nuns in a nearby convent.

By the second half of the fifteenth century, this picture had begun to change. The revival of trade, the growing importance of the vernacular,

<sup>1</sup>On the “patchwork” organization of schooling in the Old Regime, see François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, *Reading and Writing: Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 69–82.

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and the advent of print helped generate a growing demand for basic literacy. Typifying this demand was the emergence of so-called *Deutsche Schulen* and *Schreib- und Rechenschulen*. Eschewing Latin study for basic German instruction in the three Rs, these schools catered to families whose aspirations were more utilitarian in nature. They imparted the basic literacy and mathematical skills deemed necessary for future artisans, shopkeepers, and merchants. While *Deutsche Schulen* were in some cases absorbed by Latin schools, most remained independent. By the sixteenth century, they existed in most towns and cities.<sup>2</sup>

With the outbreak of the Reformation, however, popular education ceased to be a purely parental or community matter. Whether the product of evangelical fervor or the need to inoculate subjects against radical sectarian movements, popular education now became an urgent concern of municipal elites and territorial princes.<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther considered popular education to be crucial to the success of the Reformation, and exhorted secular authorities to establish schools for their subjects. Ac-

<sup>2</sup>The above discussion is drawn largely from Heinrich Heppe, *Geschichte des deutschen Volksschulwesens*, 3 vols. (Gotha, 1858), 1:1–5, and Helmut Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesens*, 3 vols. (Vienna, 1982–84), 1:226–252. For Europe as a whole, Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York, 1962), pp. 286–314, is useful on the emergence of primary schools in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Detailed accounts of the rise of *Deutsche Schulen* in northern Germany and Franconia can be found in the recent articles by Klaus Wriedt, “Schulen und bürgerliches Bildungswesen in Norddeutschland im Spätmittelalter,” and Rudolf Endres, “Das Schulwesen in Franken im ausgehenden Mittelalter,” in Bernd Moeller, Hans Patze, and Karl Stackmann, eds., *Studien zum städtischen Bildungswesen des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (Göttingen, 1983).

<sup>3</sup>Gerald Strauss, *Luther’s House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation* (Baltimore, 1978), has conclusively demonstrated the relationship between the Reformation and the expansion of parish schooling in sixteenth-century Germany. Protestantism also spurred the expansion of primary schooling in other parts of Europe. For France see Bernard Grosperin, *Les petites écoles sous l’Ancien Régime* (Rennes, 1984), pp. 12–14; and Furet and Ozouf, *Reading and Writing*, pp. 58–69. For Prussia see F. Wienecke, “Die Begründung der evangelischen Volksschule in der Kurmark und ihre Entwicklung bis zum Tode König Friedrichs I. 1540–1713,” *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Erziehung und des Unterrichts*, 3 (1913), p. 16. While primarily concerned with the eighteenth century, the excellent study by Wolfgang Neugebauer, *Absolutistischer Staat und Schulwirklichkeit in Brandenburg-Preussen* (Berlin, 1985), contains a good analysis of the relationship between Prussian schooling and the Reformation. See particularly his remarks on the role of the *Stände* and the nobility, pp. 69–73, 235–236. For selected Austrian territories see Engelbrecht, *Geschichte des österreichischen Bildungswesens*, 2:122–134; Wincent Ostrowski, *Wiejskie szkolnictwo parafialne na Śląsku w drugiej 17. Wieku* (Wrocław, 1971), p. 135; J. Hubel, “Das Schulwesen Niederösterreichs im Reformationszeitalter,” *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte des Protestantismus in Österreich*, 51 (1930); Christian d’Elvert, *Geschichte der Studien-, Schul-, und Erziehungs-Anstalten in Mähren und österreichischen Schlesien* (Brünn, 1857), pp. xxvii–ix; Josef Hanzal, “K dějinám nižšího školství před rokem 1775,” *Acta Universitatis Carolinae-Historiae Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis*, 6 (1965); Johann Loserth, *Die protestantischen Schulen der Steiermark im sechzehnten Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1916), pp. 182–188.

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cordingly, Protestant territories and municipalities throughout the Holy Roman Empire issued a flood of school ordinances requiring religious and catechistic instruction for the young. Gerald Strauss calculates that more than one hundred such *Schulordnungen* were issued during the sixteenth century. These were promulgated not only in most major Protestant cities, but also in prominent territories like Hesse (1526, 1537, and 1566), Electoral Saxony (1528 and 1533), Pomerania (1535), Brandenburg (1573), Braunschweig (1543), and Württemberg (1559).<sup>4</sup> Protestant town councils transformed existing *Deutsche Schulen* and *Schreib- und Rechenschulen* from purely utilitarian institutions into centers of religious indoctrination. In the countryside, Protestant princes and their consistories required pastors and their sacristans to maintain parish schools. Here Brandenburg can serve as a typical example. The Ecclesiastical Constitution of 1573 required the sacristan (*Küster*) to provide religious instruction to parish youth on a regular basis. Following the disappointing church visitations of 1581, sacristans were threatened with a fine if they failed to hold school.<sup>5</sup> By 1600, so-called sacristan schools (*Küsterschulen*) were scattered throughout the province, and formed the prototype for elementary schools in the region. They were designed for girls and boys alike, although in some cases girls attended their own schools. By the late sixteenth century, schools for girls (known as *Jungfernschulen* or *Mädchenschulen*) could be found in every major town in the province.<sup>6</sup>

Shocked by the spread of Protestantism in their territories, Catholic princes followed suit. As confessional differences sharpened, Catholics too came to view schooling as crucial to the preservation of doctrinal purity and liturgical uniformity.<sup>7</sup> In Habsburg Austria, schools became a central battleground in efforts to roll back Protestantism. As Luther's teachings spread rapidly throughout the Habsburg domains, so did Protestant schools. Cardinal Khlesl fretted in 1587 that fifty-seven schools attached to Lutheran parishes had been established in Lower Austria alone, many at the instigation of Protestant nobles.<sup>8</sup> Thanks to the efforts

<sup>4</sup>Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning*, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup>Wienecke, "Begründung der evangelischen Volksschule," p. 24.

<sup>6</sup>In 1574 two *Jungfernschulen* existed in Berlin, two in Prenzlau, and one in Potsdam, Nauen, and Frankfurt an der Oder. *Ibid.*, pp. 33–36.

<sup>7</sup>Here again, one can draw parallels with France. See Grosperin, *Les petites écoles*, pp. 15–16; Mireille Laget, "Petites écoles en Languedoc au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Annales*, 26 (1971), p. 1417; Furet and Ozouf, *Reading and Writing*, pp. 58–69.

<sup>8</sup>Gustav Strakosch-Grassmann, *Geschichte des österreichischen Unterrichtswesens* (Vienna, 1905), p. 44; Helmuth Feigl, *Die niederösterreichische Grundherrschaft* (Vienna, 1964), p. 270; Hubel, "Das Schulwesen Niederösterreichs," pp. 27–38.

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An Austrian Mädchenschule (ca. 1750). Source: *Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien*.

of vigorous counter-reformers like Ferdinand II, the Protestant tide was soon turned. As archduke of Styria and later as emperor, Ferdinand vigorously promoted parish visitations to root out Protestant schoolmasters. Following his defeat of the Bohemian Protestants at White Mountain (1620), Ferdinand's energetic campaign against heresy succeeded in converting or exiling most Protestant schoolmasters by 1630.<sup>9</sup> The Catholic church quickly attempted to move into the resulting vacuum, basing parish school instruction on the catechism of the sixteenth-century Jesuit Peter Canisius.

In Prussia and Austria alike, the movement on behalf of popular schooling was clearly on the wane by the mid-seventeenth century. In areas ravaged by the marauding *Soldateska* of the Thirty Years War, rural and urban schools invariably suffered the consequences. Beyond outright physical destruction, many suffered from the demographic effects of the war. In those areas experiencing a sharp population loss,

<sup>9</sup>Strakosch-Grassmann, *Geschichte des österreichischen Unterrichtswesens*, pp. 20–21, 66–67; Andreas Stoll, *Geschichte der Lehrerbildung in Tirol* (Weinheim and Berlin, 1968), p. 27.

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declining enrollments and fees imposed further hardships on schoolmasters already perched precariously on the subsistence threshold. Furthermore, as confessional tensions subsided after 1648, so did the impetus to establish or maintain parish schools. In Prussia the traditional instrument of enforcement, church visitations, declined in frequency during the latter part of the seventeenth century. Except in the Altmark, the western region of Brandenburg, no Prussian church visitations were conducted between 1601 and 1710.<sup>10</sup> The Hohenzollern conversion to the Calvinist faith in 1613 also impeded the expansion of Prussian parish education. The conversion strained relations between the dynasty and the Lutheran-dominated estates and consistories, thereby hampering any concerted promotion of parish education.<sup>11</sup>

In Austria, likewise, parish schooling expanded little during the second half of the seventeenth century. While formerly Protestant schools were placed in the hands of the Catholic parish clergy, many never reopened owing to a shortage of confessionally reliable schoolmasters.<sup>12</sup> In the late seventeenth century, the existence of crypto-Protestantism in Upper Austria was blamed on the decline in the number and quality of Catholic parish schools.<sup>13</sup> The sponsorship of parish education in the Habsburg monarchy, as will be seen later, also tended to be subordinated to the more visual, theatrical, and nonliterary forms of proselytism typical of Habsburg baroque piety.

Despite the apparent stagnation of popular schooling in the latter part of the seventeenth century, available statistics nevertheless point to an extensive network of parish schools in Prussia and Austria by the eighteenth century. By 1700 every parish seat in Brandenburg had a school, and schools could be found in two-thirds of all East Prussian parishes.<sup>14</sup> In Silesia, Catholic visitation reports from the 1660s revealed a total of seventy-four schools in the diocese of Liegnitz alone, instructing more than 1,200 pupils.<sup>15</sup> While seventeenth-century statistics for other

<sup>10</sup>Wienecke, "Begründung der evangelischen Volksschule," p. 30.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 36–37.

<sup>12</sup>Loserth, *Die protestantischen Schulen*, p. 95; Alois Kross, *Geschichte der böhmischen Provinz der Gesellschaft Jesu*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1910), 2:148–149; d'Elvert, *Erziehungs-Anstalten*, p. xxxvii.

<sup>13</sup>See Rudolf Weiss, *Das Bistum Passau unter Kardinal Joseph Dominikus von Lamberg (1723–1761). Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Kryptoprotentismus in Oberösterreich* (St. Ottilien, 1979), pp. 275–276.

<sup>14</sup>Gerhard Duesterhaus, *Das ländliche Schulwesen im Herzogthum Preussen im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Bonn, 1975), p. 135; Wienecke, "Begründung der evangelischen Volksschule," pp. 38–39.

<sup>15</sup>Ostrowski, *Wiejskie szkolnictwo parafialne*, pp. 31–37.

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Habsburg territories are rare, estimates on the eve of the Theresian school reform of 1774 reveal a considerable number of parish schools. The consistory of the bishopric of Passau, whose jurisdiction included most of Upper and Lower Austria, reported in 1772 that virtually every parish in these provinces had a school, although the attendance rate among children of school age (ages five through twelve) averaged only 10–20 percent.<sup>16</sup> In Vienna and its suburbs, schools were equally plentiful and better attended. In 1770, 4,665 pupils – more than a third of all school-age children—attended a total of sixty-five parish or municipally franchised schools.<sup>17</sup>

#### Popular schooling and literacy

Although it is customary to equate schooling with the acquisition of literacy, one must be cautious in projecting that equation on the early modern period. Given their confessional origins, parish and community schools above all provided instruction in the articles of faith.<sup>18</sup> Such instruction, however, was often oral rather than literate in character. Based largely on the oral recitation and memorization of catechisms, education at a parish school did not necessarily include reading or writing instruction.

Particularly in Austria, the teaching of reading in parish schools was sporadic given the church's distrust of popular literacy and preference for nonliterate media of religious instruction.<sup>19</sup> What appears in Catholic visitation reports as a school sometimes signified little beyond oral catechistic instruction by the church sacristan.<sup>20</sup> Further testifying to the nonliterary function of Catholic parish schools was their heavy emphasis

<sup>16</sup>*Archiv des Erzbischöflichen Ordinariats*, Vienna: Schulakten, Mappe 120, Fasz. 3, 1772. This estimate is corroborated by a 1771 archdual investigation of Lower Austrian schools, which revealed that only 18,527 out of 114,105 school-age children (or 16 percent) actually attended school. See the table in the *Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv*, Vienna: Nachlass Perglen, 1771, "Tabellarisches Verzeichnis sämmtlicher von 5. bis 12. und 13. Jahren Schulfähigen im Erzherzogthum Unterösterreich."

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>Prior to the eighteenth century, most school ordinances were issued as integral parts of comprehensive ecclesiastical ordinances. See Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning*, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup>See Chapter 3, "The Non-literate Legacy of Habsburg Baroque Catholicism."

<sup>20</sup>On the frequent absence of reading and writing instruction in rural parish schools see the example of Styria in Peter Czimeg, "Die Entwicklung der Pfarrschulen im heutigen Schulbezirk Liezen," Ph.D. diss., University of Graz, 1965, p. 6; and Moravia in d'Elvert, *Erziehungs-Anstalten*, p. 141. In Lower Austria, visitations such as those conducted in Laa (1686), Simonsfeld (1704), and Hadersdorf (1756) suggest that parish school instruction was often limited to catechistic instruction on Sundays and religious holidays. AEO: Visitationen D. D. Dechanten (1664–1760), Passau.



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on music. The parish school in the Silesian town of Ratibor, where two hours a day were devoted to choir singing in 1740, was far from atypical.<sup>21</sup> The English musicologist Charles Burney, a traveler through Bohemia in 1772, was struck by the dominant role of music instruction in Bohemian parish schools. Burney went so far as to attribute the flowering of musical culture in the Habsburg territories to the stress upon music in parish schools.<sup>22</sup> The role of music in the parish schools of the Habsburg monarchy was tied to the prominent role of processions, religious festivals, and similar manifestations of “baroque popular piety” in cultural life. Choir singing on such occasions was usually provided by the schoolmaster and his pupils. Baptisms, weddings, and funerals were other occasions that often called on the services of a school choir.

In a Protestant territory like Prussia, one might well expect a greater emphasis on reading. Historians have long stressed Protestantism’s role in the diffusion of literacy by virtue of its alleged promotion of lay Bible reading. But as Richard Gawthrop and Gerald Strauss have recently argued, Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century were highly ambivalent about the wisdom of placing Bibles in the hands of the laity. Only after the emergence of Pietism in the late seventeenth century was lay Bible reading vigorously promoted in Prussia.<sup>23</sup> The spread of sectarianism in the 1520s had convinced many church leaders of the need to restrict and control lay Bible reading. Consistories instead relied on the catechism as a safer tool of popular education. As objects of memorization, catechisms inculcated the articles of faith in a more uniform manner, thereby minimizing the risk of independent or aberrant popular interpretation.<sup>24</sup>

Lending support to the interpretation of Gawthrop and Strauss is the fact that Prussian school ordinances did not emphasize the teaching of reading until after the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>25</sup> In the countryside

<sup>21</sup>Augustin Weltzel, *Geschichte der Stadt Ratibor* (Ratibor, 1861), p. 539.

<sup>22</sup>Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces*, ed. Percy A. Scholes (London, 1959), pp. 131–136. Burney also attributed the emphasis on music to the nobility, whose insatiable musical appetites created a demand for trained musicians. Burney observed that in Prague, for example, “The nobility were now out of town, but in winter they are said to have great concerts frequently at their hotels and palaces, chiefly performed by their own domestics and vassals, who have learned music at country schools” (p. 135).

<sup>23</sup>See Chapter 2, “Goals and Methods of Pietist Schooling.”

<sup>24</sup>Richard Gawthrop and Gerald Strauss, “Protestantism and Literacy in Early Modern Germany,” *Past and Present*, 104 (1984); Strauss, *Luther’s House of Learning*, p. 17; Gessinger, *Sprache und Bürgertum*, pp. 35–44.

<sup>25</sup>Heppé, *Geschichte des deutschen Volksschulwesens*, pp. 15–16; Wienecke, “Begrün-

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school instruction frequently amounted to little more than an hour or so on Sunday afternoons, when the sexton led the children in reciting the catechism and singing hymns. Even as late as 1764, the head of the provincial administration in Prussian Silesia reported that pupils in rural schools learned little more than prayers and hymns.<sup>26</sup> Often the rural parish schoolmaster himself was barely literate, as visitation reports in the seventeenth century often remarked. In such cases, of course, instruction was purely oral in nature.<sup>27</sup>

If literacy had been a primary aim in rural areas, one would expect a relatively high rate of literacy given the existing network of parish schools. Unfortunately, literacy rates in early modern Prussia and Austria have yet to be systematically examined. The limited evidence available, however, suggests extremely low rates of literacy even in areas where parish schools were available. Only 10 percent of the adult peasants in East Prussia could sign their names around the mid-eighteenth century, although some 1,500 parish schools existed in the countryside.<sup>28</sup> In Austria, Jesuit missionaries traveling through the village of Zell (Carinthia) reported in 1760 that only 4 of the 650 inhabitants could read.<sup>29</sup> Also illustrative of the low literacy rate in rural Austria was the census of 1787, when each peasant commune (*Gemeinde*) elected representatives to assist royal and archducal officials conducting the census. Peasant representatives in Upper Styrian parishes were rarely able to sign their names to the census reports. In the parishes of Weng and Lassing, for example, none of the fourteen peasant representatives could sign their names, even though they were the most respected members of their com-

ding der evangelischen Volksschule," pp. 38–39. See the example of Magdeburg, which was incorporated into Prussia in 1680, in Friedrich Danneil, *Geschichte des evangelischen Dorfschulwesens im Herzogthum Magdeburg* (Halle, 1876), p. 41, 55–57.

<sup>26</sup>Max Lehmann, ed., *Preussen und die katholische Kirche seit 1640*, 9 vols. (Leipzig, 1878–85), 3:182–185.

<sup>27</sup>Duesterhaus, *Das ländliche Schulwesen*, p. 65, 181; Reinhold Dorwart, *The Prussian Welfare State before 1740* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), p. 153; Edmund Michael, "Die schlesische Dorfschule im 16. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für die Geschichte Schlesiens*, 63 (1929), p. 23.

<sup>28</sup>Rolf Engelsing, *Analphabetentum und Lektüre. Zur Sozialgeschichte des Lesens in Deutschland zwischen feudaler und industrieller Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart, 1973), p. 62. In Mecklenburg, another East Elbian territory, only one person in every six households was literate during the second half of the seventeenth century. See the excellent article by Jochen Richter, "Zur Schriftkundigkeit mecklenburgischer Bauern im 17. Jahrhundert," *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 3 (1981), p. 89.

<sup>29</sup>August Leidl, "Die religiöse und seelsorgerliche Situation zur Zeit Maria Theresias (1740–80) im Gebiet des heutigen Österreichs," *Ostbairische Grenzmarken*, N.F., 16 (1974), p. 169.