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978-0-521-71778-6 - German Histories in the Age of Reformations, 1400-1650

Thomas A. Brady

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## German Histories in the Age of Reformations, 1400–1650

This book studies the connections between the political reform of the Holy Roman Empire and the German lands around 1500 and the sixteenth-century religious reformations, both Protestant and Catholic. It argues that the character of the political changes (dispersed sovereignty, local autonomy) prevented both a general reformation of the Church before 1520 and a national reformation thereafter. The resulting settlement maintained the public peace through politically structured religious communities (confessions), thereby avoiding further religious strife and fixing the confessions into the Empire's constitution. The Germans' emergence into the modern era as a people having two national religions was the reformation's principal legacy to modern Germany.

**Thomas A. Brady Jr.** studied at the universities of Notre Dame and Chicago and Columbia University. He taught for twenty-three years at the University of Oregon and eighteen years at the University of California, Berkeley, where he held the Peder Sather Chair of History, and as a guest at the University of Arizona and the National University of Ireland at Galway. A specialist in central European history from 1400 to 1800, his principal writings include *Ruling Class, Regime, and Reformation at Strasbourg 1520–1555*; *Turning Swiss: Cities and Empire 1450–1550*; *Protestant Politics: Jacob Sturm (1489–1553) and the German Reformation*; *The Politics of the German Reformation*; and *Communities, Politics, and Reformations in Early Modern Europe*. In addition to his PhD from the University of Chicago, Professor Brady holds the PhD honoris causa from the University of Bern, Switzerland. He has held Guggenheim, Fulbright, and Humboldt fellowships and appointments in the Historisches Kolleg at Munich and in the National Humanities Center, North Carolina.

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**Thomas A. Brady Jr.**

*University of California, Berkeley*



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To Kathy

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear  
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;  
I will luv thee still, my dear,  
While the sands o' life shall run.

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## Acknowledgments

I have striven neither to mock human actions, nor to weep at them,  
nor to hate them, but to understand them.

Benedict de Spinoza

This book seeks neither to praise nor condemn the past, neither to justify the present nor to impose a mortgage on the future. It essays to address neither the great issues of German national history nor the current controversies about recent German and European history. The work of a double stranger, neither German nor European, it is written in the first place for fellow strangers, though certainly not for them alone, and in a voice as free as possible from both myths of national superiority or inferiority, and pseudo-theological clouds of guilt, retribution, and incomparability.

While writing this book I have thought especially about other strangers, who might welcome more explanation and orienting information than was available when I began to study this subject. I have written also with a special thought to readers from the lands in which my story is laid, including both those who know the older interpretations and those who come fresh to the subject. In addition to the explanatory notes, therefore, I have added reference materials at the end (references and a glossary).

This book's themes and argument reflect a long road traveled from the time, forty-five years ago, when, as it turns out, my preparation for writing it began. From my teachers, some of them German refugees, I learned a vision of German history as tragedy, the twentieth century's self-destruction of a great people at the height of its achievement. From younger West German scholars I learned in the 1960s and 1970s how to study the local and regional histories, which seemed at the time a retreat into pure particularism but in fact allowed larger histories to be told in new ways. From the East Germans, who came into my ken in the 1970s and 1980s, I learned or relearned how to see German histories in terms of the large continuities and restless conflicts, for the mastery of which the insights of historical materialism proved their worth. And from the Alsatians, the Swabians, and the Swiss, among whom I have lived and worked, I learned that peoples can cope with the complexities of modern life without surrendering their fond sense of even deeper, more complex pasts or lusting after power over others. To all of these guides, living and dead, I owe boundless debts I can never repay.

Not once in this passage have I ever been alone. While the inseparability of teaching and research is often academic life's most treasured cliché, for me it has taken on full

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flesh in the writing of this book. History – and this is the motto of my seminars – is not a combat sport. It is a collective search whose soul is debate and dialogue. I have always been surrounded by colleagues who have inspired and supported my reach across generations, disciplines, and nationalities. Some have been my students, some my teachers, in the United States or abroad, and some both. They have pushed me year after year to reconsider opinions, received or my own, and to strive for a presentation of German and European histories that is accurate, intelligible, responsible, and fair.

How could I possibly thank all those who aided, many unwittingly, in the making of this book? To render them all adequate thanks would require a roll as long as my story. It would bear the names of my teachers at the universities of Notre Dame and Chicago and Columbia University; of the colleagues who gave me twenty-three happy years at the University of Oregon and eighteen more at the University of California in Berkeley; of historians in North America, Germany, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, and other countries, with whom I have discussed and debated their work and mine; and of archivists, librarians, staff members, and research assistants who contributed to this book in various, indispensable ways. Among them I single out the colleagues (in alphabetical order) who read parts or all of the manuscript and/or supplied me with references and sources: Margaret Lavinia Anderson, Erica Bastress-Dukehart, Peter Blickle, Miriam U. Chrisman, Luke S. Clossey, Deborah Cohen, Brad Gregory, Carina L. Johnson, Greta G. Kroeker, Howard B. Louthan, Christopher Ocker, Michael O. Printy, Thomas N. Robisheaux, James J. Sheehan, Peter E. Starenko, and Ellen M. Yutzy Glebe. Jeanne E. Grant and Tyler Lange read drafts and completed citations. Very special thanks are due to Julie K. Tanaka, who read the entire manuscript several times with her sharp editorial eye, made many corrections, and gave many helpful suggestions. Katie Russell of Berkeley's Geography Department created the maps. In addition to them all, I am beholden to the students, undergraduates and graduates, who over many years have inspired me to investigate new subjects and to question my ideas about old ones, and who have taught me that nothing is truly self-explanatory.

I owe special thanks to the directors and staff of two special institutions, both of which support resident scholars with exemplary dedication and efficiency. The Historisches Kolleg in Munich, which is dedicated to the advancement of historical studies, was my scholarly home in 1998–99. There I made the first, ultimately decisive, revisions of this book. I am grateful to the Kolleg's curators and staff and especially to Dr. Elisabeth Müller-Luckner for her kindness and help. The second institution is the National Humanities Center, a magnificently organized and superbly operated home of scholarship in the Research Triangle Park in North Carolina. There I completely revised the manuscript again in 2001–2. I am grateful to the director, trustees, and staff, and especially to Dr. Kent Mullikin, for that golden year. For a scholar to work in either of these houses is a foretaste of the Elysian Fields.

In the book's final phase I received most support from Cambridge University Press, and in particular from my editor, Eric Crahan, and my copy editor, Sally Nicholls. To them my heartfelt thanks.

Last and best, my deepest and most enduring gratitude goes to Kathy, my incomparable wife, companion, friend, and collaborator for more than forty years. She is present in all my work as in my thoughts; she lends me her courage when I have none; and she gives me her precious counsel at need. Some time ago and with not a little Swabian hyperbole, Peter Blickle compared our partnership to that of Marx and Engels. "If we are to live up to that mark," I whispered to her, "we must each grow more whiskers."

## A Note on Usages

I have tried to avoid unnecessary capitalization and to use English equivalents as frequently as possible. The terms “Empire” and “Imperial” are capitalized only when the historic polity of the Holy Roman Empire is meant. “Church” is capitalized when the entire Western, or Roman Catholic, Church is meant. As the Imperial church is but one branch, it is not capitalized. “Reformation” is not capitalized, except when it refers to the entire movement of Protestant and Catholic reform.

The Holy Roman Empire (of the German Nation) refers to a polity, not a country. It corresponds roughly to “the German lands,” which are the German-speaking lands, including Bohemia and, sometimes, the colonized Baltic areas. While the adjectival form “German” is frequently used, the noun “Germany” refers to the post-Napoleonic country. The one exception is the humanists’ Roman-inspired use of “Germany” as a collective alternative for “the German lands.”

The term “evangelical” is used to mean Biblicist religion in the sixteenth century, either separated or not from the Church of Rome. Protestant is used to mean those people who call themselves “evangelical” in opposition to Rome.

The term “bishopric” normally refers to both the diocese under the bishop’s spiritual authority and the territory (*Hochstift*) under his feudal temporal jurisdiction.

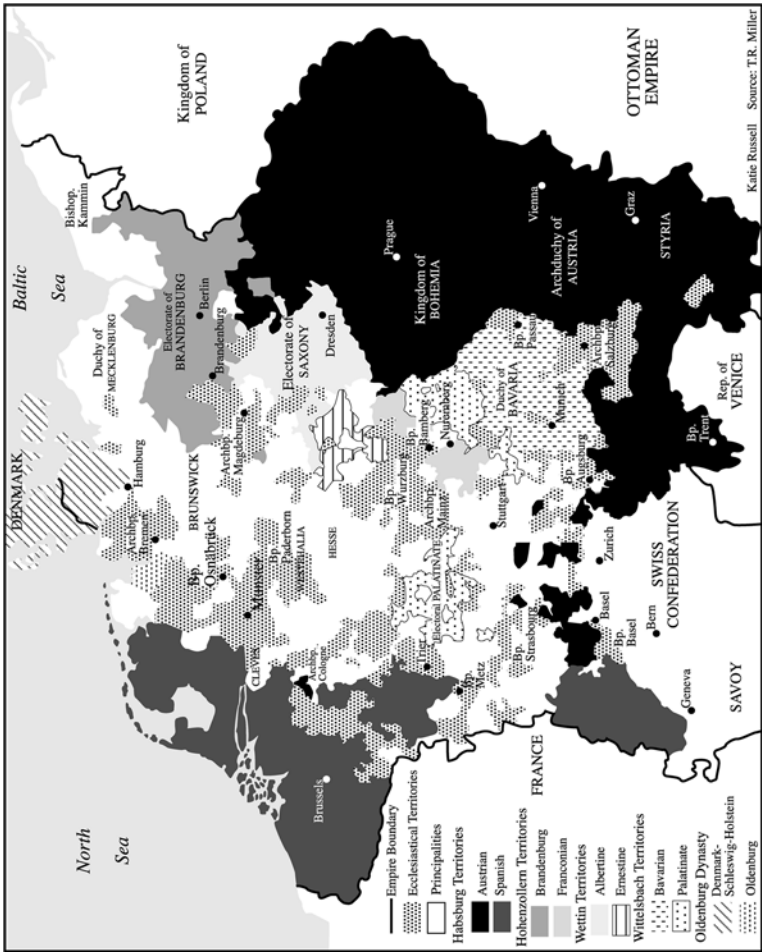
The names of members of ruling dynasties take their English forms, those of others retain the original forms.

Place names are given in their usual English forms or, if no such form exists, in the form of the country in which they lie (e.g., Strasbourg not Straßburg), or in more than one form then or now used (to help the reader to locate them).

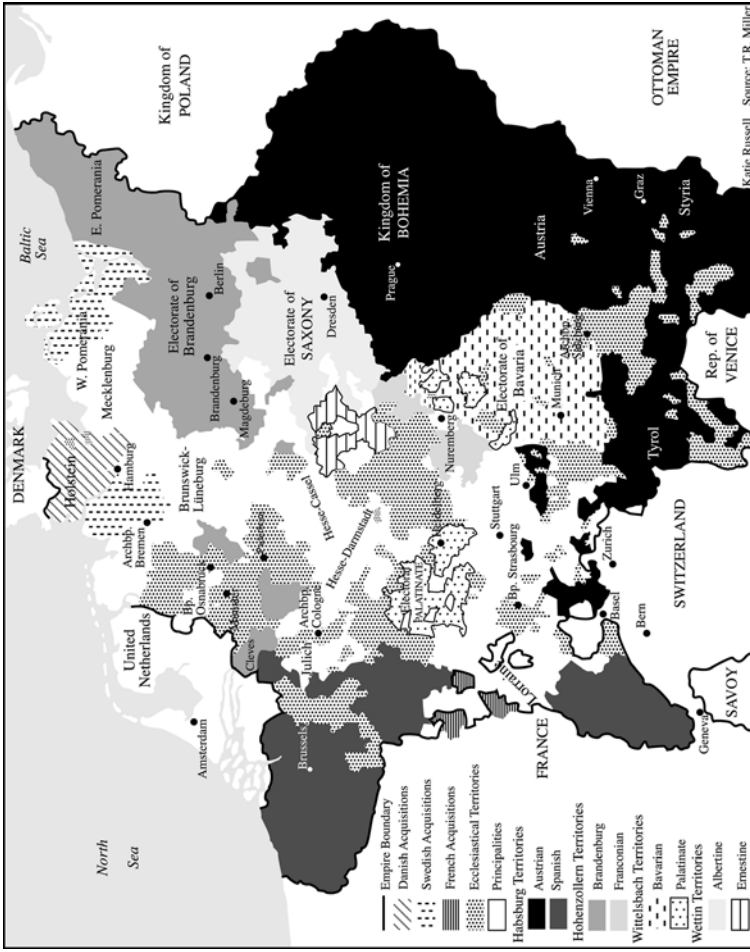
The words “upper” and “lower” in topographical names always refer to altitude or drainage, so that “upper” is always topographically higher than “lower.”

Many of the references used are German-language texts. Where these are quoted, unless indicated, the translations are mine.

In the period around 1600, German monetary equivalents would have been as follows: 1 Gulden (fl.) = 0.85 Thaler (Th.) = 4 “old” pounds (lb.) = 15 Batzen (Bz.) = 20 Schilling (sch.) = 60 Kreuzer (dr.) = 120 pence (d.) = 240 Heller (H.).



Map 1. The Empire in 1547



Map 2. The Peace of Westphalia, 1648