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978-1-107-06715-8 - Ferdinand II, Counter-Reformation Emperor, 1578–1637

Robert Bireley

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Ferdinand II, Counter-Reformation Emperor, 1578–1637

Emperor Ferdinand II (1619–1637) stands out as a crucial figure in the Counter Reformation in Central Europe, a leading player in the Thirty Years War, the most important ruler in the consolidation of the Habsburg Monarchy, and the emperor who reinvigorated the office after its decline under his two predecessors. This is the first biography of Ferdinand since a long-outdated one written in German in 1978 and the first ever in English. It looks at his reign as territorial ruler of Inner Austria from 1598 until his election as emperor and especially at the influence of his mother, the formidable Archduchess Maria. Only against this background can one understand his later policies as emperor. This book focuses on the consistency of his policies and the profound influence of religion on them throughout his career. It also follows the contest at court between those who favored consolidation of the Habsburg lands and those who aimed for expansion in the Empire, as well as between those who favored a militant religious policy and those who advocated a moderate one.

ROBERT BIRELEY is Professor of History Emeritus at Loyola University Chicago. He has served as president of the American Catholic Historical Association and on the editorial boards of the *Catholic Historical Review* and the *Renaissance Quarterly*. Bireley has been a prolific author in the field of European religious history, with a special interest in the Reformation, Roman Catholicism, and Jesuit history. His books include *Politics and Religion in the Age of the Counter Reformation: Emperor Ferdinand II, William Lamormaini, S.J., and the Formation of Imperial Policy* (1981); *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450–1700: A Reassessment of the Counterreformation* (1999); and *The Jesuits and the Thirty Years War: Kings, Courts, and Confessors* (Cambridge, 2003). He is the recipient of numerous fellowships, including fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, the National Humanities Center in Research Triangle Park in North Carolina, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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Preface

Emperor Ferdinand II stands out as the most significant ruler in the Counter Reformation in Central Europe, a leading player in the Thirty Years War, and the most important individual in the consolidation of the Habsburg Monarchy, which completed its rise to the status of a European power at the Peace of Westphalia (1648) under his son, Ferdinand III. In addition, after a period of decline during the reigns of the weak Emperors Rudolf (1576–1612) and Matthias (1612–1619), Ferdinand restored the prestige of the imperial office. Magisterial studies have appeared in recent years of the major personalities of the Thirty Years War and the first half of the seventeenth century in Europe, such as J. H. Elliott's *The Count-Duke of Olivares: The Statesman in an Age of Decline* (1986) and Dieter Albrecht's *Maximilian I. von Bayern, 1573–1651* (1998) as well as many fine biographies of Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu of France, Philip III and Philip IV of Spain, Gustav Adolph of Sweden, James I of England, and others. Two biographies of Ferdinand's son, Ferdinand III, have recently appeared, Lothar Höbelt's *Ferdinand III. (1608–1657). Friedenskaiser wider Willen* (2008), and Mark Hengerer's, *Kaiser Ferdinand III (1608–1657). Eine Biographie* (2012).¹ There is nothing similar on Ferdinand II. Three extensive studies of the emperor have appeared in recent years. Johann Franzl's well, even entertainingly written biography, *Ferdinand II. Kaiser im Zwiespalt der Zeit* came out in 1978 (reissued without change, 1984). It was based on limited sources and is long out of date.² My own *Religion and Politics in the Age of the Counterreformation: Emperor Ferdinand II, William Lamormaini, S.J., and the Formation of Imperial Policy* appeared in 1981 and dealt with the period from 1624 to 1637, and Thomas Brockmann, *Dynastie, Kaiseramt und*

¹ This is soon to appear in an English translation published by the Purdue University Press.

² See also Steven Saunders, *Cross, Sword, and Lyre: Sacred Music at the Imperial Court of Ferdinand II (1619–1637)* (Oxford, 1995).

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Preface

Konfession. Politik und Ordnungsvorstellungen Ferdinands II. im Dreissigjährigen Krieg (2011) covers only the years 1618 to 1630.

My book is meant to fill the gap for this influential Austrian Habsburg ruler, at least provisionally, and to argue for his place in European history. Assessments of Ferdinand have varied widely, for a long time dependent to some extent on whether the historian was Catholic, Protestant, or liberal. The historiography of Ferdinand begins with *Ferdinandi II. Romanorum Imperatoris Virtutes*, published by his Jesuit confessor, William Lamormaini, in 1638, the year after the emperor's death. The short volume became a Baroque classic, and it also appeared at the conclusion of the *Annales Ferdinandeï* (12 vols., with two supplementary volumes, 1721–1726) by Franz Christoph von Khevenhüller, who had been a councillor and diplomat in the emperor's service.³ Implicitly it called for Ferdinand's canonization. Friedrich Hurter in his *Geschichte Ferdinands II. und seiner Eltern* (11 vols. 1850–1864) maintained a similar tone.⁴ Nineteenth-century historians of a nationalist and/or liberal persuasion, such as Felix Stieve in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (1877), drawing upon a Protestant tradition and often acknowledging Ferdinand's personal qualities, represented him as an essentially passive character, wholly dependent upon his councillors, especially his ecclesiastical advisers, and constrained by an excessive religiosity.⁵ But no such ruler could have accomplished all that he did. Others portrayed him as an aspiring tyrant who aimed to suppress German liberties. One still encounters these views occasionally in surveys of European or German history or of the Thirty Years War. Recent, limited studies, such as Dieter Albrecht, "Ferdinand II (1619–1637)" in *Die Kaiser der Neuzeit (1519–1918)* (1990) have produced a more balanced picture than either of these extremes.⁶

My own historical interest over the years has centered on the relationship between religion and politics in early modern Europe, not so much in theory as in the actual formation of policy. This was the case in my first book, *Maximilian von Bayern, Adam Contzen, S.J., und die Gegenreformation in Deutschland* (1975). I then crossed over to the broader stage of Habsburg Vienna for my earlier book on Ferdinand. Now after thirty years I return to Ferdinand with a much more complete study of this oft-neglected ruler. The focus remains on religion and politics, and I draw heavily on my earlier study especially in the later chapters, updating, revising, consolidating, expanding. But one cannot understand his later policies as emperor and ruler of the Habsburg lands without considering his early years, especially the

³ A first edition came out in nine volumes from 1640–1646. See the Conclusion for a discussion of the *Virtutes Ferdinandi II.*

⁴ Friedrich Hurter, *Geschichte Ferdinands II. und seiner Eltern* (11 vols., Schaffhausen, 1850–1864).

⁵ *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 6 (Leipzig, 1877): 661–4.

⁶ (Munich, 1990), 125–41.

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influence of his mother, the formidable Archduchess Maria (his father died in 1590 when he was only twelve), his long rule as archduke in Inner Austria, and his struggle to stabilize the succession in the Habsburg lands and in the Empire. It is fascinating to watch this deeply religious, conscientious, and genuinely humane ruler struggle to implement his goals amidst the morass of political reality and the sometimes contradictory views of his closest advisers. One sees emerge in his later years the conflict between those councillors who placed a priority on consolidation in the Habsburg territories and those who advocated expansion in the Empire, as well as the contest between his first minister, Hans Ulrich von Eggenberg, and his Jesuit confessor, William Lamormaini, both also friends dating from his early years in Graz, over the role Spain should play in Vienna's policy. Ferdinand certainly did not avoid failures; the Edict of Restitution of 1629 and his refusal to compromise on it proved to be a disaster and undoubtedly prolonged the long war. But in the end he deserves our admiration for his nearly forty years of rule from age eighteen to fifty-seven, so this book will contend. Readers will have to decide for themselves.

This book is based on extensive archival research principally in Vienna, Rome, and Munich, much of it undertaken long ago. A significant number of the documents that I first consulted in manuscript have now been published, chiefly in the two series *Briefe und Akten zur Geschichte des Dreissigjährigen Krieges* and the *Nuntiaturreferate aus Deutschland*. I normally cite them here in their published form.

The names of persons and places have posed many challenges. Generally I have tried to use the form most suitable in the context. For the most part this meant the anglicized form for rulers and major figures in the narrative, for example, *William* Lamormaini, not *Wilhelm*, and the foreign form for others, *Vilém* Slavata rather than *William*. Ranks and titles are given in the English form, as are place names. As to places for which there are two or more names in different languages, such as Pressburg, Bratislava, and Poszony, I have indicated the various names at the first mention in the text and again in the index and tried to find a compromise for use otherwise throughout the text between the name most commonly used in the seventeenth century and the one most familiar to today's reader.

Many people have supported me in the writing of this book. I want to single out several. Paula Fichtner, professor emerita of history at Brooklyn College and from the Graduate Center, City University of New York, herself a biographer of two Holy Roman Emperors, read an early version of the manuscript and gave me many valuable suggestions. Lewis Bateman and Shaun Vigil of the Cambridge University Press have been most helpful, as have the copy editor Randa Dubnick and project manager Bindu Vinod. I am also grateful to the anonymous readers of the Cambridge University Press for their helpful comments.

This book is dedicated to my colleagues in the Department of History at Loyola University Chicago where I have taught for forty years.

Abbreviations used in the notes

AF	Franz Christoph von Khevenhüller. <i>Annales Ferdinandeï</i> . 12 vols. Leipzig, 1721–26.
AKGGI	<i>Acten und Korrespondenzen zur Geschichte der Gegenreformation in Innerösterreich unter Ferdinand II</i> . 2 vols. Ed. J. Loserth. Vienna, 1906–1907. <i>Fontes Rerum Austriacarum</i> , Section 2, 58, 60.
Albrecht 1	Dieter Albrecht. <i>Die auswärtige Politik Maximilians I. von Bayern 1618–1635</i> . Göttingen, 1962. Schriftenreihe der Historischen Kommission bei der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 6.
Albrecht 2	Dieter Albrecht. <i>Maximilian I. von Bayern</i> . Munich, 1998.
ARSJ	Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu, Rome
Aust.	Austria
Boh.	Bohemia
BA	<i>Briefe und Akten zur Geschichte des Dreissigjährigen Krieges in den Zeiten des vorwaltenden Einflusses der Wittelsbacher</i> . 12 vols. Munich, 1870–1978.
BAGW	<i>Briefe und Akten zur Geschichte Wallensteins 1630–1634</i> . 4 vols. Ed. Hermann Hallwich. Vienna, 1912. <i>Fontes Rerum Austriacarum</i> , Section 2, vols. 63–66.
BANF	<i>Briefe und Akten zur Geschichte des Dreissigjährigen Krieges</i> , Neue Folge: <i>Die Politik Maximilians I. von Bayern und seiner Verbündeten 1618–1651</i> . 10 vols. Munich, 1907–1997.
Bireley 1	Robert Bireley. <i>Maximilian von Bayern, Adam Contzen, S.J. und die Gegenreformation in Deutschland 1624–1635</i> . Göttingen, 1975. Schriftenreihe der Historischen Kommission bei der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 17

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- Bireley 2 Robert Bireley. *Religion and Politics in the Age of the Counter Reformation: Emperor Ferdinand II, William Lamormaini, S.J., and the Formation of Imperial Policy*. Chapel Hill, 1981.
- BL Fondo Barberini Latini, Vatican Library, Rome
- Brockmann *Dynastie, Kaiseramt und Konfession. Politik und Ordnungsvorstellungen im Dreissigjährigen Krieg*. Paderborn, 2011. *Quellen und Forschungen aus dem Gebiete der Geschichte*, New Series 25
- Casal Peter Casal. “Das Tagebuch des Geheimsekretärs Peter Casal über die italienische Reise des Erzherzogs Ferdinand II. vom 22. April bis 28 Juni 1598.” Ed. J. Loserth. *Mittheilungen des historischen Vereins für Steiermark* 48 (1900): 3–93.
- Dudik Beda Dudik. “Korrespondenz Kaiser Ferdinands II. und seiner erlauchten Familie mit P. Martinus Becanus und P. Wilhelm Lamormaini, kaiserliche Beichtväter, S.J.,” *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte* 54 (1876) 219–350.
- Franzl Johann Franzl. *Ferdinand II. Kaiser im Zwiespalt der Zeit*. Graz, 1978.
- Günter Heinrich Günter. *Die Habsburgerliga, 1625–1635. Briefe und Akten aus dem General-Archiv zu Simancas*. Berlin, 1908.
- HHStA Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Österreichisches Staatarchiv, Vienna
- Frieden. Friedensakten
- Krieg. Kriegsakten
- RTA Reichstagsakten
- Religion Religionsakten
- Hurter Friedrich von Hurter. *Geschichte Ferdinands II. und seiner Eltern, bis zu seiner Krönung in Frankfurt. Personen-, Haus- und Landesgeschichte*. 11 vols. Schaffhausen, 1850–1864.
- KSchw Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich, Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Kasten Schwarz
- Lorenz *Quellen zur Vorgeschichte und zu den Anfängen des Dreissigjährigen Krieges*. Ed. Gottfried Lorenz. Darmstadt, 1991
- Mann Golo Mann. *Wallenstein*. Frankfurt, 1971.
- NBD *Nuntiaturreportage aus Deutschland*. Abteilung 4: Siebzehntes Jahrhundert. Berlin/Tübingen, 1895–2013.
- Pörtner Regina Pörtner. *The Counter-Reformation in Central Europe. Styria 1580–1630*: Oxford, 2001.
- Repgen Konrad Repgen. *Die römische Kurie und der westfälische Friede. Idee und Wirklichkeit des Papsttums im 16. und 17.*

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- Vita Lamormaini “Vita Lamormaini,” ARSJ, Vitae 139.
- Wilson Peter H. Wilson. *The Thirty Years War: Europe’s Tragedy*. Cambridge, MA, 2009.