

**Renaissance and Reformation**  
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**Asbach, Olaf and Peter Schröder, eds. The Ashgate Research Companion to the Thirty Years' War**

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## Book Reviews / Comptes Rendus

**Asbach, Olaf and Peter Schröder, eds.**

***The Ashgate Research Companion to the Thirty Years' War.***

Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014. Pp. xiv, 347. ISBN 978-1-4094-0629-7 (hardcover) £85.

In 1984, Geoffrey Parker published *The Thirty Years' War*, which aimed to be more geographically comprehensive than previous syntheses such as those of C. V. Wedgwood (1938) and J. V. Polišínský (1971). Appearing in a second, corrected edition in 1997, it represented the collaborative effort of ten scholars, including Parker, in six chapters. Still in print, the book remained the *vade mecum* in English on the Thirty Years War for a generation. In 2009, with the publication of *Europe's Tragedy: A History of the Thirty Years War*, Peter Wilson supplanted Parker's volume with a much more detailed synthesis. Building on recent scholarship, Wilson has helped to reinvigorate research on Europe's most destructive conflict before the First World War.

*The Ashgate Research Companion to the Thirty Years' War* serves as the newest synthesis. It offers twenty-five chapters, each concluding with a "selected bibliography" for further reading. In the table of contents the chapters are divided into five parts: "The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation," "The Great Powers, Coalitions and Conflicting Interests," "Different Stages and Theatres of the War," "Religion and Politics," and "Experience and Praxis of War." The final part is a misnomer. It should have been entitled "Peacemaking" since its four chapters examine the Peace of Prague (1635) and the Peace of Westphalia (1648). The chapters on "The Material Conditions of War," "The Experience of War," and "Strategy and the Conduct of War" have curiously found their way into the section on "Religion and Politics." But this is an error in the table of contents. The editors, who in their introduction divided the book into six parts, separated these four chapters into an albeit invisible section on "the experience and material conditions of the war" (8).

The *Research Companion* is notable for the scholars who have and have not contributed to it. Some of the authors are well known in the scholarship on the war: Paul Douglas Lockhart, Ronald Asch, Tryntje Helfferich, John Theibault, and, of course, Peter Wilson. Surprisingly absent from the volume

is Derek Croxton, a more renowned authority on the Peace of Westphalia than Axel Gotthard, Heinz Durchhardt, and Susan Richter, who consider the Peace respectively from German, European, and global perspectives. Hans Medick in effect yields to Sigrun Haude, who in her instructive chapter on “The Experience of War” emphasizes the role of fear in the “plethora of narrative accounts” (259) of the war by eyewitnesses. These sources, which have only relatively recently attracted the attention of scholars, such as Medick, promise to enhance the social history of the war. Given his study of newspapers in relation to the destruction of Magdeburg, Medick might have been called upon to analyze the war as “a media event” (139), to quote Toby’s Osborne’s description. The news sheets, pamphlets, and other printed propaganda of the “media war” (142) form the basis of the rich social and intellectual dimensions of the political and religious history of the war investigated already long ago by scholars such as E. A. Beller (1940) but, except for brief references by Osborne in his chapter “1629–1635,” sadly ignored in the *Research Companion*.

In some respects, the *Research Companion* may have appeared too soon after *Europe’s Tragedy*. Several chapters confirm the geographical analysis, chronological narrative, and interpretations of Wilson’s book. Pärtel Piirimäe, for example, succinctly surveys the established data of Sweden’s intervention, war aims, policy towards the Empire, and financial policies. Matthias Pohlig agrees with the more recent assessments of scholars, including Wilson, that the Peace of Augsburg (1555) was a success and not a failure that from the outset doomed the Holy Roman Empire to war.

Some chapters enrich a broad knowledge of the Thirty Years War. Lockhart’s chapter on Denmark is a lucid study of Christian IV’s misadventurous ambitions in foreign policy that goes beyond the Peace of Lübeck (1629) to Denmark’s humiliation in the Peace of Brömsebro (1645). The papacy, largely ignored in recent scholarship on the war, surfaces thanks to Guido Braun, who concurs with conventional wisdom that “the papacy had changed from a central figure in the European system of power and its peace-making mechanisms to a marginal one” (111). Braun attributes the papacy’s “decline as a political and moral reference” (112) to its fundamentalist professionalized worldview. An expert on early modern Catholicism, Marc Forster concentrates on Catholic disputes over the Edict of Restitution (1629) and maintains that the Edict “floundered partly because it did not fit with the religious culture of much of German Catholicism” (214).

The old debate about the Thirty Years War as a religious war continues in the *Research Companion*. Lucien Bély takes for granted that Gustavus Adolphus led Sweden's intervention "on the grounds that he was defending Protestantism" (89). His co-contributors disagree. Nor would all agree with Maria Baramova that "it is common knowledge that the Thirty Years' War was fundamentally the teeming armed conflict between Protestants and Catholics that was forestalled in the sixteenth century" (116). Helfferich combines the war's "cross-denominational alliances" with the observation that "all parties tended to focus their primary concerns not on the general well-being of their co-religionists, but on their own territorial power and territorial churches" (153). In a chapter devoted to the debate, Cornel Zwierlein asserts rather convolutedly the "co-presence" (235, 242) of a religiously "normative" and a politically "functional-analytical" (232) justification for the war. In plain terms, he seems to argue for a combination of religious and political motivations, in which the latter were dominant.

The *Research Companion* demonstrates the intensive scholarly engagement with the Thirty Years War that has taken place since 1984. As a complement and supplement to *Europe's Tragedy*, it reinforces the complexity of the war as an abidingly significant field of research. Ideally, the volume will inspire a new generation of scholarship.

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### **Bodin, Jean.**

***Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem.* Ed., trans., and comment. Sara Miglietti.**

Testi e Commenti 15. Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2013. Pp. 792. ISBN 978-88-7642-459-5 (hardcover) €70.

In her very first sentence, Sara Miglietti succinctly summarizes the "Bodin problem": he is "un autore più spesso citato che letto" (an author more cited than read). Already at the 1929 quincentenary of his birth it was asked—rhetorically but pointedly—if anyone would swear to having read "d'un bout à l'autre *les six livres de la République*." Though this neglect is unfortunate, it is not surprising. Our acquaintance with the author of the *Methodus*, of *La*