

# *Dorothea Susanna of Sachsen-Weimar (1544–92) amid Confessions and Politics*

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Not very much is known about Dorothea Susanna (1544–1592), duchess of Sachsen-Weimar. What we do know about her, however, opens up a multi-faceted perspective on the interaction between faith and political power. Dorothea Susanna was born 15 November 1544 as the second daughter of Count Palatine Friedrich von Simmern and his wife Maria, herself born duchess of Brandenburg-Kulmbach. Assuming the name of Friedrich III and known to history as “the Pious” (*der Fromme*), Dorothea Susanna’s father took office in 1559 as elector of the Palatinate, succeeding his distant cousin Ottheinrich. One year later Dorothea Susanna married Johann Wilhelm of Sachsen-Weimar,<sup>1</sup> a man fourteen years her senior and the second son of Ernestine Saxon Elector Johann Friedrich the Magnanimous (*der Großmütige*). This was by no means a typical union like other marriages arranged by sixteenth-century ruling families since this young woman from the Palatinate had resolutely resisted a previous arrangement for marriage with a Pomeranian prince who would have fit the Palatinate family in terms of faith and confessional commitment much better.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Dorothea Susanna’s marriage was by no means the only link between the Electoral Palatinate (Reformed) and Ernestine Saxony (Lutheran) since in 1558 Dorothea Susanna’s older sister Elisabeth had married the older brother of Johann Wilhelm, Johann Friedrich the Middler.<sup>3</sup> This immediately created confessional tension between the two princely dynasties, which could hardly have been more pointed, even though or perhaps because Dorothea Susanna did not follow the confessional shift of the Electoral Palatinate toward a more Calvinist theology. On the contrary, she unwaveringly stood by her husband and his Lutheran confessional commitment, even defending this legacy against external attacks (from Saxon Elector August) for twenty years as a widow. She was thus rather intensely involved in the interaction between the Ernestine and Albertine

Dorothea Susanna, Duchess of Sachsen-Weimar (1544–1592). The quotation in the arch is from Job 19:25, “I know that my Redeemer lives.” Used by Permission: Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2020.

branches of the Wettin faculty, whose long-standing rivalry had continued to heighten following the Ernestine branch’s loss of the electoral title and lands after the Smalcald War.<sup>4</sup> By resolutely defending her confession—as one of the few princely personalities who commissioned a personal confession of the faith—Dorothea Susanna helped lay the groundwork for the reversal of religious policy that led Elector August to become a proponent of the Book of Concord.

Viewing her as an individual, it becomes very evident that faith, doctrine, and confession—which, in the era of the Reformation and budding confessional groupings, could sometimes be used either to

retain or to regain power and influence—could very well keep a firm grip on their intrinsic religious value. In such a case, not only did individuals wielding political influence act as power brokers; some were—just like their forbears in the early sixteenth century (with the signing of the Augsburg Confession)—still prepared to stand up for their faith as “confessors.” Thus, political decisions, societal changes, dynastic developments, and the friction and controversies of that period cannot be interpreted solely on the basis of the struggle for power and political advantage. Rather, they must always be seen in light of a decision of the faith and the confession of that particular individual as well. How they complement one another—or how faith and political power interact in the establishment and implementation of proper public teaching—can rightfully be interpreted as a key characteristic of the entire Reformation and the Age of Confessionalisation.

The example of Dorothea Susanna of Sachsen-Weimar is a classic case of how the struggle for faith and power impacted the most diverse environments and spheres of activity: dynastic relationships, political rivalries, and the composition of confessional documents as normative expressions of Reformation identity. What follows demonstrates this from three complementary points of view, indicating how the duchess from Sachsen-Weimar was negotiating the fields of political and ecclesiastical tension in her day while struggling with the questions of faith and power that confronted her. The essay briefly reviews the factors setting distinct understandings of the faith at odds with each other, then discusses the maneuvering between the two branches of the Saxon Wettin dynasty, and finally considers how the duchess, although she was able to maintain her confession, ultimately lost the battle for political autonomy.

### *Opposing Professions of the Faith*

In retrospect, the marriage of the daughter of the Palatine elector with Ernestine Duke Johann Wilhelm in 1560 meant the joining of two powers that both, from a confessional-political point of view, had a unique political position for that time.

On the Ernestine side, the systematic exaltation of the figure of Johann Friedrich the Magnanimous, who had been taken captive by the emperor after the Smalcald War and then deposed, had already begun. Thus, the father-in-law of the Palatine duchess was being regarded as a contender for the true faith and a bearer of the cross, one who was following in Christ's footsteps. In the view of some Protestants in the empire, his tragic fate in the war had gained him the aura of a genuine martyr even though he was freed from captivity in 1552 as a result of the armistice signed at Passau. When Johann Friedrich died soon after his release, his sons followed in their father's footsteps, remaining faithful to his confessional commitment and his pursuit of political power. Striving to achieve these goals served as the dominant element in their policymaking. This became apparent both in their unwavering, often-venturesome, support for the unadulterated Reformation teachings of Martin Luther and in their relentless dynastic opposition to their Albertine neighbor.

That the Ernestine princes were pursuing their own path in matters of the faith had already become very obvious during the Colloquy of Worms of 1557 when the Ernestine theologians demanded a clear rejection of false teaching and thus divided the Evangelical camp, leading to a premature termination of the colloquy.<sup>5</sup> This attitude, aimed at drawing confessional lines of demarcation, also became apparent at the meeting of Evangelical princes in Frankfurt in 1558. The policy seeking consensus advanced by the Palatinate, Brandenburg, Hesse, and Electoral Saxony found expression in the "Frankfurt Recess," which presented a mediating formula created under the influence of Philip Melancthon.<sup>6</sup> The goal of this formula was to overcome the doctrinal disagreements that had arisen within Protestantism after the Augsburg Interim.<sup>7</sup> Along with some north German cities,<sup>8</sup> the government of Johann Friedrich the Middler rejected this—what he considered to be a lukewarm attempt at reconciliation. He therefore had the associates of Matthias Flacius compose the Weimar *Book of Confutation*,<sup>9</sup> which was to become the core piece of the *Corpus Doctrinae Thuringicum*, a collection of confessional documents that expressed the views of the "Gnesio-Lutherans." Any disregard for or rejection of this norm

was generally punished with expulsion from the territory. The combination of a willingness to pursue a unique position regarding confessional issues and the later actions of Johann Friedrich the Middler in the Grumbach Affair, in which the duke went to war against Albertine Saxony in support of a prominent knight, Wilhelm von Grumbach, provided for an explosive mix in Saxon politics.<sup>10</sup>

For the Electorate of the Palatinate the confessional choices were very different. No wonder, then, that this led to tensions between the two dynasties and their ruling families. Even as early as 1560, when Dorothea Susanna and Johann Wilhelm married, a gradual transition in the Electoral Palatinate toward Reformed teaching was underway. In 1559, very soon after his reign had begun, Friedrich the Pious was already beginning to intervene in the ecclesiastical affairs of his land to put to an end the disagreement over the correct understanding of the Lord's Supper. This disagreement had erupted between a faithful supporter of Luther—Tilemann Heshusius, who at the time was still general ecclesiastical superintendent in Electoral Palatinate—and Deacon Wilhelm Klebitz. With support from a memorandum by Philip Melancthon,<sup>11</sup> the disagreement ended with the dismissal and expulsion of both opponents. In this way the elector finally removed the Gnesio-Lutheran presence from his land and set the stage for gradual "Calvinization," which concluded—at least in the eyes of his contemporaries—with the *Kirchenordnung* of 1563. This ordinance made the *Heidelberg Catechism* compulsory.<sup>12</sup> In light of the Peace of Augsburg, which guaranteed legal status in the German Empire only to adherents of the Augsburg Confession alongside those faithful to Rome, this movement to Calvinism was also an example of Friedrich's taking a unique, independent stance within the constellation of political power plays and religious politics. This became apparent soon afterward when, at the Diet of Augsburg of 1566, the Electoral Palatinate was in danger of being excluded from the Peace of Augsburg.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, Ernestine Saxony and the Electoral Palatinate are excellent examples of the application of political power in the search for the desired unity of faith and confession within a principality. Other examples could be mentioned as well. What makes the examples cited particularly interesting is that they demonstrate

how confessional coexistence between princely dynasties could be accepted—or at least had to be tolerated—as a complement of efforts for confessional standardization at a territorial level. As such, it became quite customary for noble and princely families to ally themselves with one another in accord with a specific policy decision for a marriage across confessional lines.<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, confessional consensus and, on the other, a toleration of dissonance were two sides of the same coin in trying to balance concern for correct faith and at the same time maintain political power.

### *Contest between the Saxon Houses*

Just before the Saxon-Palatine wedding, scheduled for 16 June 1560 in Heidelberg,<sup>15</sup> frictions arose. The two Ernestine brothers, Johann Friedrich the Middler and Johann Wilhelm, who had arrived in the Palatinate in early June, made every effort to dissuade their Palatine father-in-law from his Calvinist position. They thus brought with them their own theologians, Maximilian Mörlin, superintendent in Coburg, and Johannes Stöbel, superintendent in Heldburg. Both were well informed about past events in the Electoral Palatinate by none other than Heshusius, who had by that time been expelled. Heshusius had provided them with Wilhelm Klebitz' disputation theses "De sancta eucharistia," with which the latter had attained his bachelor of theology degree in Heidelberg in 1559 and which had at that time triggered the confessional struggle in the Palatinate.<sup>16</sup> The Ernestine plan was to use a religious colloquy to resolve all the issues that had long since spread beyond territorial borders, with each side hoping to convince its opponent of its own correct faith and true doctrine. On the Palatine side were the dean of Heidelberg's theological faculty, Petrus Boquinus, and the electoral physician, Thomas Erastus, both of whom were also members of the church council organized in 1560, modeled after the church council of Zurich.<sup>17</sup> But since the opponents stuck to their respective positions, the enterprise failed. This was the reason Johann Wilhelm did everything he could to foil the wedding ceremony that would be officiated by the theologians of his Palatine father-in-law, especially since, from his point of view, they did not adhere

to correct doctrine. This is confirmed in a letter that Friedrich III wrote his son-in-law four days before the wedding, in which the elector expressed his great displeasure that Johann Wilhelm would expect the wedding ceremony of his daughter to be officiated by the two Saxon pastors who had accompanied him, Mörlin and Stöbel. The elector regarded his being publicly depicted “as though he did not also have a minister who would be able to officiate the wedding of his children in a Christian manner”<sup>18</sup> as scandalous behavior and perhaps even, in light of the Peace of Augsburg, as an act of religious-political denunciation. After several delays, the wedding was finally held on 10 December 1560, presumably in accordance with Palatine plans.<sup>19</sup> This was not to be the only showdown in the struggle for the correct faith and true doctrine. In the long run, both princely families had to deal with the undesirable but unavoidable consequences of the coexistence of different confessions.

This was demonstrated in a dramatic way when the couple’s second child, a girl, was born in 1563,<sup>20</sup> the same year in which the *Heidelberg Catechism* was made compulsory in Electoral Palatinate.<sup>21</sup> Dorothea Susanna’s mother, Palatine Electress (*Kurfürstin*) Maria, had been invited by the couple to travel from Weimar for this occasion and assist them with the birth.<sup>22</sup> Needless to say, she assumed she was going to be asked to be the child’s godmother at the baptism ceremony. However, she was refused this role. Shifts determined by confessional teaching and practice were becoming obvious in the Palatinate: the removal of the traditional host in the Lord’s Supper, pastors introducing the breaking of the bread in the celebration of the Sacrament, altars being replaced by simple tables, and images being removed from the churches. In light of this, Johann Wilhelm had already at an earlier point in time expressed doubts as to whether the Word of God was even still being correctly preached in his father-in-law’s lands.<sup>23</sup> Already once before he had had to put up with a clear rebuke from his father-in-law for having asked the electress to give an account of her faith.<sup>24</sup> Now that the baptism in Weimar was at issue, she was spared this examination of her faith but was denied the role of godmother, which made the lines clear from the very start of her visit. This was because the role of a godparent was considered to be a public confession of the faith and also

signified unity in the faith in which the child was to be raised. From the Ernestine point of view, however, this unity of faith no longer existed. In Electoral Palatinate this issue was not only seen as a personal insult but also as religious intolerance. Therefore, in a letter he wrote his son-in-law, Friedrich III reacted very angrily to the rejection of his wife as the godmother: "If I had to bet or guess, I would guess that the reason was that my most beloved wife . . . with me has received several times the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the institution of the one who instituted it and has eaten the bread that was broken, which is considered by you, my Dear Ones, as such an abomination that you have the worst of heretics among you."<sup>25</sup>

The offense ran deep. Even months later the electress complained to her older son-in-law, Johann Friedrich the Middler, about this unfair treatment, which had apparently even trickled down to court gossip: "My ladies-in-waiting were asked by the ladies-in-waiting of my daughter Dorothea if I had not been asked to be the godmother. My ladies-in-waiting said no. They were astounded. My ladies-in-waiting said that they themselves were amazed that I had been dragged such a long way and not given the honor of being a godparent, especially since the child is a daughter. Her ladies-in-waiting said that the reason was that things were not right with matters of the faith, that bread-breaking dare not take place, which your electress had done. So my ladies-in-waiting said, 'What in the devil's name is that, we are not Turks or heathen, we are just as much Christian people as you are, even if you think you are so good.' But my son Duke Hans Wilhelm or Dorothea have not asked for my pardon with a single word . . ."<sup>26</sup>

It was not possible to resolve this matter so easily, and the frictions flared up again in 1565 when the electress became gravely ill. Now it was the Palatine elector's turn to roughly reject the sympathy of his daughter, Dorothea Susanna. He pointed out to Dorothea that the prayer for her mother that she had promised was Pharaic and thus could be only hypocritical and false if she was still harboring the prejudices against her mother being the godmother: "It is to be observed regarding someone who wants to pray for something that the person knows what he is praying for. I just hope to God that you



will abandon the crazy idea that you had thought up in regard to my kind, dearly beloved spouse, your mother, that you did not have enough respect for her to have her serve at your daughter's baptism as a godmother; otherwise you will be praying as a Pharisee, who exalts himself to the heavens and thrusts the sinner behind him into hell. Remember that this is my fatherly, loving estimation, and it is meant in no other way than as a Christian and loving gesture."<sup>27</sup>

All of this was not simply a family spat. Rather, the backdrop was the construction of confessional boundaries between the two principalities. What divided them was becoming ever more apparent in their different practices of piety. While this did not lead to a break of the relationship between the two families, which still corresponded with one another, it most certainly did influence *how* they treated one another. At times, when issues of faith were at stake, missionary zeal became apparent. When Dorothea Susanna's second daughter was stillborn in October 1564, Friedrich the Pious used this opportunity to write a pastoral letter of condolence, which between the lines was also promoting Calvinist views of the sacrament of baptism. In a classically Calvinist fashion, the theologically educated prince explained baptism as a symbol of a new, godly covenant of grace with humans. Since their child had died before being baptized, he wanted to console them and pointed out that children of believing parents are included in the covenant of the grace of God, regardless of whether the children have received the external sign of baptism with the earthly element of water or not.<sup>28</sup> Between the lines but in unmistakable fashion, Friedrich the Pious denigrated the sacramental act, which was highly esteemed in Lutheranism, and its relevance in providing consolation and salvation. Although a child dying before baptism does not pose a theological problem in Lutheranism,<sup>29</sup> it can be presumed that the princely couple regarded this letter more as a provocation than as a letter of consolation even though Friedrich stressed the sincerity of his intent. He claimed to have sent it not to belittle or abrogate the meaning of baptism but only to console his family members through Holy Scripture during their time of trial,<sup>30</sup> as he assured them.

By no means did this act bridge the confessional gulf that had been created and which—despite the readiness of both sides to allow

the other side to believe as it saw fit—could sometimes erupt in dangerous breaches in their relationship. For when situations arose in which the parties thought false beliefs needed to be combated or correct faith needed to be defended or protected—all of which was sometimes fueled by politically motivated power struggles—this could sometimes actually lead to military confrontations. One famous example is the reaction of Johann Casimir, the brother of Dorothea Susanna, who—undoubtedly for reasons of common faith but also with an eye towards promised rewards<sup>31</sup>—went to war to defend the persecuted Huguenots. Dorothea's husband, on the other hand, was determined to fight on the side of the Roman Catholic French king against the Calvinists. This was the case largely because until 1559 he had served King Henry II, then King Charles IX of France, and had received an annual stipend and land for his services. However, in late 1568 he gave up this commitment<sup>32</sup> although it is not clear whether the various letters of Elector Friedrich to his daughter in 1567 and 1568, designed to exert influence on his son-in-law, actually played a role in Johann Wilhelm's decision. At any rate, Friedrich warned her and her husband against taking any steps that could pit relatives against one another on the battlefield, for this would definitely divide the family. It would seem that Elector Friedrich was actually able to prevent the impending disaster, although, here as well, confessional interests were a driving force. In this situation, Friedrich painted a picture that, since she had decided to join her husband on the battlefield, his daughter would not only be going to war against her own brothers but even against Christ himself. In this action the elector saw nothing less than being an accessory to murder of the Christians persecuted in France. Their martyrdom caused by this action would have to be regarded as an act against the Redeemer himself.<sup>33</sup> For Johann Casimir, on the other hand, there was no reason to give up his plan to aid the Huguenots.

### *The Struggle for Faith and Power*

In late 1592 Dorothea Susanna died at the age of only 48, having been widowed for about twenty years.<sup>34</sup> Among the funeral sermons given for her, that of Superintendent Gregor Strigenitz from

Orlamünde in Thuringia is particularly interesting because in his eulogy and sermon he not only constructed a literary monument for the duchess but also made her passion for her land and its faith the theme of the sermon.<sup>35</sup> For his exegesis and the praise appropriate for a princely family connected to it, Strigenitz selected the Old Testament character of Judith,<sup>36</sup> illustrating the life and merits of the deceased electress of the land, while using this biblical female character as a model. Needless to say, in line with the exegetical tradition, he emphasized the virtues connected with the exemplary widowhood of Judith rather than Judith's plucky yet cold-blooded murder of Holofernes or the way she used her beauty and intelligence to sustain the power of the people of God. As such, he continued, Dorothea Susanna had oriented her life according to the role model of Judith; despite her high-ranking status in society, she had in an exemplary way demonstrated meekness, chastity, and honor, which one today might describe as restraint, an appropriate lifestyle, and personal integrity.<sup>37</sup>

As a matter of fact, that Dorothea Susanna chose not to remarry did play an important role for the Ernestine region of the land. Her status as a widow enabled her to remain "mother of her country" even though, after the unexpected and early demise of her husband Johann Wilhelm in March 1573,<sup>38</sup> August, the Albertine cousin, had maneuvered himself into the role of guardian for her sons Friedrich Wilhelm and Johann, who were still minors.<sup>39</sup> In this way August became the ruler of Sachsen-Weimar. This had occurred against the wishes drawn up in the last will and testament of Johann Wilhelm, who had actually appointed his brother-in-law, Ludwig VI of the Palatinate, and Johann Albrecht of Mecklenburg as the boys' guardians.<sup>40</sup> But, after the rule over the territories of the yet underage sons had fallen into his lap, August saw in this an opportunity to complete the extension of his power and influence. This had occurred because in 1572 the Ernestine lands were divided between Johann Wilhelm and the two minor sons of Johann Friedrich the Middler, in captivity since 1567 because of his involvement in the Grumbach Affair.<sup>41</sup> These policies led to a clash between the nobility of the duchy of Sachsen-Weimar and the electoral Albertine councilors, and it also triggered the opposition of the theologians of the

land, who were on the side of the duchess. However, the latter were made to pay for their criticism of the rulers and their resistance to electoral religious policies with the termination of their duties and expulsion from the duchy.<sup>42</sup>

For thirteen years, from 1573 to 1586, Albertine electoral Saxony and the Ernestine duchy remained united under August's rule. At the same time, however, the merger of these territories initially provoked a confrontation between those holding the two different attitudes regarding the proper confessional stance—namely, a decidedly Lutheran approach on the side of the Ernestines and—at least at that time—a Philippist approach on the side of the Albertines. This position included a strong tendency towards spiritualizing views of the sacraments. Every attempt of Elector August in the mid-1570s to reconcile these two confessional positions failed, not least due to the resistance of Duchess Dorothea Susanna, the young widow.<sup>43</sup> As the eulogist Strigenitz expressed it, she had always been focused on the *correct* religion and had “withstood every danger associated with her stance.”<sup>44</sup> Tirelessly, she had striven to maintain correct doctrine in churches and schools and had also instructed her own children in it, resisting every external pressure. For the superintendent from Orlamünde, the key to her historical greatness was that she never tired of standing up for the faith and confession of her land. Strigenitz stated that what gave her the seal of legitimacy was that she agreed with the prophetic and apostolic teachings, that is, the Old and New Testaments, as well as with the teachings of Martin Luther.<sup>45</sup> Strigenitz further maintained that it was she who had made sure that the *Corpus Doctrinae Thuringicum*—which Johann Wilhelm “had made a part of the life of every church in his principality and which he had bequeathed as a valuable treasure”—remained normative for teaching in the duchy.<sup>46</sup> By being an exemplary widow and courageously standing up for this theological heritage, Strigenitz said, Dorothea Susanna was “the bulwark of this duchy, the protector and guardian of this principality” [*propugnaculum huius Ducatus, der Schutz vnd Schirm dieses Fu[e]rstenthums*]. In this way, in the preceding two decades she had been able to avert quite a few calamities for the duchy's churches and schools and its land and people, through her constant prayer.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, Dorothea Susanna had proved to be a perfectly exemplary “mother of her country,” not only at her husband’s side but also by using the influence that she continued to exercise (due to her position in society) on behalf of the correct faith after his death. This had not been an easy task because the option of her particular position regarding the proper confession of the faith was closely enmeshed in the Ernestine–Albertine rivalry.

In order to illustrate this clearly, a retrospect. The heightening of the territorial–political rivalry between the two parts of Saxony had been a long process, fueled and supported by their confessional differences. This had occurred in various stages across Europe, culminating in the efforts of the duchess, who had been deprived of her political power, to retain at least confessional autonomy for her territory. One of the key stages in this struggle for faith and power had been the issue of the Saxon universities. After their defeat in the Smalcald War the Ernestine family had lost to the Albertine relatives not only the electoral title but also the electoral territory, centered in Wittenberg, with its university. This meant that Ernestine Saxony—as the home of the Reformation—had lost not only its political influence but also its cultural center. With the proponents of Melanchthon’s way of thinking centered in the universities of Leipzig and Wittenberg, these two influential educational institutions were now in the hands of the hated rivals. In no way whatsoever were the Ernestines prepared to support the religious policies of their rivals, which aimed at rapprochement with the emperor and permitted a special form of policies with roots, from the Ernestine perspective, in the Augsburg Interim.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the Ernestines tried to compensate for this loss by founding a university in Jena and originally even trying to persuade Melanchthon to join the faculty.<sup>49</sup> The Ernestine university opened its doors in 1548 and soon became a magnet for everyone determined to preserve the original teaching of Martin Luther’s Reformation in what they regarded as a pure fashion, namely, for the so-called “Gnesio-Lutherans.”<sup>50</sup> This group was headed up by Nikolaus von Amsdorf (1483–1565)<sup>51</sup> and the Croatian Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520–1575).<sup>52</sup> A visitation of the congregations in Ernestine Saxony in 1554/1555 directed by the ducal government led to unity of faith, doctrine, and ceremonies.<sup>53</sup>

After the series of painful losses, the impulses radiating from Jena, which prompted a renewed embrace of Luther and a new identification with the Lutheran Reformation, reinvigorated Ernestine policies of drawing firm boundaries and the Ernestine claim to be the stronghold and shepherd of the legacy of the Wittenberg reform.

A further step in implementing this goal was a project to establish a new edition of Luther's works printed in Ernestine Jena. This was begun in deliberate competition to the collection of the reformer's writings which had been initiated by Elector Johann Friedrich the Elder in Wittenberg while Luther was yet alive.<sup>54</sup> The Wittenberg Edition had arranged Luther's writings according to topics—so that readers could quickly consult the opinion of their Wittenberg master on various theological questions and thematic problems. In contrast, the Jena Edition launched by the Ernestine government in 1555 followed a chronological presentation of his writings. Among other things, this was to put a stop to people trying to use Luther as an authority on topics shaped by his theology in a historically unjustified manner, for example, to prevent people from making conclusive statements by juxtaposing earlier writings of the Reformer with later ones. This abuse was apparent whenever people tried to legitimize views on faith and doctrine expressed in late-medieval forms in the earlier writings without recognizing the maturing of Luther's thinking. In particular, some were suspicious that Melancthon and his colleagues from Wittenberg—being influenced by Albertine political goals—were giving up the Reformation heritage by striving for broad agreement with Roman Catholic opponents. The theologians from Ernestine Saxony, on the other hand, claimed to be the sole true guarantors of Martin Luther's pure reformational teaching.

Despite all the losses the Ernestine family had had to endure, its duchy under Johann Friedrich the Middler intended to be the guarantor of the pure gospel and of the pure identity of the Reformation. With this understanding of their mission, the Ernestine dukes formulated their policy and pursued the interests of this program in the following decades, which did not prevent confrontation with the theologians of the land. Twice—in 1560/1561 and in 1573—the followers of Matthias Flacius had to endure expulsion and leave the

land because they had not agreed with how the secular authorities were intervening in and governing church matters.<sup>55</sup>

However, as far as the tension between faith and power is concerned, the most important role in this development was the publication of the Weimar *Confutation* in 1558, on which the confessional identity of the land was based.<sup>56</sup> For Ernestine Saxony, initially jointly ruled by the three brothers Johann Friedrich the Middler, Johann Wilhelm, and Johann Friedrich the Younger,<sup>57</sup> it became the obligatory confessional foundation. After a fruitless attempt at reconciliation with the electoral Saxon Philippists in the Colloquy of Altenburg in 1568/1569,<sup>58</sup> the government of Johann Wilhelm issued the *Corpus Doctrinae Thuringicum* in 1570. It included the Weimar *Confutation*. This collection of confessional documents became a Gnesio-Lutheran counterbalance to the *Corpus Doctrinae Philippicum* of the Albertines.<sup>59</sup> This significant step in the confessional consolidation of the duchy occurred during the period when the theologically well-educated Johann Wilhelm and his wife Dorothea Susanna were shaping the fate of their lands after the expulsion of his elder brother in 1566. However, after the land was divided in 1572, this was true only for the regions around Weimar and Altenburg.<sup>60</sup> The theological advisors of the ducal couple at that time included most importantly Johannes Wigand and Tilemann Heshusius, who had been called to Jena as professors of theology in 1568 and 1569, respectively. Both of them played a role in influencing the land in the direction of “Gnesio-Lutheran” positions.<sup>61</sup>

However, when Johann Wilhelm suddenly died on 2 March 1573, the power structures changed dramatically since the circumstances now favored their political rival, the Albertine August. At that point the widow, only 28 years old, was forced to take an active role in shaping the policies of the duchy if she wanted to preserve its territorial and confessional identity. This time the struggle over faith, influence, and power would not be carried out in more or less private correspondence between the ruling princes but at a public level through strategies in the societal and political spheres. A year before the unmasking of “Crypto-Calvinism” in his territories would take place, August was still trying to enforce Philippist norms (aligned with Melanchthon’s theology) on issues of doctrine and faith and to

impose them as a means of uniting both parts of the lands he now governed. For this purpose, a comprehensive visitation was conducted, new regulations for the consistory in Jena were drawn up, a new set of professors was installed at the university there, and one hundred eleven pastors were expelled from the duchy. These included Bartholomäus Gernhardt, Dorothea Susanna's court chaplain; Bartholomäus Rosinus, superintendent of Weimar; and professors Wigand and Heshusius from Jena.<sup>62</sup> The duchess herself was put under pressure and accused of heterodoxy and searching for new doctrine.<sup>63</sup> Even when August soon after reacted decisively against his own theologians (who were under suspicion of Calvinist views) and became a key supporter of what became Concordist Lutheranism, he did not moderate his reproaches against her. This shows to what extent the political-dynamic rivalry had correlated with the confessional antipathies even after these had largely been laid aside. Nonetheless, Dorothea Susanna was turning out to be August's chief opponent. In the end the measures she undertook put an end to the stage of the growing confessional identity determined by August's policies in Ernestine Saxony and simultaneously created the prerequisite for budding potential for resistance against Albertine encroachment. She had a theologian with Gnesio-Lutheran tendencies named Casper Melissander<sup>64</sup> draft a confession, which she adopted—not only to refute the charges of heresy made against her but also to consolidate the Ernestine Gnesio-Lutheran confessional position.<sup>65</sup> She turned a deaf ear to her father's advice to be more diplomatic towards such a powerful prince as August.<sup>66</sup> In letters of protest and petitions she appealed unintermittingly to August and his wife Anna to bring about the return of those theologians who had been expelled, especially her court chaplain, Bartholomäus Gernhardt, and to declare that her confession was orthodox.<sup>67</sup> Nothing could discourage her from pursuing her goals even though August reacted quite rudely to her diplomatic maneuvering and advised her to stop bothering him with her confession.<sup>68</sup> She should rather, he said, adhere to Luther's simple catechisms. Furthermore, as a woman, she should not get involved in "high and copious disputation" or should at least instead follow the advice of better advisors if she wanted to "have a confession drawn up in her name."<sup>69</sup>



The measures undertaken by Dorothea Susanna proved successful. In 1576 her dismissed court chaplain was allowed to return to his position; two years later Gernhardt even became vice superintendent in Weimar.<sup>70</sup>

### Conclusion

Two factors played a decisive role and make clear how confessional developments in this case influenced political activities. First, Elector August had to rethink his position regarding Gnesio-Lutherans in the Ernestine duchy. When August's committee seeking concord convened in May and June of 1576 in Torgau to consult on what would later become the Formula of Concord, the theologians he had summoned as advisors for this purpose from other territories and towns urged that his opposition to the Gnesio-Lutherans should cease. Jacob Andreae, the architect of the Book of Concord, had personally contacted Dorothea Susanna, assuring her that he would champion the theological renewal of the University of Jena on her behalf.<sup>71</sup> Secondly, the widowed duchess had succeeded in having her confession generally and publicly acclaimed and thereby established as a doctrinal and confessional standard in line with the *Corpus Doctrinae Thuringicum*. To this end, she had chosen a way that would become typical for forming confessions and propagating a unified standard of faith. She did this by presenting her confession to outstanding theologians, inviting their critique and endorsement.<sup>72</sup> By 1591 she had received memoranda approving its text from a wide variety of parties.<sup>73</sup> Dorothea Susanna's confession was confirmed to be in agreement not only with the Ernestine *Corpus Doctrinae Thuringicum* but also with the supraterritorial Lutheran formulation of the confession in the Formula of Concord. In retrospect, these statements, made in part by theologians who signed the Formula of Concord, affirmed not only the widowed duchess but also Ernestine religious policies over against the Albertine rivals and their charges of heterodoxy against Dorothea Susanna. In the struggle between faith and power, this confession had helped the voice of the politically disempowered duchess gain a lasting theological impact. In her attempts to continue the ecclesiastical and dynastic policies of her

husband the widow took actions that led her “with her confession of faith to break through the gender structures of her time.”<sup>74</sup>

*This is an extensively revised version of an essay that originally appeared in German, “Dorothea Susanna von Sachsen-Weimar (1544–1592) im Spannungsfeld von Konfession und Politik. Ernestinisches und albertinisches Sachsen im Ringen um Glaube und Macht,” in Glaube und Macht: Theologie, Politik und Kunst im Jahrhundert der Reformation, ed. Enno Bünz, Stefan Rhein, and Günther Wartenberg, Schriften der Stiftung Luthergedenkstätten in Sachsen-Anhalt 5 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005), 175–192, based on a lecture presented to the Mainzer Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, 22 June 2002. An English translation of the original essay by Christian C. Tiews underlies the English version of this revision.*

## NOTES

1. Born 11 March 1530, in Torgau; see Thomas Klein, *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 10 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1974), 530; and Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Großes vollständiges Universal-Lexikon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* 14 (Leipzig: Zedler, 1739), 1018.

2. See letters of Elector Friedrich to Johann Friedrich the Middle, 7 January 1560, and 3 March 1560, in *Briefe Friedrich des Frommen, Kurfürsten von der Pfalz mit verwandten Schriftstücken*, ed. August Kluckhohn, Bd. I: 1559–1566 (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1868) (Hereafter cited as *BFPf*); Vol. 2: 1567–1576 (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1872), here I: 108, Nr. 85; I: 123–128, Nr. 92. In tears, Dorothea Susanna had resisted the arranged marriage. She apparently willingly agreed to the union with Johann Wilhelm, which was thereupon promoted by Dorothea, the widow of Elector Friedrich II, the daughter of King Christian II of Denmark and Isabella of Austria, sister of Emperor Charles V. Dorothea continued to exercise influence at the Palatine court despite her husband's distant relationship in the Wittelsbach family to Friedrich III.

3. Duke Johann Friedrich II had first been married to Agnes, Landgravine of Hesse, the widow of Moritz of Saxony, who had been killed in battle in 1553. Elisabeth was thus Johann Friedrich's second wife.

4. This rivalry was rooted in the Treaty of Leipzig of 26 August 1485.

5. See Irene Dingel, “Religionsgespräche IV. Altgläubig—protestantisch und innerprotestantisch,” in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* 28 (1997) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977–2007): 662. (Hereafter cited as *TRE*.)

6. See Irene Dingel, “Melanchthons Einigungsbemühungen zwischen den Fronten: der Frankfurter Rezeß,” in *Philipp Melancthon. Ein Wegbereiter für die Ökumene*, ed. Jörg Hausteil (Bensheimer Hefte 82, 2. ed., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 121–143; ET: “Melancthon's Efforts for Unity between the Fronts: the Frankfurt Recess,” in

Irene Dingel et al., *Philip Melancthon. Theologian in Classroom, Confession, and Controversy* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 123–140.

7. These disagreements were due to the failed Colloquy of Worms of 1557. See Benno von Bundschuh, *Das Wörmser Religionsgespräch von 1557 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der kaiserlichen Religionspolitik*, Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte 124 (Münster: Aschendorf, 1988), 458–472, and Björn Slenczka, *Das Wörmser Schisma der Augsburger Konfessionsverwandten von 1557: Protestantische Konfessionspolitik und Theologie im Zusammenhang des zweiten Wörmser Religionsgesprächs* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2010), 262–473.

8. Namely, Hamburg, Lüneburg, and Magdeburg. The dukes of Mecklenburg rejected the Recess as well.

9. The text of the *Book of Confutation* is edited in *Controversia et Confessio. Theologische Kontroversen 1548–1577/80. Kritische Auswahl Edition. Band 5. Der Synergistische Streit (1555–1564)*, ed. Irene Dingel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 308–501; compare Daniel Gehrt, *Ernestinische Konfessionspolitik. Bekenntnisbildung, Herrschaftskonsolidierung und dynastische Identitätsstiftung vom Augsburger Interim 1548 bis zur Konkordienformel 1577* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2011), 144–178.

10. Because of his unwavering commitment to the knight Wilhelm von Grumbach, Johann Friedrich the Mittler was outlawed by Emperor Maximilian II, after which the emperor commissioned August of Saxony to carry out the sentence. In light of this, Johann Wilhelm, too, turned against his brother, and thus ruled from 1567 until his death. Johann Friedrich was imprisoned by the emperor and died in prison on 9 May 1595, after thirty years of harsh imprisonment, shared with him in part by Dorothea Susanna's sister, Elisabeth. See Gehrt, *Ernestinische Konfessionspolitik*, 283–284, and “Geschichte der Universität Jena. 1548/58–1958,” in *Festgabe zum vierhundertjährigen Universitätsjubiläum*, ed. Max Steinmetz et al., *Bd. I: Darstellung* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1958), 42. See also August Beck, *Johann Friedrich der Mittlere, Herzog zu Sachsen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Teil I (Weimar, 1858), 404–599. Regarding Ernestine policies aimed at reacquiring the electoral title and lands, see Robert Kolb, “The Legal Case for Martyrdom. Basilius Monner on Johann Friedrich the Elder and the Smalcald War,” in *Reformation und Recht, Festgabe für Gottfried Seebaß zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Irene Dingel, Volker Leppin, and Christoph Strohm (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002), 145–160. Regarding the later rapprochement of Ernestine and Albertine Saxony, see Thomas Klein, “Kleinere Thüringische Gebiete,” in *Die Territorien des Reichs im Zeitalter der Reformation und Konfessionalisierung. Land und Konfession 1500–1560, Mittleres Deutschland*, vol. 4, eds. Anton Schindling and Walter Ziegler, *Katholisches Leben und Kirchenreform im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung*, 52 (Münster: Aschendorf, 1992), 22–24.

11. See Robert Kolb, “The Critique of Melancthon's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper by his ‘Gnesio-Lutheran’ Students,” in Dingel et al., *Philip Melancthon*, 236–262.

12. Regarding the ecclesiastical disagreement in the Palatinate, see Paul Tschackert, *Die Entstehung der lutherischen und der reformierten Kirchenlehre samt ihren innerprotestantischen Gegensätzen* (Göttingen, 1910, reprint Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 538–544. See also Peter F. Barton, *Um Luthers Erbe. Studien und Texte zur Spätrenaissance* (Witten: Luther-Verlag, 1972) 158–225, and Irene Dingel, “Die lutherische Kritik am Heidelberger Katechismus,” in *Profil und Wirkung des Heidelberger Katechismus*, ed. Christoph Strohm and Jan Stievermann (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2015), 226–241, and idem, “Der Heidelberger Katechismus in den konfessionellen Debatten des 16. Jahrhunderts,” in *Macht*

*des Glaubens. 450 Jahre Heidelberger Katechismus*, ed. Karla Apperloo-Boersma and Herman J. Selderhuis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 41–52. The *Kirchenordnung* of Friedrich III is printed in *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, Bd. 14, Kurpfalz, ed. Emil Sehling (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969), 333–408.

13. See Walter Hollweg, *Der Augsburger Reichstag von 1566 und seine Bedeutung für die Entstehung der Reformierten Kirche und ihres Bekenntnisses*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der reformierten Kirche. 17 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: NeukirchenerVerlag, 1964).

14. The best-known example is the marriage between Henry of Navarre, a Protestant, and Marguerite, a Catholic and the daughter of Catherine de Medici. Also, Calvinist Palgrave Johann Casimir married the Lutheran electress of Electoral Saxony, Elizabeth, the daughter of Elector August.

15. This date is according to B. Röse, “Dorothea Susanna,” in *Allgemeine Encyclop[ä]die der Wissenschaften und Kufe[n]ste*, Section 1, Volume 27, ed. Johann Samuel Ersch and Johann Gottfried Gruber (Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1836):173–175.

16. As taken from Burcard Gotthelf Struve, *Ausführlicher Bericht Von der Pfälzischen Kirchen=Historie. In sich fassend die verschiedenen Religions=Veränderungen und den Kirchen=Staat in der Chur=Pfaltz und andern Pfälzischen Landen, Vom Beginn der Reformation an, biß auf gegenwärtige Zeiten . . .* (Frankfurt am Main, 1721), 93.

17. See Ludwig Häusser, *Geschichte der Rheinischen Pfalz nach ihren politischen, kirchlichen und literarischen Verhältnissen 2* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1924), 15 and Struve, *Ausführlicher Bericht*, 93–103. This work includes the theses presented at the colloquy.

18. As described in the summary of Friedrich’s letter to Johann Wilhelm, 12 June 1560, in *BFPf* I:139, Nr. 99.

19. This date is given by Beck, *Johann Friedrich der Mittlere*, 235. Kluckhohn reports that the wedding—originally planned for June—was postponed to a later date and was then once again delayed because of a death in the family. See *BFPf* I:139, footnote 1 to Nr. 99.

20. See below, footnote 40.

21. See the article by Wulf Metz, “Heidelberger Katechismus I. Kirchengeschichtlich,” in *TRE* 14 (1984): 582–586.

22. As can be seen from the letter, 19 November 1563, from Elector Friedrich to Johann Wilhelm; see *BFPf* I:470, Nr. 257.

23. This was not a unique incident, as Matthäus Wesenbeck, a professor of law from Jena, also experienced. As he was to become the godfather of the child of Johann Stigel, professor of poetry, he was requested to subscribe to the *Book of Confutation*. However, Wesenbeck appealed to the *Confessio Augustana* because “as a layman, he did not want to interfere in theological issues.” After making this statement he was refused the role of godfather. See “Geschichte der Universität Jena,” 40 and Martin Kruse, *Speners Kritik am landesherrlichen Kirchenregiment und ihre Vorgeschichte*, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 10 (Witten: Luther-Verlag, 1971), 58.

24. From a letter of Friedrich to Johann Wilhelm, 7 July 1563, printed in *BFPf* I, 238.

25. Elector Friedrich to Johann Wilhelm, 19 November 1563, in *BFPf* I, 257: 471.

26. A letter from Maria to Johann Friedrich the Middler, 24 April 1564, in *BFPf* I, 276: 506.

27. In his letter to Dorothea Susanna, Friedrich first stressed that God only listens to prayers that come from believing hearts. He compared her prayers to those of the Pharisee

in Lk 18:10–14. Letter from Elector Friedrich to Dorothea Susanna, 18 May 1565, in *BFPf* I:583, Nr. 306.

28. See the letter from Elector Friedrich to Johann Wilhelm, 20 October 1564, in *BFPf* I: 530–533, Nr. 291, where it says (p. 531): “If our dear God and Father in heaven according to his divine providence—apart from any reason in the parents—calls his children to grace and lets them die in the womb or shortly after they come into the world before they have been baptized, we parents should not be so unthinking as not to trust that our dear God and Father in heaven will save them just as much as he has saved and will save us parents (if the children are born of believing parents, even if they have not received the outward sacrament and earthly element).”

29. For more on how Luther and Calvin view baptism, see Karl-Heinz zur Mühlen’s compilation: *Taufe V. Reformationszeit*, in *TRE* 32 (2001): 701–710, and Jonathan Trigg, *Baptism in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

30. See the letter from Elector Friedrich to Johann Wilhelm, 20 October 1564, in *BFPf* I:532, Nr. 291.

31. See Häusser: *Geschichte der Rheinischen Pfalz*, 133; see also Irene Dingel, *Concordia controversa. Die öffentlichen Diskussionen um das lutherische Konkordienwerk am Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte 63 (Gütersloh: GütersloherVerlagshaus, 1996), 107–109.

32. King Henry II had given Johann Wilhelm the town and principality of Châtillon in Burgundy; Charles IX had given him an annual stipend of 38,000 francs. See Johann Heinrich Zedler, “Ioannes Wilhelmus” in *Großes vollständiges Universal-Lexikon* 14 (1739): 1018. A letter from Elector Friedrich to Dorothea Susanna, 1 October 1568, mentions for the last time the fact that Johann Wilhelm and his knights were going to war for France (see *BFPf* 2:246, Nr. 540). See Karl Hahn, “Herzog Johann Wilhelm von Weimar und seine Beziehungen zu Frankreich,” *Zeitschrift des Vereins für thüringische Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 26/NS 19 (1908): 1–174.

33. See the letter of the Elector to his daughter in *BFPf* I:504, Nr. 492. Regarding the events in France, see pp. 156–159, Nr. 516; pp. 182–184, Nr. 521; as well as pp. 210–211 and pp. 219–220.

34. Her date of death is given as either 28 or 29 March; see Röse, “Dorothea Susanna”: 175.

35. *Gedechnis vnd Leichpredigt / Aus dem Sechzehenden Capitel des Bu[e]chleins IVDITH. Nach dem Tö[e]dlichen Abgang vnd Begra[e]bnis / Weyland der Durchlauchtigen / Hochgebornen Fu[e]rstin vnnnd Frauen/ Frauen DOROTHEA SVSANNA. Geborner Pfälzgra[e]fjin bey Rein / etc. Hertzogin zu Sachsen / Landgra[e]fjin in Thu[e]ringen / vnd Marggra[e]fjin zu Meißen / etc. Widwen/ Christmilder vnnnd Lof[e]blicher Gedechnis. Zu Orlamu[e]nde den 16. Aprilis / am Sontage Iubilate, Anno 1592. gethan vnd gehalten* (Leipzig: Frantz Schnelboltz, 1600). Gregor Strigenitz was born on 9 February 1548, in Meißen, where he attended the famous “Fürstenschule.” He studied in Leipzig from 1567–1571 and attained the degree of *magister artium* in Wittenberg in 1572. That same year he assumed the office of school rector in Döbeln but became a pastor in Wolkenstein in 1573. He served as the preacher at the Saxon court from 1581 on and was at the same time also the assessor at the consistory in Meißen. In 1588 he became superintendent in Jena but transferred to Orlamünde in 1590. He did not return to Meißen until 1593, where he died in May 1603. See *Deutsches Biographisches Archiv* I, 1240, Microfiche edition (Munich, 1982), 247.

36. See the book of Judith, esp. chapters 8–16.

37. The preacher went to great lengths to point out these parallels between Dorothea Susanna and Judith. See Strigenitz, *Gedechtnis vnd Leichpredigt*, passim, esp. D 1a.

38. Only four years later was she able to have a funeral sermon for her husband, along with poetic paeans of Johann Wilhelm, published: Andreas Ellinger, *De obitu illustri: Principis ac Domini Domini Ioannis Gvillelmi . . .* (Jena, 1577).

39. On her active opposition to August's assumption of power and of the guardianship of her sons, see Gehrt, *Ernestinische Konfessionspolitik*, 436–454.

40. Of the five children to whom Dorothea Susanna had given birth, three were still alive when her husband died in 1573, namely Friedrich Wilhelm, Johann, and Marie. Marie had been born on 7 November 1571 and died on 8 March 1610, as the abbess of the Lutheran monastery at Quedlinburg. See Röse, "Dorothea Susanna."

41. See Gehrt, *Ernestinische Konfessionspolitik*, 438–452, and "Geschichte der Universität Jena," 44.

42. See Ernst Koch, "Später Philippismus in Jena. Zur Geschichte der Theologischen Fakultät zwischen 1573 und 1580," in *Dona Melancthoniana. Festgabe Heinz Scheible*, ed. Johanna Loehr (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt; fromann-holzboog, 2001), esp. 218–222, and Gehrt, *Ernestinische Konfessionspolitik*, 461–471.

43. On her waging of the defense of Ernestine autonomy and confession of the faith, see Gehrt, *Ernestinische Konfessionspolitik*, 477–525.

44. Strigenitz, *Gedechtnis vnd Leichpredigt*, D 1r.

45. In her confession Dorothea Susanna had emphasized the importance of these authorities as a standard for correct doctrine and had noted the need to conform to them. See "Vnnsrer von Gottes Gnaden Dorotheen Susannen/ gebornner Pfaltzgreuin Bey Rhein etc. Hertzogin zu Sachssen Landtgreuin zum Duringen/ vnd Marggreuin zu Meißen/ witwen/ Gläubens Bekenñus Mit anngehendter erklerunge etzlicher Jnwertigen Religions Jrrungenhalben. An den Hochgebornnen Furstenn/ Herrn Augustenn/ Hertzogenn zu Sachssen/ des Heiligenn/ Römischen Reichs Ertzmarschaln/ vnnd Churfurstenn—vnnsren Freundlichen lieben vettern/ vnnd Schwagern/ Ausganngen Jm Monat Julio. Anno 1575." The manuscript used for this essay is in the Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, G17.20 Helmst. On the development of the final text, see Gehrt, *Ernestinische Konfessionspolitik*, 499–506.

46. In this way Strigenitz clearly distinguished her from other ignoble female characters in history, such as Justina, the mother of Emperor Valentinian, who had reintroduced Arianism in the fourth century. See Strigenitz, *Gedechtnis vnd Leichpredigt*, D 1a–b, citation on D 1b. For Strigenitz, Dorothea Susanna was more comparable to Placilla, the wife of Theodosius, the great emperor who had done much for Christianity in the empire of that period. Because of this, Placilla went down in history as a "*fidelissima Niceni dogmatis custos*" ("very faithful custodian of the Nicene Creed"), D 1a.

47. See Strigenitz, *Gedechtnis vnd Leichpredigt*, E 3b. This generally high opinion of widowhood is based on a theological point of view as stated in the Old Testament where God is the protector of widows and orphans. This is also taught in the New Testament, in that the task of women who have not remarried is to serve God. For more on this point of view, see the following passage from the funeral address (E 2v): "Experience shows that often when in a household a grandmother or the mother of the family remains steadfast in her widowhood and lifts her sighs before God's face and faithfully prays day and night for her own [family], peace, joy, and all good things are present in the entire house. As soon as the prayers of the old lady leave the house, blessing and well-being leave along with

them. Those special heroic people, God-fearing persons, are often while they live the bulwark of the duchy, the protector and guardian of the principality and with their fervent prayer become a defensive wall and oppose a break with the Lord for the land that it not go to ruin."

48. Treatises composed in criticism of the Augsburg Interim and of the electoral Saxon Leipzig Proposal of 1548 are found in the first two volumes respectively of *Controversia et Confessio. Theologische Kontroversen 1548–1577/80. Kritische Auswahl*, ed. Irene Dingel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010, 2012).

49. After Luther's death in 1546, Melanchthon was considered to be the head or reforming authority of the Reformation, which had begun in Wittenberg. Only later was it to become apparent that his theology did not coincide with Luther's in every aspect and actually departed from Luther's in key areas. The efforts to win Melanchthon for the new Ernestine university, however, were to prove fruitless: the "praeceptor Germaniae" remained in Wittenberg, see Gehrt, *Ernestinische Konfessionspolitik*, 36–41.

50. On this, see "Geschichte der Universität Jena," 26ff. The statutes of the university clearly state that its "purpose is primarily to preserve God's Word and the Christian religion against corrupt persons and sects;" see also p. 34. Regarding the later history of the theological faculty of University of Jena, see Koch, "Später Philippismus," 217–245.

51. See Robert Kolb, *Nikolaus von Amsdorf. Champion of Martin Luther's Reformation* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2019).

52. Not only had Flacius been a student and colleague of Melanchthon but he also had close contact with Luther himself. See Wilhelm Preger, *Matthias Flacius Illyricus und seine Zeit*, 2 vols. (Erlangen: Bläsing, 1859–1861, reprint Hildesheim: Nieuwkoop, 1964); Oliver K. Olson, *Matthias Flacius and the Survival of Luther's Reform*, *Wolfenbütteler Abhandlungen zur Renaissanceforschung* 20 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002); Luka Ilić, *Theologian of Sin and Grace. The Process of Radicalization in the Theology of Matthias Flacius Illyricus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck/Ruprecht, 2014), and Irene Dingel, "Flacius als Schüler Luthers und Melanchthons," in *Vestigia Pietatis. Studien zur Geschichte der Frömmigkeit in Thüringen und Sachsen, Ernst Koch gewidmet, Herbergen der Christenheit, Sonderbd. 5*, eds. Gerhard Graf, Hans-Peter Hasse et al. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2000), 77–93.

53. See Gehrt, *Ernestinische Konfessionspolitik*, 85–97, and "Geschichte der Universität Jena," 36.

54. Luther had actually contributed to the early stages of the Wittenberg Edition of his works, which Melanchthon and his student Georg Major continued after Luther died. This latter fact alone made the Gnesio-Lutherans suspicious of this edition. Another factor was that writings of other authors—especially of Melanchthon—were contained in the Wittenberg Edition. Therefore, Nikolaus von Amsdorf and Johann Aurifaber (who had been the last amanuensis of Luther, the chaplain of Johann Friedrich the Elder during the Smalcald War, and then the court preacher in Weimar) were urging that a new edition of Luther's works be published. For this reason Georg Rörer, Luther's long-time amanuensis, was called to Jena. He co-wrote many sermons of Luther which Luther composed at the request of Johann Friedrich the Elder. After the defeat of Johann Friedrich the Elder at Mühlberg in April 1547, Rörer had to flee, accepting the invitation of King Frederik III of Denmark to go to Copenhagen. See Gehrt, *Ernestinische Konfessionspolitik*, 68–73, and "Geschichte der Universität Jena," 36. Regarding Rörer, see Reinhold Jauernig, "Georg Rörer," in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 5 (1961<sup>3</sup>), esp. 1149, and *Georg Rörer (1492–1557): der Chronist der Wittenberger Reformation*, ed. Stefan Michel and Christian Speer (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2012). Regarding the Luther editions see also Eike

Wolgast, "Geschichte der Luther-Ausgaben vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert," in *Luthers Werke*, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 57 vols., eds., J. F. K. Knaake et al. (Weimar: Böhlau, 1883ff.), 60:431–460. See also Eike Wolgast, "Die Wittenberger Luther-Ausgabe. Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der Werke Luthers im 16. Jahrhundert," in *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 2 (1970): 1–336; and Eike Wolgast, "Der Streit um die Werke Luthers im 16. Jahrhundert," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 59 (1968): 177–202.

55. The first expulsion had to do with the introduction of the new consistorial order of the duke on 8 July 1561, in the drafting of which the theology professors from Jena had not been involved. As such, the consistory, made up of four ecclesiastical superintendents and four political councillors, was to be able to carry out church disciplinary measures without the participation of the theology professors. In this matter the Gnesio-Lutherans saw a usurpation of the *ius in sacra* by the political powers, against which they protested mightily. The duke, however, addressed this issue by simply expelling the unwanted critics. See Kruse, *Speners Kritik*, 57–63. The second expulsion in 1573 occurred when August of Saxony began his governance of the Ernestine lands after the death of Johann Wilhelm.

56. What was new was that it did not define confession and doctrine using positive definitions but solely using exclusionary negatives, i.e., by segregating every movement in which Protestant heresies were detected or were thought to be present.

57. This joint rule had been ordered in the last will and testament of their father, Johann Friedrich I, who had died in 1553. See "History of the University of Jena," 32.

58. At the onset of his regency Johann Wilhelm had tried to use the Colloquy to settle the differences between the Philippists and the Gnesio-Lutherans on the doctrine of justification, the doctrine of good works, the ability of free will, and on the issues of adiaphora. However, the Colloquy was discontinued even before the issues of free will and adiaphora could be addressed. The Colloquy of Altenburg has been little researched to date. However, see Wilhelm Schäfer, "Beiträge und Curiosa zur Geschichte des Colloquiums zu Altenburg, vom 21. Oktober 1568 bis zum 9. März 1569" in Wilhelm Schäfer, *Sachsen-Chronik für Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* I (1854): 78–86; Dingel, "Religionsgespräche IV," TRE 28: 668 and 673–674; and Daniel Gehrt and Friedhelm Gleiß, "Die Weimarer Disputation von 1560 und der Altenburger Theologenkonvent von 1568/69: Aspekte inner-lutherischer Religionsgespräche," in Irene Dingel, Volker Leppin, and Kathrin Paasch, eds. *Zwischen theologischem Dissens und politischer Duldung. Religionsgespräche der Frühen Neuzeit*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäischen Geschichte Mainz. Abt. für Abt. für Abendländische Religionsgeschichte, Beiheft 121 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 151–159. The Ernestine theologians from Jena began the publication of the protocols of the meeting: *Colloquium zu Altenburgk in Meissen Vom Artikel der Rechtfertigung vor Gott. Zwischen Der Churfürstlichen vnd Fürstlichen zu Sachsen etc. Theologen gehalten. Vom 20. Octobris Anno 1568 bis auff den 9. Martij 1569* (Jena, 1569). The Philippists published their own version of the proceedings: *Gantze vnd Vnuerfalschete Acta vnd Handlung des Colloquij zwischen den Churfürstlichen vnd Fürstlichen zu Sachsen etc. Theologen vom Artickel der Gerechtigkeit des Menschen fur Gott vnd von guten Wercken zu Aldenburgk in Meissen gehalten. Vom 20. Octobris Anno 1568. bis auff den 9. Martij / Anno 1569* (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1570).

59. The *Corpus Doctrinae Thuringicum* contained the three ecumenical symbols, the *Confessio Augustana*, the Apology, the Large and Small Catechism, the Smalcald Articles of Martin Luther, the Thuringian *Confession* written by Justus Menius in 1548, and the Weimar *Confutation*. On the other hand, the *Corpus Doctrinae Philippicum* contained only writings of Melancthon, plus the symbols of the ancient church. See Dingel, *Concordia controversa*, 15–20, esp. 16.



60. Elector August had ordered that the Ernestine lands belonging to Johann Wilhelm be divided, with some placed under the sons of imprisoned Johann Friedrich the Middler, who were still minors. Johann Casimir and Johann Ernst obtained the regions around Eisenach and Coburg, which led to the formation of two Ernestine duchies: Saxony-Weimar and Saxony-Coburg-Eisenach. See "History of the University of Jena," 44.

61. See Barton, *Um Luthers Erbe*, esp. 228–230; and Irene Dingel, "Johannes Wigand," in *TRE* 36 (2004), 33–38.

62. Gernhardt and Rosinus had made themselves unpopular by issuing a "statement of discontinuation and a prayer request form regarding these events" and were thus deposed on 20 April 1573, see Koch, "Später Philippismus," 221. Wigand and Heshusius had been expelled on 31 March 1573 for "reviling the Elector." A new consistory order had already been prepared by the end of the visitation in November 1573 and was published the following year. See Koch, "Später Philippismus," 220, 222–228, and Gehrt, *Ernestinische Konfessionspolitik*, 455–477. Despite these changes Heshusius continued to remain the "key theologian advisor of the duchess," see Barton, *Um Luthers Erbe*, 229.

63. See Röse, "Dorothea Susanna," 174.

64. Melissander was also the tutor of her sons. See Röse, "Dorothea Susanna," 174.

65. Compare Gehrt, *Ernestinische Konfessionspolitik*, 491–511.

66. See letter from Elector Friedrich to Dorothea Susanna, dated 1 April 1573, in *BFPf* 2:572–574, Nr. 476.

67. To this effect she wrote a letter to Elector August on 9 July 1575, and another one to Electress Anna, in which she included her confession. See *Fortgesetzte Sammlung von alten und neuen theologischen Sachen* 15 (1734): 535.

68. *Fortgesetzte Sammlung*, 537.

69. August stated that she should have consulted God-fearing and erudite persons "and not such who are attached to Flacianism," *Fortgesetzte Sammlung*, 537.

70. See *Fortgesetzte Sammlung von alten und neuen theologischen Sachen* 27 (1746): 482–483.

71. See Koch, "Später Philippismus," 233, with further developments, 233–242.

72. See the path toward acceptance of the Formula of Concord, which had also been presented to various imperial states (*Reichsstände*). Needless to say, this was not without difficulties. For details, see Inge Mager, "Aufnahme und Ablehnung des Konkordienbuchs in Nord-, Mittel- und Ostdeutschland," in *Bekennnis und Einheit der Kirche. Studien zum Konkordienbuch*, ed. Martin Brecht (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1980), 271–302, and Werner-Ulrich Deetjen, "Concordia Concors—Concordia Discors. Zum Ringen um das Konkordienwerk im Süden und mittleren Westen Deutschlands" in *Bekennnis und Einheit der Kirche*, 303–349.

73. Of course, only critiques of those persons were invited whose agreement could be expected. Nevertheless, these included people such as Andreas Pouchenius (1526–1600) who had been superintendent in Lübeck; Hieronymus Menzel (1517–1590), superintendent in Eisleben; the ministerium in Strasbourg under the leadership of Johannes Marbach, and last but not least, some of the theologians who were responsible for the Formula of Concord and its Apology, namely Jakob Andreae, Nikolaus Selnecker, Martin Chemnitz, and Timotheus Kirchner. The various critiques are published in *Fortgesetzte Sammlung von alten und neuen theologischen Sachen* 28 (1747), 34–45, 337–341, 843–845; 29 (1748), 822–828; 30 (1749), 631–635; 31 (1750), 649–663, 828–834, 968–975; (1751), 459–479. Compare Gehrt, *Ernestinische Konfessionspolitik*, 507–522.

74. Gehrt, *Ernestinische Konfessionspolitik*, 541.