

Book Reviews

Von der Reliquie zum Ding: Heiliger Ort—Wunderkammer—Museum. Stefan Laube.
Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2011. 585 pp. € 89.80. ISBN 978-3-05-004928-1.

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Through the last decade, the material culture of early Protestantism has become an increasingly important field of research. Here, Laube's book is a most valuable contribution. The book deals with early modern cases from the Lutheran core territories, reaching from the two famous early sixteenth-century collections of relics belonging to Elector Fredric of Saxony and Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg (chap. 2) up to the late nineteenth-century "Christlich-Archäologische Kunstsammlung" of the Berlin University, built up by Professor Ferdinand Piper in order to demonstrate the value of Christianity not only through thoughts and arguments, but also through a representative collection of things from its rich cultural tradition (chap. 6).

In the chapters in between, Laube has his focus on the material culture preserving and nourishing the memory of Luther on places like Wittenberg, Eisleben, Eisenach, and Erfurt (chap. 3); on the efforts of Lutheran outsiders like Jacob Böhme to connect a radical Protestant spirituality not only to the spiritual world, but also to nature and to things (chap. 4, which is the shortest one); and on the fascinating world of the Halle Pietists under August Hermann Francke in the eighteenth century, with its different dimensions of materiality—including the construction of a "Kingdom of God" in Glaucha/Halle and displaying a marvellous collection of exotica from all over the world where pietists had been and were active propagating the gospel (chap. 5).

In an introductory chapter ("Materielle Kraftfelder im Kirchenraum"), Laube discusses the church room as a room loaded with some fundamental tensions, which have seldom been further analyzed. On the one hand, the church should serve as and be experienced as a holy place, defined through its opposition to the profane or secular surroundings, but on the other hand, it often also served as a kind of museum, preserving and exhibiting not only memorabilia, but also exotica. In this introductory chapter, the scope is considerably broader than early modern Germany.

It is rewarding and fascinating to read Laube's book. The analyses of his different cases from chapter 2 on take inspiration not only from the field of cultural studies, but also from traditional church history, history, art history, and archeology. The bibliography alone covers almost one hundred pages, and bears witness to this multidisciplinary approach. The combination of this broad approach on the one hand and Laube's great attention for detail on the other qualifies his investigations into the fields covered by the different chapters as valuable contributions to research.

Take the Halle chapter: Most visitors to the Francke Stiftungen today will be aware of the brave and utopian ideals which inspired the construction of this place, and most

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visitors will also be astonished when they are led through the collections of exotica in the museum there. Focusing on these material manifestations of Halle Pietism, Laube offers an interpretation of this particular part of the Pietist movement, which adds important insight to earlier research.

Similarly, the chapter on Fredric's and Albrecht's collections of relics contributes to new insights through the interdisciplinary approach. In this chapter, Laube demonstrates in the first place, how in the *Hallesche Heiltumbuch* from 1520 the relics in Albrecht's collection were organized and presented according to an order taken over from salvation history, and in the second place how the reliquaries throughout the sixteenth century were gradually "emancipated" from the relics they had contained and to which they were earlier inseparably connected. When the collection on special days throughout the year was available to visitors, the reliquaries were frequently the only things to be seen. They did not any longer contain the relics, but had replaced them and represented them. Laube also uses the term "hybrids" to characterize the relics in the collections of Albrecht and Fredric, because many of the reliquaries combine natural and artificial expressions in a quite unsystematic way (189). This closer look at different dimensions of the "thing" opens up very interesting perspectives for interpreting the veneration of the relics in early modern Saxony.

The title "Von der Reliquie zum Ding" could according to the author also have been rephrased to "Zwischen Reliquie und Ding" (xii). There is a line of development from the exhibition of Albrecht's and Fredric's collections in their respective churches to the exhibitions of mirabilia and artifacts in modern museums. But not in the sense that the aura of the relic has totally disappeared in the collection of a modern museum, and neither in the sense that the thing as a *memorabilium* or an *exoticum* was absent in the late medieval and early modern collections exhibited in the churches.

Laube writes that his book does not have to be read in toto; it may also be read chapter by chapter: the different chapters are designed so that they may be read separately. This is an important observation. The book may and should be consulted as an important contribution to introducing modern cultural theory in order to better understand Halle Pietism, Jacob Böhme, the early modern cult of Luther in the Lutheran core territories, and the religious world of Elector Fredric of Saxony or Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg. Correspondingly, the book does not have to be read primarily as a contribution to a general theory of relics and things in the transition from early modern to contemporary society, even if the author in this respect, too, makes a number of interesting observations on his way through the vast material analyzed or commented on in the book.



Thomas Cromwell: Servant to Henry VIII. David Loades.

Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2013. 352 pp. £20.00. ISBN 978-1-4456-1538-7.

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It is noteworthy that a chapter that explores the historiography of Thomas Cromwell concludes this latest biography of Henry VIII's chief minister. The life and career of Cromwell has provided for a wealth of scholarship, but in writing for a general audience, David Loades, the eminent historian of Tudor England, sets out to provide an accessible and sympathetic account of the life of Cromwell without obscuring the reader in previous historiographical debates. Loades stresses Cromwell's crucial significance in the shaping of Henrician policy. He emphasizes that Cromwell was a greater statesman than the "useful