Zimmerling strives to give an overview in plain language of the history and significance of the Watchwords. However, aside from the points already mentioned, further questions arise regarding the conception of his book. The order of the chapters is somewhat haphazard, and the choice of examples often eclectic. In his attempt to write clearly the author occasionally shoots beyond his goal, as when the Watchwords are compared to a 'Maggi cube' containing, as it were, the 'quintessence' of Scripture (129). Even if Zimmerling's book is intended for the wide public rather than a specialised audience, still, it is regrettable that the author did not pick up on the exciting research of the historian Shirley Brückner (Lösen, Däumeln, Nadeln, Würfeln. Praktiken der Kontingenz als Offenbarung im Pietismus. In: Ulrich Schädler u.a. (eds.): Spiel und Bürgerlichkeit. Passagen des Spiels I. Wien u. a. 2010, 247-272; Die Providenz im Zettelkasten. Divinatorische Lospraktiken in der pietistischen Frömmigkeit. In: Wolfgang Breul / Jan Carsten Schnurr (eds.): Geschichtsbewusstsein und Zukunftserwartung in Pietismus und Erweckungsbewegung, Göttingen 2013, 351-366). These findings help to contextualise the lot drawing of the Moravian Brotherhood. The Watchwords are unique in their own way, but they are nevertheless part of a long history of appropriation of the Bible.

Prof. Dr. Ruth Albrecht
University of Hamburg
ruth.albrecht@uni-hamburg.de


‘Religion shapes politics’ – this is one way of reading the title of an exciting volume gathering more than twenty richly illustrated chapters researching the position of clerics at court in the early modern period in Europe (‘Religion Power Politics. Court Clerics in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800’). Between 2009 and 2013, a project devoted to this subject has generated new insights that inscribe themselves consciously or unconsciously into a larger revision of the secularization paradigm that increasingly has been questioned in early modern studies.

Since J.C.D. Clark’s ground-breaking 2012 essay “Secularization and modernization: the failure of a ‘grand narrative’” (The Historical Journal 55, 1 2012: 161-94) more and scholars have arrived to the understanding that
conventional and established patterns of explanation – that religion increasingly lost its societal and cultural significance in Europe during early modernity – have to be questioned. Instead, it has been proposed that even the most adamant rationalists have not rejected religion as an epistemological category with relevance for human discussion, but rather were engaged in a re-definition of its place in human progress. It has since been possible to open up new and fruitful avenues for research, for instance related to the position of esoteric thought in the enlightenment period, how ideas on early Christianity informed nineteenth century pre-socialism or how religious imagination saturated the rituals of initiation of the Bavarian Order of Illuminati, and the ostensible vanguard of ultra-secularism.

Whereas this is written from the perspective of a more comprehensive history of ideas, the volume at hand is based on factual historiography in its most elaborate form, albeit in parts under-theorized. Heavily anchored in studies of sources gathered at the Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel (HAB) and in different collections in Lower Saxony, the researchers writing in the volume edited competently by an interdisciplinary team representing various historical disciplines, are able to cover a significant and frequently neglected aspect of European court culture: the position of court clerics in general and of ‘head court clerics’ (‘Oberhofprediger’, a formal office in Protestant territories) in particular.

Taking a comparative approach that transgresses confessional, cultural and political boundaries, the individual chapters focus on court clerics in the Old German Empire, the Habsburg monarchy, France, Denmark, England, Poland and the Russian empire. A common denominator in the cases covered is an area of intersection between pastoral care, theological discourse, political consulting, and the design of courtly power. The volume is divided into six sections: rulers and the court; careers, offices and self-conceptions; participation in governance, proximity and distance to power; networks and coalitions; language and medial strategies.

In their introduction, Ulrike Gleixner and Siegrid Westphal outline the challenges of studying the position of religion at European courts. Research within these areas is still organized along confessional, linguistic and territorial boundaries and there are few platforms of inter-confessional comparison and collaboration. One of the objectives of the project and volume has been to establish common ground among researchers with shared interests. Although the nexus between religion and political power and the figure of the court cleric is heavily determined by a distinctly Protestant model, one of the findings of the project is that there is a larger heterogeneity among Protestant courts than expected and that certain aspects of the Protestant concept of the court cleric are comparable across Europe.
It is my opinion that a more solid theoretical approach to these issues would have helped the editors to establish and highlight the significance of these findings in the light of the earlier mentioned ongoing revision of the secularization paradigm. Not least since the chapters in the subsequent six sessions present overwhelming evidence of the nexus between political power (as praxis, as culture and as concept) and religion which even is able to inform contemporary charged discourses on the place and legitimacy of religion in public life. For Russian orthodox and Catholic territories, it is in particular the position of the confessor that is investigated and that shifted relating to contextual circumstances. This function was less prominent in Protestant countries and the direct link between cleric and ruler was thus broken. Depending on the religious situation in these territories, ruler and court clerics were rather united by a shared religious culture, which received significance when religious preferences of the ruler switched from Orthodox Lutheranism to Reformed Protestantism or Pietism.

The case studies at hand suggest that there were different constellations of proximity and distance between ruler and court clerics. It appears however fruitful to study the embeddedness of court clerics within the ruling families, particularly when they occupied lifelong curatorial and educational functions. Surprisingly this is an aspect that hitherto not has been covered extensively in previous scholarship (perhaps since it relates to the position of women at court) and some of the chapters break new ground in locating court clerics within the sphere of (sometimes denominationally diverging) interest among rulers. This section opens up new and fruitful avenues of scholarship in that the position of court clerics and their career prospects appears to be under-researched. In a forthcoming article on the position of freemasonry at the Swedish court of Gustav III, the author of this review was able to identify almost thirty court clerics among members of Swedish masonic lodges during the eighteenth century, some of them advancing to bishops and two of them to archbishops.

Further highlighting the formal position of court clerics, one of the sections of the volume treats their collective biographies. It emerges that their formal position was far stronger in Protestant territories and that they advanced into a part of the functional elites of early modern governance at large. For Catholic territories it is possible to observe that the Jesuits played a significant role in assuming leading positions at court, although their loyalty to the Jesuit Order created a principal division between secular and sacred power. It is also apparent that (informal) patronage relationships played a striking role in appointment procedures, stronger so in Protestant territories, where appointment to the ministry frequently was a princely/noble prerogative. In theological terms it is possible to determine the function of the Protestant court cleric as an admonisher of Christian rule in the immediate surroundings of
the ruler, solidly based on Lutheran concepts of the division of worldly and heavenly powers. Such a function is less prominent in Catholic cases, however a number of contributions question if it at all is possible to identify homogeneous ideological positions shared by all court clerics in all contexts. Nevertheless, across different Christian denominations there was consensus that political authority was of a pre-political and divine origin, ‘by grace of God’. Whereas this theological position implies obedience, it did not preclude court clerics from critique of the political establishment. It was both in the interest of Protestants and Catholics to defend the position of theology as a master science.

Since Protestant clerics were actively engaged in the administration of their respective regional/national churches and thus assumed important offices in the state apparatus, they deduced a right to co-determine and control politics. Protestant clerics used the medium of the oral and printed sermon to formulate sometimes sharp critique against their rulers or a presumed deterioration of moral standards, in some cases leading to existential conflicts. Such a self-conception (as a superordinate faithful admonisher and moral guardian) cannot be observed to the same extent in Catholic territories, where the supreme position of the ruler not was questioned. However, the nexus to political mythology is an obvious feature of clerics at court across the spectrum of Christian denominations. All forms of sermons at the occasions of major political events contributed to create legitimacy of the territorial ruler and his dynasty. At the beginning of the historiographical creation of significance, “they provided readings and interpretations of political processes” (p. 21), as it is stated in unusual theoretical poignancy in the introduction. Moreover, since court clerics frequently belonged to the supremely educated theological elites, they were frequently active as authors and publishers and were thus embedded in scholarly trans-territorial/international networks, the scribal communities of the cosmopolitan republic of letters.

In the tense atmosphere of theological controversies informing the entire early modern period, court clerics played a significant role in fomenting and sustaining a sharp intellectual debate in Europe, assuming proto-political dimensions in that different visions of social justice, power relationships and resource distribution were addressed. In this context, two fascinating chapters analyse the political language mobilized among court clerics. Here, the volume would have profited from a more sophisticated theoretical approach in conceptual history (‘Begriffsgeschichte’). For instance, the terms ‘Wohlfahrt’ (‘welfare’) and ‘Glückseligkeit’ (‘happiness’, ‘felicity’) migrated over the course of the eighteenth century from primarily theological (Pietist, Wolffian) semantics to assume system-changing meaning in political language.

It is in this review impossible to provide with a fair overview of the individual chapters which are a proof of foundational and eminently source-
based scholarship sometimes presented from new and refreshing vantage points. The volume represents a solid contribution to significant aspects of the intellectual history of the early modern period and its confessional dimensions, evidence that religion indeed shapes politics.

Dr. Andreas Önnerfors
University of Gothenburg
andreas.onnerfors@gu.se


“A glorious display of the banner of free grace, holding forth the riches of it very clearly and convincingly, and bringing the offers of it very low, wonderfully low… some of his hearers were made to think, that the cord of the offer of salvation was let down and hung so low to sinners, that those of the lowest stature among them all, might have caught hold of it, who, through grace had any mind to do so.”

These words were written by John Gillies (1712-1796), a Presbyterian minister at Glasgow, Scotland, in his book *Historical Collections of Accounts of Revival Relating to Remarkable Periods of the Success of the Gospel* (enlarged edition, Kelso, 1845, 185). Thus Gillies characterized the gospel ministry of his predecessor at Glasgow in the seventeenth century, James Durham (1622-1658). It may be there is some exaggeration in this ‘testimony’. But a recent study on James Durham on the place and function of the gospel offer in his ministry evidences the thesis. It shows that the free and well-meant offer of salvation to all hearers of the gospel was in the forefront of Durham’s preaching. The author, the Scottish Free Church minister, Donald John Maclean, deals with Durham’s view on the gospel offer in its seventeenth-century context.

James Durham was a representative theologian of the Second Reformation in Scotland. This turbulent period in Scottish church history succeeded the restoration of Presbyterian church order and establishment of a covenanted (theocratic) nation. This movement was not only ecclesiological, but had a strong pietistic warmth. It had strong links with the Puritan movement in England. Books which were published in both countries contain significant parallels in theological and practical divinity. Generally Scottish Second Reformation books give more attention to the proclamation of God’s