

Robertsons were well served by the general editors who appear to have directed them to the secondary literature which provided the broader context for an understanding of the diary. The introduction and the notes offer a more than adequate discussion of Eliza Chipman's Baptist world in Pleasant Valley. It is interesting to note, however, that George Rawlyk, whose contribution to the volume was acknowledged, has argued that the period of the 1820s to the 1840s witnessed a challenge to the older Baptist ministers by a group of young evangelicals. The older group stressed the importance of order and respectability, while downplaying the excesses of emotional conversions; the spiritual health of the community could be found not in revivals, but in proofs of devolution such as worship, charitable deeds and good behaviour. The diary hints at some of this because William Chipman was an old Calvinist, not a Free Will Baptist, but it is a theme largely ignored by the Robertsons. A more surprising omission was the failure to include any reference to S.D. Clark's *Church and Sect in Canada*, which also addresses the challenge of sectarianism. Clark explored the shift among Baptists from individual piety to a greater sense of community responsibility reflected through the desire for an effective school system and the movements for temperance and observance of the Sabbath.

The editors have noted that by the 1850s, when the *Memoir* was published, "interest in diaries of this type was declining" and, thus, it was found "only in a few contemporary Baptist homes". There has been renewed interest recently in Eliza Chipman's work; it has been cited in a number of recent collections because it is one of the only examples of a woman's spiritual journals; two biographies are also available. But this reprint might suffer the same fate as the first publication over a century ago. In 1855, the publishers wrote that the "intrinsic value of the *Memoir*...furnishes an adequate reason why all the copies of it should be purchased and read" (xi). Yet, now and then, the *Memoir* may remain of interest only to a few contemporary readers.

David Mills
University of Alberta

Thomas Robisheaux — *Rural society and the search for order in early modern Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Pp. xvi, 297.

In this perceptive and persuasive study, Thomas Robisheaux succeeds in elucidating major currents and streams in the often murky waters of "authority" and statebuilding debates among historians of the early modern period. Despite the often pivotal prominence accorded the German Peasants' Revolt of 1524-25, the economic and political dynamics of rural society as a whole, as Robisheaux points out, have largely been neglected by modern scholars. Towards remedying the imbalance, the author proposes a local study of Langenberg, one of ten or twelve districts of the County of Hohenlohe, during the period of 1500-1700. Robisheaux appears well aware of the problems of generalization from such a narrow regional sample, yet, at the same time, shows considerable dexterity in extracting the most from a variety of sources, from rent books and tax registers to marriage court protocols and visitation reports. The result is a highly nuanced account of the ebb and flow — or "give and take", as Robisheaux characterizes it — of economic and political relations between the central State and its

subjects. Most importantly, as the author repeatedly emphasizes, the people of Langenberg “never became the helpless victims of a merciless and exploitive state” (13), but were instead able “...to turn reforms to their own advantage, to refashion old relationships in new ways, to carve out new ones, even to set strict limits to the power of the state” (11).

The long period of 1500-1700 is divided into three phases in the book. The first, 1500-1550, is portrayed as one of unrelenting economic and demographic expansion, coupled with frequent crop failures, new taxes and religious upheaval. Here, Robisheaux provides a succinct synthesis of other secondary accounts as well as a long narrative on the Peasants’ War in Hohenlohe. His most important conclusion in this section is actually a negative one, i.e. that the Peasants’ War is much less of a watershed than generally assumed by social historians, and that its immediate impact on agrarian society was negligible.

It is the second phase of his study, 1550-1620, that obviously attracts most of Robisheaux’s — as well as the reader’s — attention. The drastic economic polarization that took place during this time has been well documented elsewhere (*cf.* especially the work of Wilhelm Abel and Erich Keyser), but Robisheaux’s figures are especially effective. In 1528, the wealthiest 10 percent of Langenberg owned 26.5 percent of the assessed property, and the bottom 60 percent owned 33 percent; by 1581, the top 10 percent owned 42.7 percent of the wealth, and the poorest 60 percent only 16 percent (86). In the wake of such dramatic shifts in economic power, political repercussions at the local and territorial levels were inevitable. Robisheaux identifies three principal levels, or arenas, of struggle between local powerbrokers and the prince: family and household, marketplace and the State. In all three cases, his conclusion is the same — the ambitions of central authorities to “socially engineer” (my term, not Robisheaux’s) the effects of the economic upheaval were continually frustrated by their own inadequate institutional means of enforcement.

At the household level, for instance, local property owners and the State shared the same overriding concern — keeping property together. Consequently, in questions of clandestine marriage (mainly minors marrying against their parents wishes) and all other illicit unions and offspring, their cooperation was both complete and effective. Specialized marriage courts, one of the Reformation’s juridical innovations, routinely terminated upon request all alliance between young people without their parents’ permission. Not only was this an explicit rejection of canonical *consensus nudus facit matrimonium*, but it conveyed the shared sentiments of most parents and rulers alike that marriage itself was as much a joining of properties as of persons. Only destitute fortune-hunters would seek to evade their spouses’ families, went the logic, hence invalidation of the vows.

The same unanimity is less applicable, though, to questions of inheritance, especially in the territorial State’s attempt at legal codification, a feat not accomplished in Hohenlohe until 1738. There is also some evidence that the State tried to protect the rights of the excluded — especially some widows and daughters — again meeting with widespread local resistance. Not until the mid-seventeenth century, Robisheaux argues, would territorial states such as Hohenlohe secure sufficient bureaucratic and administrative domination to enforce such unpopular statutes. Here, he rightly questions the reliability of household inventories as proof of successful State “bureaucratization” of familial relations, yet, he is perhaps too trusting of the generalizations of others, such as Herman Rebel for Upper Austria, in the late sixteenth century.

State intervention in the marketplace was likewise only very partially successful and apparently, according to Robisheaux, extremely susceptible to manipulation by villagers. In the face of spiraling inflation and massive food shortages, many princes, viewing themselves as *Hausväter* of their realms, attempted to create a “moral economy” (164). From 1594-1602, for instance, the Count of Hohenlohe approved 96 percent of the requests from Langenberg for reductions or postponements of rents (172). Grain relief efforts were regular from the 1580s on, and indispensable by the 1620s. At the same time, price-controls were notoriously unpopular and unsuccessful, and the great prosperity of the nobility (evident especially in newly erected opulent Renaissance palaces) often provoked strong resentment in such harsh times. Violent popular resistance was not unknown, but by 1600, German rulers enjoyed an almost complete calm in relations with their subjects — until the onset of the Thirty Years’ War.

The period from 1620 on forms the third phase of Robisheaux’s cycle, and it is by far the most tumultuous in terms of agrarian production and political authority. Under the “crushing burden” of war *Kontributionen* to occupying armies, the entire administrative and fiscal apparatus of the state of Hohenlohe collapse during the 1630s. The political vacuum, combined with huge grain shortages and the rule of troops, results — not surprisingly — in a strikingly deferential attitude among villagers from the 1640s on. Thirty years of famine and warfare had accomplished what the previous century of concessions could not, eliminating all vestiges of popular resistance to the growing absolutist state without — Robisheaux stresses — causing any dramatic change in the village social structure.

The book presents a convincing perspective on statebuilding and communal authority. Too often, as the author realizes, we view the early modern state with anachronistic eyes, a sprawling expanding, and always purposeful Leviathan. But as Robisheaux reminds us:

Power never flowed simply from the top down; and it did not rest solely on violence or coercion.... State power did not simply expand in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; it was very often drawn into the village by villagers themselves. State power was also checked, frustrated, often turned to purposes no ruler completely controlled (258).

If anything, the case for limitations of State power is perhaps overstated, especially in view of some undeniable successes in checking the ruthless exploitation by local property-owners of their own less powerful neighbors (particularly women and the land-holding poor). Judicial restraints *were* effective in inheritance disputes and redistribution of grain *did* help ease the cruelties of the “unchristian market” — both could have only been accomplished by a strong central authority.

But then, these are only questions of emphasis in a work which has done much to restore such discussions of “authority”, central or local, to a common ground. The prose is lucid and, in those particularly difficult spots (for those of us less statistically literate), amply illustrated with tables and graphs on the distribution of wealth, taxes, debt, etc. The bibliographical essay at the end is especially helpful in introducing the reader to a broad spectrum of relevant topics. In all, Robisheaux has provided us with an extremely welcome synthesis of political, economic and broadly social perspectives on a very difficult and pivotal question for early modern Europe.

Joel F. Harrington
Vanderbilt University