Since the 1980s, the paradigm of "confessionalization," or the consolidation of ecclesiastical and political authority in the form of religious communities called confessions, has served as the paramount organizing principle of the historiography of early modern Germany. More recently, historians of nineteenth-century Germany have applied this paradigm to the religious effusion and sectarianism that occurred during that century. While the paradigm of confessionalization helped scholars of the early modern era to illuminate the relationship between religious conflict and state formation, historians of nineteenth-century Germany have used the paradigm to test the strength of the secularization thesis.

The histories of confessionalism in nineteenth-century Germany typically follow two predominant narratives. One, conceived by Etienne François, posits that by the early nineteenth century the German confessional divide had been internalized, as outward hostilities gave way to an "invisible boundary" and increasing concern with confessional identity. Another narrative, articulated by Olaf Blaschke, suggests that the nineteenth century represented a "second confessional age" that was precipitated by orthodox opposition to the 1817 unification of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Prussia. But the nineteenth-century German confessional divide was neither wholly internalized, nor did it have its origins exclusively in the unification of the Lutheran and Reformed churches. Instead, the tangibles of faith—liturgy, ritual, and the material culture of religious practice—remained paramount to how contemporary Protestants and Roman Catholics defined their confessional identities.

Indeed, the place where historians might locate the origins of nineteenth-century German confessionalism is the 1830 anniversaries of the Augsburg Confession. Here, the relationship of ritual, doctrine, and Protestant confessional identity was manifest, as King Friedrich Wilhelm III (r. 1797-1840) used the occasion to compel the
Evangelical churches within his realm to adopt a new and unpopular liturgy called the "Agenda" as a means of consummating the 1817 union. The ensuing controversy provoked a reconfessionalization of German religion and thus reanimated the boundaries — visible and invisible — among the Christian confessions.

The "worship wars" occasioned by the compulsory introduction of the Agenda, known as the Agendenstreit, created internecine rifts within German Protestantism, led to the creation of new confessional categories, and indirectly revitalized German Catholicism. The king’s attempt to compel the Agenda and appropriate the three-hundredth anniversary of the founding creed of Lutheranism reinvigorated confessional Lutheranism, leading to a split between Evangelical Protestants and so-called "Old Lutherans." The irenicism of nineteenth-century Pietism and the religiosity of the Protestant Awakening Movements were diminished, as both movements became increasingly confessionalized in response to the controversy. His confessional policy under increasing criticism, Friedrich Wilhelm III then dealt with Roman Catholics in his realm in a heavy-handed manner. This invigorated ultramontane Catholicism and in response, a nascent Cultural Protestantism arose which was at the forefront of late-century confessionalism and presaged the anti-Catholic policies of the Kulturkampf. Far from invisible boundaries that had been internalized, German confessional identity and difference, and indeed the second confessional era itself, turned on the tangibles of faith that were so fiercely contested at the 1830 anniversaries of the Augsburg Confession.

The introduction of the Agenda at the 1830 anniversaries was part of a larger process of Friedrich Wilhelm III’s consolidation of religious authority. This process began when the king called for a unification of the Reformed and Lutheran churches in Prussia. This Prussian Union was inaugurated on 31 October 1817 and celebrated at the Reformation anniversary festivals of the same weekend. The king proclaimed the Prussian Union on the occasion of the Reformation anniversary festival in order to legitimize the union by associating it with the memory of Martin Luther, thus underlining the new Evangelical church’s continuity with the Reformation.
The king was motivated by a sincere desire for church unity, the opportunity to consolidate his ecclesiastical and political authority, and because he self-consciously identified himself with the tradition of Protestant pluralism of his ancestors. He desired to be known as a righteous ruler of a strong Christian state and believed that a unified church was essential to the well-being of state and society. In that spirit, the king sought a unification of the separated Protestant churches because he believed it would ensure the strength of both Prussian Protestantism and the Prussian state by dissolving an internal divide that had traditionally separated his subjects from one another and he from his subjects—the Hohenzollern monarchs had been Calvinist since 1613 but their subjects overwhelmingly Lutheran. As the 1817 anniversary approached, the king's ministers advised him to pursue a union of Reformed and Lutheran churches, assuring him that it would broaden and strengthen the Prussian state church, that it would represent an enlightened form of religious tolerance, and that it might address the growing problems of confessionally-mixed marriages and religious discord within his confessionally-heterogeneous kingdom.

And so, on 31 October 1817 the king announced the union of the Lutheran and Reformed churches within Prussia. The union enjoyed widespread popular support, as nearly three-quarters of all Prussian congregations accepted the union—including most Lutherans, Reformed, Pietists, and Awakened Christians. But one quarter of the Prussian congregations declined to recognize the union. These included orthodox Lutherans and Reformed, both of whom were concerned about church governance and unresolved theological points such as the doctrine of the Real Presence. But among those congregations that nominally recognized the union, there was nothing except the Evangelical name to denote them as unified. For the most part, formerly Lutheran and Reformed congregations conducted services just as they had prior to the union. In response, Friedrich Wilhelm III sought to finalize this nominal union with the introduction of a new liturgy that he hoped would normalize the ritual and material culture of the Evangelical church. The liturgy was first introduced in 1822. But congregations that had enthusiastically adopted the union balked at the new liturgy. However, the adoption
of the Agenda was voluntary, and from the circulation of the liturgy in 1822 until 1830, the Evangelical church in Prussia would remain liturgically heterogeneous and unified in name only.

The Agendenstreit and the 1830 Anniversaries of the Augsburg Confession

It was not the unveiling of the new liturgy in 1822, but rather its compulsory introduction into Prussian churches in 1830 that provoked the strongest response from German Protestants. While pro-union congregations resented the compulsion, orthodox Lutherans and Reformed Christians saw the Agenda as a usurpation of their liturgical traditions and an extirpation of their distinct confessional traditions. Indeed, the external manifestations of confessional identity and difference—ritual and material culture—remained as important to participants in the debates over the Agenda as they had during the first confessional era. And the 1830 anniversaries of the Augsburg Confession would function as a kind of confessional "ground zero" in the continuing debates over the Prussian Union, the liturgy of its church, and Protestant identity.

As the founding document of Lutheranism and the basis for Lutheran confessional identity, collective memories of the Augsburg Confession were central to how Protestants understood themselves and their churches. Indeed, the Augsburg Confession and its memory were instrumental to the formation and maintenance of Protestant confessional identity. Contemporary Protestants—including Lutherans, Reformed, and Evangelicals—revered the Augsburg Confession for both its doctrinal content and for what it represented. Lutherans regarded it as the earliest confession of their faith. Reformed and Evangelicals recognized the handing over of the Augsburg Confession to Charles V in 1530 as an act of Protestant self-assertion and defiance of the Catholic emperor.

While the Augsburg Confession had been foundational to Protestant identity, its meaning had become fluid. By 1830 there was little agreement on how it should be commemorated vis-à-vis the Agenda. In fact, the two existed in a dialectical relationship, as collective memories of the Augsburg Confession informed one's position on the Agenda, and vice versa. To be sure, both the Agenda and Augsburg
Confession were markers intended to create a distinct confessional identity—one through a shared liturgical practice and another through a statement of beliefs. But the memory and meaning of the Augsburg Confession and of German Protestantism itself seemed up for debate at the 1830 anniversaries, as supporters and opponents of the Agenda used the memory of the Augsburg Confession to position themselves within contemporary disputes over the union, liturgy, and material culture of the Prussian Union church.

A wholesale revaluation of Prussian Protestantism was not what Friedrich Wilhelm III had envisioned for his new church. Indeed, the king had first introduced the Agenda in 1822 to provide the new church with a uniform liturgy that might mediate differences between Lutherans and Reformed. While the liturgy was unpopular, it was voluntary, and thus rarely implemented in congregations that preferred to retain their old liturgical traditions. But the Prussian government took measures to curtail opposition and enforce conformity. By 1821 it had already begun to direct the church consistories to carefully examine prospective ministers so that preaching vacancies were only filled by candidates sympathetic to the Prussian Union. Another edict followed that directed the replacement of the titles Lutheran and Reformed in church documents with the title Evangelical. These steps were ostensibly intended to create a shared sense of confessional identity and improve relations between the churches. Likewise, the king’s plan to use the 1830 anniversary of the Augsburg Confession to compel adoption of the Agenda for those congregations that had not assumed it was intended to normalize the liturgical life of the Prussian Union church. Instead, it touched off a firestorm of debate.

The majority of the sermons and speeches produced to commemorate the anniversary shared a common theme: Friedrich Wilhelm III’s order of 4 April 1830 forcing Evangelical congregations to adopt the new rite in time for the anniversaries of the Augsburg Confession in June. Evangelical Protestants, orthodox Lutherans, and Reformed Christians invoked memories of the Augsburg Confession, Luther, and the Reformation to dispute theological and liturgical matters unresolved within the Evangelical church and to protest the compulsory adoption of the liturgy. But the use and
abuse of the collective memory of the Augsburg Confession for ecclesiastical or theological purposes was not confined to the 1830 anniversaries.

German Lutherans had celebrated the anniversary of the Augsburg Confession since 1630. The anniversaries had typically been theologically-contested sites of memory that reflected contemporary intra-Protestant theological disputes. Fierce debates and indeed a struggle for existence between the Lutheran and Reformed churches typified the 1630 anniversary of the Augsburg Confession. Internecine Lutheran feuds between orthodoxy and Pietism dominated the 1730 anniversary.7 And the 1830 anniversaries were dominated by bitter disputes among pro-Agenda Evangelicals, anti-Agenda Evangelicals, and Lutherans who opposed union and Agenda.

The festivals accompanying the tercentenary of the Augsburg Confession in Germany began on Friday 25 June and lasted until Sunday 27 June. A morning and an evening service were typically held on each festival day. Sermons and speeches followed the services, while children's religious instruction was offered in the afternoons between services. Celebrants played drums, sounded horns and trumpets, rang bells, sang songs, and recited poems. Clerics, laypeople, civic authorities, and military officers made processions through cities to their churches. Dignitaries carried copies of the Bible and the Augsburg Confession through the streets and placed them together on the altars of the festival churches. Participants also celebrated by lighting candles and torches, setting off fireworks, and hanging banners. One banner in Martin Luther's hometown of Eisleben included illustrations of Luther, Phillip Melanchthon, and Friedrich Wilhelm III and featured the signature “Long live Luther, Melanchthon, and the King!” Celebrants also placed busts of Luther and Melanchthon on church altars and struck commemorative coins.8

These festivities and celebrations were part and parcel of the 1830 anniversaries of the Augsburg Confession. But the paramount concern remained Friedrich Wilhelm III's order that all Evangelical congregations must adopt the Agenda. Friedrich's decision to use the tercentenary of the Augsburg Confession to force adoption of the 1822 liturgy was significant because, according to the king, the
Agenda would serve as the foundational document of the Evangelical church just as the Augsburg Confession was the foundational document of the early Lutheran church. Its function for the Evangelical church was envisioned as similar to the Augsburg Confession and Luther’s Catechism for the Lutheran churches and the Heidelberg Catechism for the Reformed churches.

Friedrich Wilhelm III himself was deeply involved in the composition of the Agenda, and had originally introduced it to bring order, uniformity, and stability to the new Evangelical church. Indeed, the king’s biographer, Thomas Stamm-Kuhlmann, recognized the Agenda as Friedrich Wilhelm’s “hobbyhorse.” The king took a personal role in the composition of the Agenda by studying the Bible, Reformation-era liturgies, and the confessional statements of the Reformed and Lutheran faiths in depth. He carefully examined how Communion was distributed in Calvinist and Lutheran churches and personally composed prayers to be included in the liturgy. Friedrich Wilhelm based most of the Agenda on Luther’s own liturgies: the 1523 Formula missae and 1526 Deutsche Messe. Although the Agenda was an innovation, it was still intended to maintain continuity with the traditional Protestant liturgies and to overcome the historic differences between the Lutheran and Reformed worship practices.

Friedrich Wilhelm III was more concerned with consistency of ritual than he was of doctrine. Far from an invisible boundary, Friedrich’s liturgy clearly defined the Evangelical church in terms of its ritual and material culture. The Agenda was a means of encouraging a common Evangelical confessional identity based on a shared liturgy, if it did not create a new legal-ecclesiastical category. To this end, the royal Agenda included detailed instructions relating to the design of altars, the manner of ecclesiastical dress, and the proper introduction of candles, images, and crucifixes inside of Evangelical Churches. Altars would be decorated with a simple cloth, candles, a Bible, and a crucifix. The Agenda countenanced images, although only of the Last Supper and scenes from the New Testament. The liturgy would consist of prayers and a choral service led by the pastor who would face the altar rather than the congregation, and responses from an all-male choir. After leading the congregation in the
recitation of the Apostles’ Creed and in the singing of no more than three hymns, the pastor would begin his sermon, which would last no longer than one half hour to de-emphasize preaching, after which Communion would be served to the congregation. Certain detailed characteristics of the liturgy—each church’s need for a set number of crucifixes, detailed instructions on how to cross oneself, admonitions to kneel during the reception, and the revocation of the Reformed prohibition on images—even earned the king accusations of crypto-Catholicism. The Lord’s Supper, however, would become the most contested part of the Agenda.

According to the French sociologist Daniele Hervieu-Leger, liturgy is the symbolic evocation of religious memory. And the center of the Christian liturgy is the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, a rite that recalls the Last Supper and that is reenacted at every mass and service. And perhaps one of the most significant theological-liturgical differences between Reformed and Lutherans is over the presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper. Whereas most Reformed believed the Eucharist was symbolic of the body and blood of Jesus and that His spirit was present in the host, Lutherans believed in the Real Presence of Christ in the host. Moreover, in their Communion rituals Reformed typically broke and distributed a simple loaf of bread and shared it among the congregation, whereas a Lutheran pastor would distribute wafers directly to the communicants. Ritual spaces differed in Reformed and Lutherans churches as well. Reformed churches generally included simple wooden altars or tables with no ornament except for a Bible placed upon them. The altars of Lutheran churches included candles, crucifixes, and were the spaces around which the celebration took place. Among Reformed Christians, the liturgical space of the Agenda too closely approximated the Lutheran service. But for Lutherans, the question of the Real Presence became the rub.

Friedrich Wilhelm III had proposed a shared celebration of the Lord’s Supper between Reformed and Lutheran churchgoers at services to inaugurate the Prussian Union in 1817. He reiterated this proposal in 1830 as a way of a congregation signaling their adoption of the Agenda. Sidestepping the potentially thorny issue of the Real Presence, the Agenda stipulated that each communicant would be
allowed to interpret the meaning of the rite for himself. This was achieved by omitting from the Agenda an exhortation from Luther's German Mass that stated explicitly that the bread and wine is the body and blood of Christ. Deliberately non-confrontational, Friedrich believed this shared celebration of Communion could have a unifying effect on his Reformed and Lutheran subjects. He identified the shared celebration of Communion as a performative act that denoted a congregation's membership in the new Evangelical Church and adoption of the Agenda. But by demanding this ambiguous and Evangelical rite, rather than a specifically Reformed or Lutheran one, and because of the Agenda's equivocation on the matter of the Real Presence, the king alienated the orthodox members of both churches.

Whereas the Prussian Union had enjoyed popular support throughout Prussia, the Agenda did not. Lutherans saw it as unresponsive to their confessional traditions and of course, unsupportive of the doctrine of the Real Presence. Reformed Christians considered it too Lutheran, even too Roman in character. Other German Protestants who had strongly supported the Prussian Union, including Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and the Lutheran editor of the Evangelische Kirchenzeitung, E.W. Hengstenberg (1802-1869), saw it as an unwelcome intrusion by the state into religious affairs and quite possibly illegal according to the Prussian General Code, which prohibited the recognition of new religious sects outside of the already-recognized Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed Christian churches. Such pro-Union and anti-Agenda sentiments were typical of the "worship wars," and contributed to splintering within the Evangelical church. The outward manifestations of confession remained as important as they had during the first era of confessionalization and in fact engendered new confessional divisions within the nineteenth-century Protestant churches.

Friedrich identified the forthcoming services to commemorate the anniversary of the Augsburg Confession with those 1817 services that had celebrated the 300th anniversary of the Reformation and the establishment of the Prussian Union. He also explicitly associated the Agenda with the Augsburg Confession. The Agenda would serve as the cornerstone of the Evangelical church as the
Augsburg Confession had for the early German Lutheran community. As the Augsburg Confession had codified the Reformation that Luther had begun in 1517, the Agenda codified the union of Reformed and Lutheran churches introduced in 1817. To be sure, the anniversaries of the Reformation and the Augsburg Confession were traditionally confessionally-exclusive Lutheran affairs. But the king sought to refashion these anniversaries to evoke memories of intra-Protestant unity that he believed the Prussian Union embodied.

In a letter to his culture minister Karl Freiherr vom Stein zum Altenstein (1770-1840), Friedrich Wilhelm III explicitly asked for advice on how best to associate the 1830 anniversary of the Augsburg Confession to memories of the 1817 Prussian Union so that it might bring the union closer to fulfillment:

> On account of this celebration yet to be decreed, I will expect your expert opinions; note however, that it appears to me, at this joyful event further steps may be taken to tie—by which the holy work of the Union, which for so long the voices of so many sympathizers rose, and which in the most important relationship was sufficiently prepared—it to the spirit of my edict from 27 September 1817, through which it can be led closer to consummation.18

The king sought to underline the continuities of memory among the Augsburg Confession, the Agenda, Luther, and the Prussian Union in order to legitimize and strengthen the Evangelical church. Indeed, Friedrich's efforts to reform the liturgy represented an attempt to reconstruct the past and revise the memory of German Protestantism itself. But instead of realizing greater unity within the Evangelical church, the new liturgy precipitated the creation of new feuds within German Protestantism.

*Support for the Agenda and an Evangelical Confessional Identity*

Friedrich was the most notable champion of the Agenda, but it enjoyed significant popular support in the city of Breslau. Located in heavily Roman Catholic Prussian Silesia, Breslau remained a stronghold of German Lutheranism throughout the early modern period. Friedrich himself especially encouraged the adoption of the liturgy in Silesia, where a handful of orthodox Lutheran congregations
had still refused to adopt either the Prussian Union or Agenda. By celebrating the memory of the Augsburg Confession and introducing the Agenda—a compromise of Reformed and Lutheran liturgical forms—the king believed he might reconcile the Evangelical congregations with the Silesian Lutheran congregations. This led to opposition to the union and Agenda from confessional Lutherans in Breslau, but other Lutherans in the city represented some of the strongest support for the king’s liturgy. And as debates over the Agenda played out, bright theological and liturgical lines emerged between proponents of the Evangelical Church in Prussia and an “Old Lutheran” confession.

Two weeks ahead of the official celebrations of the Augsburg Confession, a group of pro-union pastors in Breslau published an open letter of advice to their city. In their letter, they recalled the harm and calamity of the separation between the Reformed and Lutheran churches. They maintained that the 1830 anniversary of the Augsburg Confession was the perfect time to reconcile differences between Reformed and Lutherans because it was at Augsburg in 1530 when the Zwinglians had first disassociated themselves from the Lutherans. As such, the 1830 anniversaries of the Augsburg Confession might serve as a site of reconciliation for the discord that had originally accompanied the original confession of faith. In addition to reconciling Reformed and Lutherans, the Breslau pastors also recognized the anniversaries as occasions when proponents and detractors of the Agenda might find common ground. But this reconciliation was inhibited by unresolved theological and liturgical questions that were rekindled at the 1830 anniversaries.

For most critics of the Evangelical church in Prussia, opposition was not to the union itself, but to the introduction of new liturgical practices and material cultures into their congregations. This was especially true in 1830, when the celebration of the Lord’s Supper again became a point of contention among Evangelicals, Reformed Christians, and confessional Lutherans. The king recognized the celebration of the rite as defined by the Agenda—the breaking and sharing of bread, which approximated the Reformed celebration and distribution more closely than the Lutheran—to be a sign of a congregation’s assent to the union. As such, the very meaning of
what it meant to be an Evangelical Christian and what it meant to be a member of the Evangelical church in Prussia was defined by how the Lord’s Supper was celebrated. But perhaps the thorniest issue—the issue of the Real Presence—was left to the conscience of each communicant.

Despite this seeming concession that was intended to diffuse disagreements over the Real Presence, orthodox Lutherans rejected the liturgy entirely. Moreover, they regarded it an affront to Lutheranism and the legitimate memory of the Augsburg Confession—which affirms the Real Presence—that an ahistorical liturgy that made no regard for their traditions at services might be introduced at the three hundredth anniversary of the confession. Indeed, even the pro-union Breslau pastors acknowledged the celebration of the Lord’s Supper and the doctrine of the Real Presence as primary points of disagreement among the Evangelical, Reformed, and Lutheran congregations. But as a model of an ecumenical celebration for the nineteenth-century present, the pastors pointed to the common celebration of the Supper and the ultimate resolution of the doctrine of the Real Presence at the 1536 Wittenberg Concord between the irenically-minded Reformed theologians Martin Bucer and Wolfgang Capito, and Luther and his associate Philipp Melanchthon. As such, the signatories of the Breslau letter acceded to the king’s wish to celebrate the festival service according to the royal Agenda and advised their parishioners to accept the union and Agenda in order to preserve the intra-Protestant unity realized by the 1817 union of Reformed and Lutherans into an Evangelical Protestant church. By doing so they hoped to honor the memories of the early Protestant Reformers.

Support for the Agenda also came from outside of the Prussian realm. In a speech to commemorate the 1830 anniversary of the Augsburg Confession in Maulbronn, the Lutheran theologian Johannes Ernst Osiander (1792-1870) waxed hagiographical about the Reformer and author of the Augsburg Confession, Philipp Melanchthon. Osiander, a descendant of long line of Lutheran theologians from Tübingen, a city not far from the Prussian-controlled Hohenzollern Province within Württemberg, cited Melanchthon’s composition of the Augsburg Confession and the Reformer’s irenical
tendencies as a model for interconfessional peace between Reformed and Lutherans in the nineteenth century. Osiander recognized Melanchthon as the founder of Evangelical Protestant theology and the Augsburg Confession as the founding document of the same. He compared Melanchthon’s work and its importance to Luther’s, noting that Melanchthon’s work as a reformer, theologian, and founder of Protestant dogmatics was as important as Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses. Osiander even claimed that Melanchthon’s participation at the Diet of Augsburg was as heroic as Luther’s stand at Worms.

According to Osiander, Melanchthon was devoted to the union of the two separated Protestant churches and a promoter of a constructive and unifying theology of peace rather than an unfruitful and divisive polemical theology. Osiander affirmed the Evangelical church at the 1830 anniversary of the Augsburg Confession by invoking Melanchthon as an example of how Reformed and Lutherans could overcome their differences and preserve the intra-Protestant unity realized by the 1817 Prussian Union. Like the 1817 Reformation anniversary, the memory and anniversary of the Augsburg Confession would have to lose its confessionally-Lutheran character and became associated with the intra-Protestant unity of the Evangelical church. Osiander’s speech also represented an appropriation and refashioning of the memory of the Augsburg Confession from a foundational Lutheran confessional document to an intra-Protestant creed. Indeed, Osiander’s Melanchthon was an irenical figure dedicated to intra-Protestant peace and represented just the kind of concord that Evangelical Protestants believed that their church represented and inherited from Melanchthon and the Augsburg Confession.

The affirmation of the Breslau pastors, Osiander, and other like-minded Lutherans contributed to the formation of an Evangelical confessional identity with the Agenda and refashioned memories of the Reformation era and the Augsburg Confession at its core. And indeed, the movement to redefine the Evangelical liturgy and material culture was intimately related to the effort to redefine the meaning of the legacy of the Augsburg Confession. This was crucial to redefining German Protestant identity from a confessionally-exclusive Lutheranism to one that was inclusive, or at least aspired to be
inclusive, of Lutherans and Reformed. But this noble attempt at a union of the Reformed and Lutheran churches in Prussia led to discord and new divisions within Prussian Protestantism—divisions that emerged from disagreements over the tangibles of faith.

Opposition to the Agenda and "Old Lutheran" Confessionalism

Opponents of the Prussian Union and royal Agenda used the 1830 anniversaries of the Augsburg Confession to rebuke the Evangelical church and its liturgy, and to underline the impossibility of the intra-Protestant unity it sought to enforce. They did so by invoking a confessional Lutheran memory of the Augsburg Confession that made no room for irenicism. In their opposition to the Agenda, these confessional Lutherans became the object of state persecution and would eventually be pushed to the margins of the Protestant community.

The most outspoken critic of the Prussian Union and Agenda was the firebrand Kiel pastor Claus Harms (1778-1855). Harms argued that the 1830 anniversary of the Augsburg Confession should celebrate and renew the memory of an orthodox Lutheranism that had been expunged during the irenical celebration of the 1817 Reformation anniversary festivals. Like most confessional Lutherans, Harms recognized the Augsburg Confession as the foundational document of the Lutheran church. He argued that the Augsburg Confession was a wall between Lutherans and Roman Catholics and a shield against other confessions, including Protestant “heretics” such as Arians, Samosatanes, Anabaptists, Pelagians, and others because the Augsburg Confession defined Lutheranism and clearly demarcated it from other faiths. That Friedrich Wilhelm III would use the anniversary of the definitive Lutheran statement of faith to consummate a union of Reformed and Lutheran churches outraged Harms and other confessional Lutherans. Moreover, religious doctrine like that encapsulated in the Augsburg Confession represented the collective memory of a church. By abolishing the liturgy and doctrine of the Lutheran church for the Evangelical, Harms feared the Prussian Union and Agenda would nullify the memories and identity of the Lutheran church itself.
As early as 1817 Harms had recognized the Lord’s Supper as a point of contention in any union of Protestant churches. Proclaiming that if the Real Presence of Christ was conceived to be in the host in 1530 according to the Augsburg Confession, then it was surely so in 1817 and 1830, Harms appealed to the orthodox memory of the Augsburg Confession and the traditional doctrines of Lutheranism to reject union and Agenda. By 1830, Harms, fiery as ever, was arguing that this anniversary should be marked by a reorientation of German Protestantism to Lutheran orthodoxy rather than a further winnowing of Lutheran confessional consciousness—a winnowing that he believed would only intensify if Friedrich’s plans to compel adoption of the Agenda were realized. Thus Harms sought to protect the confessionally-Lutheran character of the anniversary, the orthodoxy that he believed it commemorated, and the ritual and liturgy that had been a part of its tradition.

Turning the confessional history of Prussia on its head, Harms even invoked memories of the 1731 Salzburg Transaction, when the Roman Catholic archbishop and ruler expelled all of its Protestants on 31 October. Recalling the fidelity and courage of the city’s Protestants who sacrificed everything to retain their faith, Harms sought to strengthen the sense of contemporary Lutheran confessional identity and solidarity. Invoking memories of Protestant persecution, he called on Lutherans to remain constant in their faith despite the persistent threat of confessional dilution—this threat not from a Roman Catholic archbishop but a Protestant monarch.

In addition to Harms’ individual criticism, widespread opposition to union and Agenda persisted longest in the Lutheran stronghold of Silesia. Indeed, popular resistance to the union and Agenda was so fierce in Silesia that troops were necessary to restore public order. And Breslau was the center of Silesian orthodox Lutheran opposition, where two-thirds of the pastors of that city still had not adopted the Agenda. In a series of appeals to the king, the Old Lutheran community noted the dwindling attendance at services in the Breslau St. Elizabeth’s Church since the Prussian Union was introduced in 1817. They feared the loss of their congregations, and the dilution of Lutheran confessional identity as a result of the union. They asked the king not to exacerbate these problems by demanding
the congregations conform to a new Agenda that would further alienate confessional Lutherans from the Evangelical church. Finally, the Breslau Lutherans began referring to themselves as “The Congregation of the Augsburg Confession.” This not only underscored their fidelity to orthodox Lutheranism and its symbolic books, but also defied a specific order by the king that all ecclesiastical correspondence replace the titles “Lutheran” and “Reformed” with “Evangelical” to refer to the Prussian church.36

The orthodox Lutheran theologian Johann Gottfried Scheibel (1783-1843) was the most prominent opponent of the Agenda in Breslau. In works published on the occasion of the three-hundredth anniversary of Breslau’s adoption of the Reformation (1824), Scheibel argued that debates surrounding the introduction and enforcement of the Prussian Union and Agenda recalled the conflict between Zwingli and Luther over the Lord’s Supper at the 1529 Marburg Colloquy. The 1817 union had reproduced the confessional strife between Reformed and Lutheran clergy that the 1529 colloquy had revealed.37 Paradoxically, the current union of Reformed and Lutheran Christians represented a fundamental confessional separation on account of the discord it had engendered. If debates over the nature of the Evangelical church could lead to such confessional discord, how could it be characterized as a union?

Scheibel recognized the 1830 anniversary of the Augsburg Confession and the introduction of the Agenda as the newest attempt at a compulsory union between the Reformed and Lutheran churches. He feared that the Agenda was the final, inevitable step toward the consummation of the Prussian Union, arguing that it would move the church too far away from the early Lutheran liturgy and too closely approximated the Reformed service.38 Indeed, Scheibel noted that since the Marburg Colloquy of 1529, Reformed theologians had sought to dissolve the Lutheran church and lead it into error in the name of “brotherly union.”39 Scheibel even called the authors of the 1563 Heidelberg Catechism, the founding confessional document of the Zwinglian congregations that would become the German Reformed Church, “faithless, disloyal, and rebellious” Lutherans.40 And he saw the Prussian Union and royal Agenda as simply the most recent instances of a continuing Reformed plan to convert Lutherans
surreptitiously. Scheible’s indictment of the Agenda, and the union it consummated, was explicit. The intention of the Prussian Royal Agenda was to make Lutherans into Reformed Christians:

Is it now then not apparent and above all else not a sublime contradiction that the main tendency of this Agenda is to introduce a union—and indeed, what every union attempt aims—to make the Lutherans Reformed?41

Scheibel argued that the Union and Agenda destroyed the Lutheran church from the inside. He lamented that Reformed theologians who had been planning to convert Lutherans to the Reformed church since Marburg had found recent developments especially appealing.42 For his bitter criticism of the Evangelical church, Scheibel was dismissed from his clerical and academic positions in 1832. He then relocated to Dresden. In 1836 the Dresden authorities banished him from the city for his biting sermons against the Union and Reformed churches. Scheibel was formally exiled from Saxony the following year. He moved to Nuremberg in 1839 and would befriend figures associated with the mid-century revival of Lutheranism and the emergence of high-church Lutheranism.43

Effects of the ‘Worship Wars’: Confessional Strife in the 1830s and Beyond

Scheibel’s fate—expulsion from the Prussian realm—was shared by other Old Lutherans who resisted the Prussian Union and the introduction of the Agenda. But instead of closing the door on confessional strife, the expulsion of Scheibel and the Old Lutherans presaged the bitter confessional conflicts of the 1830s. The Old Lutherans were a group of Prussian Lutheran congregations that had consistently refused to join the Evangelical church or adopt its 1822 liturgy. Friedrich Wilhelm III had marginalized this group, especially in eastern Prussia and Silesia, since 1817 because they had refused to join the Prussian Union.

After 1830, when the king used the tercentenary of the Augsburg Confession to compel holdout congregations to adopt the 1822 liturgy, Old Lutheran clergy and laity who dissented were routinely
defrocked and arrested. Friedrich's culture minister Karl von Altenstein even ordered the army into some of the most recalcitrant Old Lutheran parishes to enforce Prussian religious policies. But in an attempt to quell further opposition, the king offered a compromise. A February 1834 order stipulated that the Old Lutheran congregations would no longer be required to assent to the Prussian Union, but they were still required to conduct services according to the Agenda. Naturally, this order caused confusion, protest, and additional discontentment among the Old Lutheran congregations, which had already begun to emigrate from Prussia. And indeed, on 2 September 1837 Friedrich Wilhelm III finally permitted the Old Lutherans to legally emigrate from Prussia. Thousands left for the United States and Australia, with one of the émigré groups landing in America in 1839 and later establishing the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. In Prussia, intra-Protestant relations between orthodox and Evangelical Protestants, remained tense.

The Agenda and its compulsory introduction created new divides within German Protestantism. But the Agendenstreit also colored Friedrich Wilhelm III's handling of other religious affairs within the Prussian Kingdom. One notable affair that increased confessional tensions between Roman Catholics and Protestants and underscored how confessionally-mixed populations related to each other and to the Prussian state were the so-called Cologne Troubles of 1837. These were massive Catholic demonstrations against the Prussian government's 1837 arrest of Archbishop Clemens August von Droste-Vischering (1773-1845). Agreements in 1825 and 1834 between the Roman Catholic Church and Prussian state stipulated that sons of confessionally-mixed marriages would be raised in the faith of the father and daughters in the faith of the mother. Like the Prussian Union and the Agenda, these agreements were originally intended to accommodate the growing religious heterogeneity of the Prussian lands. But Archbishop Droste-Vischering, invested in 1836, refused to honor these agreements because they contradicted the Catholic teaching that children of mixed-marriages must all be raised as Roman Catholics. The archbishop also forbade his priests from performing mixed marriages unless the parents guaranteed that all of the children would be raised Roman Catholic.
His ecclesiastical and political authority already challenged by the outspoken opposition to the union and Agenda, Friedrich Wilhelm took a heavy hand with Rhenish Catholics to avoid the appearance of weakness. For refusing to uphold the 1825 and 1834 agreements, the king had Droste-Vischering arrested. The arrest provoked a raucous Roman Catholic reaction and heightened confessional tensions between Catholics and Protestants in Rhenish Prussia. But perhaps more notably, the Cologne Troubles contributed to a reconfessionalization of German Catholicism and point to the origins of German Roman Catholic Ultramontanism and the roots of political Catholicism.45

In response to Ultramontanism and political Catholicism, Protestants established associations (Verein) for the protection and promotion of Protestant interests, especially in heavily Roman German states.46 The establishment of these associations not only contributed to the cultivation of a new German Protestant confessional consciousness and identity, but also to conflict with German Catholics. And the existence of extra-ecclesiastical Protestant forums of sociability translated into party politics and contributed to the development of German Cultural Protestantism and its increasing conflation of Protestantism with German nationalism.47

The apotheosis of this increasing confessional tension, of course, was the anti-Catholic Kulturkampf, whose policies were intended to address the confessional divide in a newly-unified Germany by forcing the integration of Roman Catholics into normative (read: Protestant) German society and culture through the abrogation of German Catholic civil rights, the seizure of church property, and the persecution of Catholic religious orders. To be sure, Germany's long-standing confessional divide between Roman Catholics and Protestants had its roots in the sixteenth century. And the vicissitudes of German history influenced how that divide was manifested and experienced by individual German Catholics and Protestants. But during the “second confessional age” of the nineteenth century, this divide was amplified and exacerbated as a result of internecine disputes over liturgy, ritual, memory, and material culture of Protestantism that were so fiercely debated at the 1830 anniversaries of the Augsburg Confession.
NOTES


8. The inclusion of Melanchthon alongside Luther in this act of commemoration represented something of a novelty in itself. During the sixteenth century Melanchthon, the original author of the Augsburg Confession and an irenical Lutheran, had been rejected by a group known as the Gnesio-Lutherans, so called because of their claim to represent Lutheran orthodoxy. For the use and abuse of memories of Luther, Melanchthon, and other Protestant Reformers during the early modern era see Robert Kolb, "Luther’s Function in an Age of Confessionalization" in Donald K. McKim, ed. The Cambridge Companion to Luther (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).


10. Stamm-Kuhlmann, König, 481.


37. Nicholas Hope, German and Scandinavian Protestantism: 1700 to 1918 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 446.

38. Scheibel, Actenmässige Geschichte Vol. 1, 83 and 89.


43. Hope, German and Scandinavian Protestantism, 447.


