

BOOK REVIEW

Henry A. Jeffries and Richard Rex, eds. *Reformations Compared: Religious Transformations across Early Modern Europe*

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The coherence and overall thrust of the chapters in this volume demonstrate both the powerful central message of the Reformation as well as its varied impact across different geographies and cultures. The editors, Henry A. Jeffries and Richard Rex, have assembled an international team of expert scholars whose twelve substantive chapters assess the course and consequences of the Reformation in lands as diverse as they are similar. Each author focuses on two or more areas (sometimes quite near, sometimes farther apart) to offer an internal comparative framework for each chapter, but the overall comparisons across the chapters drive home the impression of religious and political heterogeneity with which we have become familiar over the past generation. Indeed, scholars now generally recognize that there was no single Reformation, that all was contingent on time and space, and that the older national and insular narratives of “the English Reformation,” for example, are no longer tenable. The editors’ introduction lays out the general aims of the volume and offers some good food for thought regarding the early decades of the sixteenth century: “The very fact that the [Catholic] church was shattered so dramatically and so profoundly by a maelstrom triggered by a young professor based in a tiny university that had been founded hardly a decade earlier in an obscure little town shows that late medieval Catholicism was far more vulnerable to challenge than anyone could have imagined” (5). In the subsequent chapters, readers are treated with geographically specific cases of the Protestant Reformation, historiographical synopses, and suggestions for further reading; readers looking for treatments of the Catholic or Counter-Reformation will find much of value here but may also find themselves looking elsewhere.

Christoph Volkmar’s chapter grounds the discussion in Saxony with a comparison of Ernestine/Electoral and Albertine/Ducal lands. Arguing against historical determinism and for the unexpected turns of the Reformation, this chapter “represents Europe’s dilemma in a nutshell” (20). Amy Nelson Burnett then shows how the Swiss Confederation “poses in miniature the question” of the whole volume because of the Confederation’s political organization and complexity (42). Particularly welcome in her discussion is the variety of Protestant opinion across the cantons because, after all, Basel was not the same as Bern or Zürich. Moving slightly east, Howard Louthan examines the cases of Austria and Bohemia, illustrating “the limitations of [an] approach where national blinders have frequently screened out the networks and connections that existed” (62). The same applies to linguistic limitations. Heading further east, Béla Vilmos Mihalik considers the multiconfessional variety in Hungary and Transylvania, where varieties of Protestantism,

Catholicism, and Orthodox Christianity vied with but could find coexistence among the Ottomans because of a lack in an overarching political authority to make religion uniform. Liudmyla Sharipova's chapter, rightfully deemed "pioneering" by the editors (4), details the limits of toleration for Orthodox Christians outside Muscovy and Ottoman rule. Rather, in places like Poland–Lithuania, Carpathia, Ruthenia, and Transylvania, the Orthodox experienced an unequal sense of toleration and were under pressure to ally with Rome or be converted by Protestants.

For a discussion of the northern kingdoms of Denmark and Sweden, Göran Malmstedt narrates the character and pace of Lutheran reform, noting the different social and urban structures that enabled Lutheranism to take hold much more quickly and thoroughly in Danish lands than in Swedish. Maciej Ptaszyński keeps us in the north along the southern Baltic coast, where the Hanseatic League maintained connections with Lutheran Germany, and where a network of evangelical preachers in migration helped to spread Luther's message. Christine Kooi's chapter on the Low Countries offers internal comparisons of what became the Catholic south (now Belgium) and Protestant north (the Netherlands), but she also points out the broadly European influences and effects. In a chapter that extends into the seventeenth century, Kooi also emphasizes the differences in how the authorities dealt with dissent in the south and north, where the political goal for the Dutch Republic was "to manage religious pluralism" (183). Richard Rex's chapter considers England and France, two countries not usually compared because they contrast markedly in many ways. Sometimes discounting the strength and significance of religious dissidents and minorities (especially the Protestant underground and their sympathizers during the reign of Mary), Rex sees an "English tradition of obedience" and "the religion of monarchy" holding sway in Tudor England (209). This revisionist view of the power of the monarch is strongly critiqued by Henry A. Jeffries in the chapter immediately following, which offers a rounded discussion of why the Reformation took hold (or did not) so differently across Ireland, Scotland, and England. Jeffries's discussion of the Irish context is a particularly useful distillation of a large body of work.

Taking the reader south to the Iberian peninsula, Michel Boeglin offers a historiographically informed discussion of how networks of foreign Protestants as well as indigenous reformers challenged Catholicism and forged what became the "Black Legend" (established by the authors of a book published in Heidelberg in 1567). Given the savvy and clear discussion of complex issues and scholarship in this chapter, one is slightly surprised not to see reference to Frances Luttikhuisen's book on the topic published in 2017. The first chapter started in Saxony, but the final ends the story in Italy. Simone Maghenzani shows how connections with transalpine reformers combined with Erasmianism and other impulses for reform within Italy, and how these developments can be understood as two sides of the same coin: the Reformation in Italy; the Italian Reformation. We find, on the Italian peninsula, "not a Reformation that never broke out, but a Reformation that never broke through" (268).

These chapters can be read with great profit individually because they offer concise discussions of their scholarly terrains, boil down complex issues particular to each locale, and offer thought-provoking insights on where research can go next. They also, though, come together to illuminate the wonderful diversity of the Reformation(s) as a whole. From Eastern to Western Europe, from the Mediterranean to the Baltic, these chapters will be valuable to scholars of early modern Europe no matter their specialty. In sum, this book is excellent. Two curious omissions, however, left this reader wondering. The lack of an epilogue is probably a missed opportunity to tie everything together and leave a good taste in the reader's mouth. More grievous, especially given the volume's geographic breadth, is the lack of any maps: no overall map of Europe at the front; no maps of the regions in each chapter. Accordingly, this reader needed to look elsewhere to remind himself where, exactly, Sighișoara (Romania) and Košice (Slovakia) are.