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Terpstra, Nicholas. Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World: An Alternative History of the Reformation

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To an extent, this is a deliberate choice: the editors have elected to avoid notes that might spoil or intrude upon the experience of encountering Spenser for the first time. While I find this limiting, readers irritated by over-annotation will likely consider this attitude refreshing. Taken altogether, the Norton Critical Edition of *Edmund Spenser's Poetry* should be warmly received both by general readers and by instructors looking to introduce students to the full range of Spenser's accomplishment.

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Terpstra, Nicholas.

Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World: An Alternative History of the Reformation.

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. Pp. 348 + 42 ill, 2 maps. ISBN 978-1-107-65241-5 (paperback) \$34.99.

In recent decades the confessionalist paradigm, especially indebted to German scholars such as Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling and often associated with work on the Reformation, has shifted to encompass other considerations. Of late, historians have used the idea of confessionalism to reconsider state building in the early modern period, as well as the very idea of the Counter-Reformation and social discipline. It has been used and applied by scholars working in Catholic and Jewish history as a common model for the early modern period. Nicholas Terpstra's book takes up the question of the relationship between confessionalism in the early modern period and the displacement of people which it produced. As such, he has offered a relevant and groundbreaking contribution to the field.

Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World: An Alternative History of the Reformation is true to its title. Terpstra offers an ample portrait of the forced migrations that took place in the early modern period across the board. Histories of diasporas in the period are certainly not lacking. The Catholic, Huguenot, Mennonite, Quaker, Anabaptist, Jewish, *converso*, and Muslim diasporas have all been given lucid and scholarly attention. What Terpstra offers is an impressive synthesis of previous scholarship and a reflection on the

manifold consequences of the forced migrations of people during the early modern period. He takes into account a myriad of displacements to provide the reader with a succinct overview of the phenomenon and its implications for how these religious groups understood their beliefs and themselves.

The book's framework is linked to the idea of confessionalism. In the period under consideration, people in Europe were uprooted for what were deemed to be threats to the purity of the *Corpus Christianum*; those who did not adhere to accepted dogma were cast aside and obliged to leave. Terpstra shows how it played out in both Catholic and Protestant worlds. The various means by which threats to purity were contained and dealt with is at the heart of chapter 1. Once he establishes the basis for the concern for purity, the author describes the many ways it is applied in the purification of the body through an increased rigour which he locates at the end of the Middle Ages and early modern period, as evinced in the rise of observant religious orders and various means of containing and enclosing individuals and groups who are deemed to be at the margins of religion and society (chapter 2). Chapter 3 provides readers with case studies of how people's lives and the places they left and settled in were transformed by their uprooting. Displacement changed and gave a new impetus to ideas and thought. The chapter provides a cross-section of people and places that stretch along the confines of faiths and geographical locations from east to west. The disciplining of mind and body in the early modern period is likewise dealt with in chapter 4 as the author tackles the way in which different interpretations of religious concepts such as presence, authority, and the role of scripture obliged people to leave their places of origin to settle elsewhere. In chapter 5, Terpstra describes, in painstaking detail, how religious refugees constituted new worlds, transforming space where they settled, bringing with them learning, artistic and cultural production, and collective sensibilities—and in turn being imbued with elements of the new locales in which they settled. At the same time he describes the many instruments used to maintain the faithful, especially converts, in the constrictions of their confessions, through choices of names, martyrologies and exile narratives, all calculated to instill a sense of belonging and allegiance. In chapter 6, final considerations of a more general nature on persecution and the will to impose collective purity bring us to the twentieth century where the ideas of the religious purity of the *Corpus Christianum* have been supplanted by the imposition of the civilizing process, racial purity, and nationalism.

The scope of the book, across cultures, religions, and civilizations, is staggering; the author is conversant with a vast number of religious traditions, even the most obscure. The result is an impressive fresco of the common experience of millions of men and women throughout the early modern period, obliged to move to new places on account of their beliefs, motivated by ideals of purity. In Terpstra's words, "The spread of very particular notions of purity, contagion, and purgation from the late medieval period led to expulsions of tens and hundreds of thousands across the continent and turned the religious refugee into a mass phenomenon. In this particular historical context, the early modern Other was not only different, but distinctly dangerous and threatening."

Terpstra's book is sure to inspire debate and attention. He offers a radically new reading and chronology of the idea of the Reformation itself. "Dating Europe's Reformation to a German monk's theological preoccupations was a North European conceit. To date it instead to a first act when European Christian culture sought to protect its religious purity by expelling and/or enclosing the Other, thereby triggering harsh violence and extraordinary diasporic movements, gives a more acute view of the roots of some modern global realities." It has the merit of seeing confessionalism in the period as a general trend and extending it beyond the Protestant and Catholic divide; and seeing it at work in a variety of contexts. Terpstra very convincingly puts into evidence the many factors involved in the displacement of people and the implications these migrations had for members of the faith communities uprooted; for the way people would understand themselves and the others they came in contact with. Well researched, engaging, and based on the most recent bibliography, the book is highly readable and will be of interest for people working in diaspora studies, religious studies, and early modern history. It will certainly be hailed as a thought-provoking contribution to the study of a period and a phenomenon that is of constant interest, bringing together as it does the question of the will to impose social discipline and exclusion, and the consequent mobility of people.

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