Carlos M. N. Eire

Reformations: The Early Modern World, 1450–1650. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016. Pp. xviii + 893. Hb, \$40.

Scholars are preparing for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation much like Christians in 1517 were anticipating the Second Coming of Christ. Just as the “world would crackle in all places and come to an end,” as Luther wrote in his Preface to the *Book of Daniel*, historians are expecting a major reckoning of the status of their field. For some years now, the group Refo500 in Europe has been actively organizing conferences and promoting internet scholarly exchanges. In the field of publishing, there might well be an explosion of print, of which *Reformations* is the first major work of scholarship. Written by Carlos Eire, Professor of History and Religious Studies at Yale, who modestly describes his book as “a narrative for beginners and non-specialists [...] an introduction and a survey,” *Reformations* is rather more like a life’s work of research and teaching, a deep work of erudition. According to Eire, three features characterize this narrative of the Reformations between 1450 and 1650: “the conviction that religion is a real factor in history, and ideas do play a significant role in human events; the interrelatedness of multiple reformations that cannot be understood in isolation; and “the conviction that we cannot begin to comprehend who we are now as Westerners without first understanding the changes wrought by the Reformations of the early modern era” (xvii). Three adjectives also come to the mind of this reviewer in describing this hefty book: comprehensive, balanced, and judicious. The comprehensiveness is apparent in the chronology (1450–1650) and the geographical coverage, which extends to Catholic missions in Asia and the Americas. All the major reformers and many minor figures, all the important events, and nearly all the commonplaces in theology and doctrine are covered. There are very few omissions, which I shall address later. The balance is represented by the structure of the book, which is divided into four parts and twenty-six chapters. The six chapters of Part One, “On the Edge” survey the decades from c. 1450 to 1510, and cover late medieval Christendom, reform and dissent, Italian and Christian humanism, and forerunners of the Catholic Reformation. Three of the seven chapters of Part Two, “Protestants,” are devoted to Luther, with others narrating the Swiss Reformation, the Radical Reformation, Calvin, and the Reformation in the British Isles. At this point in most Reformation surveys, we would have reached the penultimate or even the final destination, whereas here, the reader is only half way in Eire’s *Reformations*. He gives equal voice and coverage to Catholics in Part Three, where the six chapters present Catholic reforms, the Council of Trent, the new

religious orders, and missions in the Americas and Asia. Part Four, "Consequences" picks up the narrative to unpack the events after the 1530s. Six of the seven chapters cover an enormous amount of territory: the religious wars, the consolidation of doctrinal orthodoxy, the drawing of confessional boundaries, the rise of demonology and witch-hunts, and the rise of toleration and religious skepticism. In a final chapter, Eire offers his own reflection on the meaning of the Reformations for us in a lively dialogue with Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, and Karl Holl. For readers of *JJS*, it should be noted that Eire pays close attention to the foundation of the Society and its history, addressing the missions, anti-Jesuitism, ministry, and politics. Aside from Ignatius, Xavier, and Canisius, Eire also cites Pedro de Ribadeneyra, Edmund Campion, Juan Eusebio Nieremberg, and Luis de Molina. The judiciousness of this narrative comes across immediately in Eire's narrative style. Every chapter begins with an anecdote or a contemporary quotation that illustrates the larger points elaborated on in the chapter. It is easy to miss the learning and pedagogy in *Reformations* because of the book's lively style. Eire offers the reader many quotations from the contemporary sources; there are succinct and precise summaries of scholarly debates and theories, just enough to introduce students to the *status quaestionis* and not to bore the general reader; and there are plenty of images, maps, and neat schemes to help the reader follow the complex historical developments.

Reformations offers an excellent introduction on the subject to the general reader; it summarizes the best scholarship in the field for graduate students and advanced undergraduates. Written dispassionately, this is perhaps the most balanced and judicious synthesis of the history of the Reformation. Even in a good and comprehensive book, there are desiderata. One of the major blind spots in this otherwise comprehensive narrative is the relative neglect of Judaism and Jews. While Eire mentions the status of *conversos* in Spain and the importance of Hebrew learning for biblical humanism, he does not address Luther's anti-Jewish tirades, nor does he analyze the importance of anti-Semitism as an issue in the polemic between Protestants and Jews. Another area that is neglected is the impact of the Reformations in Latin Christendom on Greek and Russian Orthodoxy. And finally, while the seventeenth century was mostly a time of Catholic missions, the Dutch Reformed missions to Indonesia and Taiwan represented counterweights to the Catholic dominance and made important contributions in translating Christian texts into Malay and other Austronesian languages spoken by the native peoples of Taiwan.

These lacunae notwithstanding, *Reformations* is a major milestone in the field of Reformation Studies that would inspire discussion and debates. There is no better tribute to any work of scholarship.

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