Pedro de Ribadeneyra

Pedro de Ribadeneyra's Ecclesiastical History of the Schism of the Kingdom of England: A Spanish Jesuit's History of the English Reformation. Introduction, Translation, and Commentary by Spencer J. Weinreich. Jesuit Studies, volume 8. Leiden: Brill. Pp. xxvi + 830. Hb, \$253.

For such a well-trodden subject as sixteenth-century English religious history, it is surprising that so little work has been devoted to understanding outside perceptions of its momentous unfolding. This persistent Anglocentrism may have been modified by recent studies on Protestant and Catholic English exiles abroad, or of the mutual interactions between continental and English institutions, theologies or martyrological writings. Meanwhile, the “archipelagic turn” has compelled scholars to apply religious developments to the larger British-world framework, even if they ignore the rich evidence, for example, of the Gaelic world and its own (Irish-language) perceptions of the religious earthquake across the sea. The English, however, were extraordinarily conscious of (and self-conscious about) those outside views, and often wrote in response to them. To therefore overlook non-English perspectives is to tell a partial story at best, which is why Spencer Weinreich's translation and edition of Pedro de Ribadeneyra's *Historia eclesiástica del scisma del reyno de Inglaterra* is to be enthusiastically welcomed, and not only by scholars of England.

In 1558, Ribadeneyra, a first-generation Jesuit and protégé of Ignatius of Loyola, spent a few miserable months in England, as the earliest Jesuit to enter the country with the express purpose of bringing the Society there. Unfortunately, Mary I and Reginald Pole died soon after he landed, leaving him stranded amongst exultant “heretics” while the accession of a new Protestant queen signaled the death, for now, of the Jesuits' English dream. Though he eventually returned to Rome and continued to be active throughout the next two decades, his retirement to Spain in 1574 allowed him to continue his literary and polemical pursuits, not least when he embarked on a translation of the Catholic Nicholas Sanders's ecclesiastical history of the English Reformation entitled *De origine ac progressu schismatis Anglicani libri tres* (Rome: Typis Bartholomaei Bonfadini, 1586). Not coincidentally, Ribadeneyra completed his project in 1587, the year before the Armada fiasco, when Spanish hopes were high but needed bolstering yet.

The translation that resulted was therefore not quite an outsider's view of the English Reformation. But as Weinreich points out in his illuminating introduction, Ribadeneyra's editorial interventions and commentary, as well as his substantial narrative extensions, also made the work distinctly his own.

One of the fascinating aspects about the *Historia* is that it is a textual palimpsest carrying the authorial traces not only of Sanders but of two Ribadeneyras: the Ribadeneyra who translated and embellished Sanders on the eve of war, and the Ribadeneyra who returned to the book after that war's crushing and disillusioning defeat. Intentions for the work also shifted: if Sanders's work, in Christopher Highley's words, was "designed as a counterweight to Protestant histories" of the English reformation (21), Ribadeneyra proceeded to Hispanicize it by translating Sanders's Latin into Spanish, thus purposely making it more accessible to a wider public. Not least, as Weinreich also points out, Ribadeneyra's insertions and continuation of the narrative in subsequent parts also reflect a wholly more providentialist and martyrological orientation wrapped in an increasingly contentious language, all of which reflected more closely the quickly evolving story of Catholicism in the late 1580s and beyond. Weinreich argues that Ribadeneyra was above all motivated by "personal and emotional" impulses in composing these later sections and chapters (47), driven as he was by Senecan influences and the need to create a consoling explanatory framework; both impulses continued to drive the book forward, imprinting it even more with the Spanish Jesuit's stamp.

For all this, scholars, with some notable exceptions, have unfairly dismissed or minimized the *Historia*, which is surprising, given the resurgent interest in Catholicism and the Society of Jesus, in book history, and in martyrdom—to name but three examples. Indeed, for all the attention paid to the study of martyrologies in the past twenty years, few English-language works pay attention to the *Historia* at all (nor to Sanders, for that matter). Yet Books Two and Three contain full-on martyrologies, offering portraits of little-known Catholics executed under Elizabeth as well as a lengthy, if not exactly original, depiction of Edmund Campion's trial and death (Robert Southwell, on the other hand, missed inclusion by dying one year after the book ended). Weinreich points to a number of other exciting approaches that could come out of the *Historia*, as he examines the text through the prism of early modern history writing, translation, source material, gender, perceptions of the global order (notably the situation in Japan), and the manner in which each are perceived through a distinctly Jesuit register. Interesting to this reviewer as well is the work that could be done on the text's presentation of Catherine of Aragon ("Doña Catherine") or Mary I ("Doña Mary"), particularly in light of the sympathetic revisionist portrayals made recently by Eamon Duffy in *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), for example. Further work could also be conducted on the popular reception of the book. On the one hand, Weinreich mentions the *Historia*'s subsequent editions (though not the possible significance of the years—one of which was 1945—

in which those later editions were published); Pedro Calderón's play entitled *La cisma de Inglaterra* (1627) was also based on the *Historia*, and is discussed at length. But an excellent study could also be undertaken on the popular afterlife and circulation of the *Historia* across abridged editions or in other cultures (including, perhaps surreptitiously, in England itself), just as its influence on Dutch Jesuits, and Heribert Rosweyde particularly, could also be fruitfully pursued.

Finally, while the *Historia* has been beautifully translated by Weinreich and presented elegantly by Brill—with five appendices as well as highlighted text reflecting Ribadeneyra's later additions—the *Historia* cries out for a digital platform, where readers may compare linked additions, keywords, editions and translations from the author's time and beyond. Until that happens (or not), Ribadeneyra could do no better than to be Englished by Weinreich, in a book that promises to transform our understanding of early modern religious history through one of its most learned, prodigious, and impassioned voices.

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