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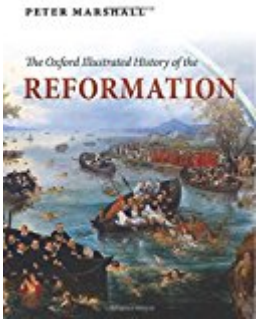
Peter Marshall, ed.. *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Reformation.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. 320 pp. $39.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-959548-8.



Reviewed by Richard Rawls

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Commissioned by Nathan N. Orgill

As the quincentenary of Luther's posting of his Ninety-Five Theses approaches, one can expect the publication of numerous books reassessing the Reformation's legacy. With the release of this edited work, Peter Marshall and Oxford University Press have already teamed together to make a valuable contribution to the academic discussion. Marshall assembled a group of distinguished scholars to scrutinize various movements within the Reformation, including: Lyndal Roper, University of Oxford (Martin Luther); Carlos Eire, Yale University (Calvinism and the Reform Movement); Brad S. Gregory, University of Notre Dame (Radical Reformation); Simon Ditchfield, University of York (Catholic Reformation); and Peter Marshall (Britain's Reformations). An introductory chapter on late medieval Christianity, by Bruce Gordon, of Yale University, and a concluding chapter by Alexandra Walsham, University of Cambridge, provide excellent context and reflection.

The Reformation is sufficiently complex and intertwined with social, intellectual, artistic, and religious movements that any team of authors writes with proverbial fear and trembling when covering the entire period in approximately three hundred pages. This book's contributors understood that fact. Recognizing the difficulties and the impossibility of satisfying a mass audience, Marshall concludes in the book's preface, "if readers come away provoked by questions to which they are still seeking parts of the answer, and are inspired to delve deeper into some of the issues raised, then the authors of this book … will assuredly feel justified in their endeavours" (p. x). By this criterion, the authors can consider the book an incredible success.

The book focuses not on the history of doctrine, social or political movements, economic history, intellectual developments, or any one "tidy" theme. Instead, the approach remains both broad and yet traditional in the sense that the authors "believe that the actual content of ideas mattered, and had the power to motivate individuals to act in ways that were not always in their own material best interests" (p. vi). With that said, the topical coverage remains balanced amongst the various

and competing interests of modern historians and theologians.

Bruce Gordon's opening chapter, "Late Medieval Christianity," suggests a number of helpful considerations: the Reformation's "true character" cannot be located in a simple tale of corruption of the medieval church (p. 1); "Late medieval Latin Christianity possessed not one single theology," but rather a number of beliefs (p. 13); in an age with low literacy rates, symbols of faith were ubiquitous (p. 25); and the laity's possession of the Bible produced tensions that depended upon the political and social context. The chapter provides both familiar ways of approaching the Reformation and some new ways to consider it. For example, Gordon's comment on the Waldensians as representative of the "fluidity of the divide between orthodoxy and heresy" is a reminder that neat and clear divides may be more a reflection of our contemporary imposition of order upon the past than of the actual experience of those living then and there (p. 35).

Lyndal Roper's chapter on Luther contains genuine nuggets of wisdom. The reference to the Catholic biographer and anti-Lutheran, Johann Cochlaeus, suggests that this battle of ideas, though carried on in print, nonetheless developed over time. Since Luther was an adroit polemicist, the Catholic Church always trailed behind him. As Roper observes, "Cochlaeus noticed, part of what made Luther such a powerful antagonist was that while you were fighting one heresy, Luther had already moved on to a worse one" (p. 48). Roper cautions, however, that Luther's theology was not completely worked out from the Ninety-Five Theses onward. Luther was still drawing out the implications of his thought throughout the 1520s.

Carlos Eire's chapter on the Calvinism and the reformed tradition centers largely but not exclusively around Geneva and the person of Calvin. The chapter's description of Calvin's Geneva, the siege mentality that came to be felt in the city, and the need to constantly strive for moral perfection in both the ruled and the rulers was especially helpful. Equally poignant was Eire's intimation that straining for perfection then, as now, leads to unfortunate outcomes. Geneva acquired a "reputation for coldness, intolerance, and cruelty" that became displayed in the burning of Michael Servetus (p. 95). Eire observes, "Catholics showcased the incident as proof positive of Calvin's cruelty, megalomania, and hypocrisy.... Lutherans expressed dismay, over both Servetus and Calvin" (p. 96). Eire's chapter, given page constraints imposed on each author, succinctly but successfully details the spread of Calvinist ideas throughout Belgium, the Netherlands, England, German, and briefly through Poland and Lithuania.

Brad Gregory's chapter on the "Radical Reformation" faces the difficulty of defining exactly *what* or *who* constituted this stream of Protestantism. While Gregory could have summarized this more quickly, he should nonetheless be commended for taking a broadly inclusive approach. That made his task harder, but it also enabled him to draw disparate religious reform movements into an intelligible unit. Especially helpful was Gregory's discussion of the early radical rejection of infant baptism as "a meaningless ritual practiced on babies who by definition could not have the faith that was the prerequisite for becoming a Christian" (p. 121). A criticism of this excellent coverage is that one wishes Gregory had expanded his discussion. What put many "radicals" at odds with both other reformation movements and Catholics was the rejection by many of the notion, articulated since Augustine, of the doctrine of original sin. If infants were not sinners simply because they inherited it from Adam, then the need for infant baptism disappeared. Adult baptism was therefore not just a push towards "believer's baptism" but also for many a rejection of an entire medieval ontological view of the human person. Another strength of this chapter was its connection of peasants, and peasant wars, with the radical egalitarianism of these reformers. Entire books have been composed on the topic, but Gre-

gory describes much about it with an economy of words.

Simon Ditchfield's chapter on the Catholic Reformation is the most, if the term can be pardoned, "unorthodox" of all the chapters. Starting neither with reforming popes nor with the Council of Trent, Ditchfield commences with the Portuguese port in India, Goa. He then proceeds with a breathtaking survey of Catholicism in non-European parts of the world ***and*** the indigenization of Christianity. Given the underlying theme of the book as an "illustrated history," the imagery for Ditchfield's chapter delivers. One encounters images of the Virgin Mary quite in keeping with Catholic iconography but also with fidelity to the artistic depictions and illustrations of those who produced them. At first, this is a bit jarring, but it begins to make sense. Ditchfield argues that the vision of Roman Catholicism as embracing and being embraced by the known continents did not happen from 1500 to 1700 CE (p. 163). However, he notes a different kind of Catholic "victory" in that the laity became far more engaged with orthodox devotional practice and doctrine. The period of the Catholic Reformation thus "laid the foundations for the eventual realization of a global Roman Catholicism in the twentieth century" (p. 163). In due course Ditchfield surveys the Council of Trent, but he joins a chorus of those who suggest that the Council's significance is not as we conceptualize it. He considers its importance to be twofold in that "Trent paved the way for the eventual triumph of a ***Roman*** Catholicism … and the Council [indirectly] made bishops the key building blocks of the church"—both in the New and Old worlds (p. 171).

Peter Marshall's "Britain's Reformations" captures well both the complexities of the reforms in Britain and their violence. Marshall rebuts the top-down conceptions of British reform that suggest a relatively benign unfolding: "The common idea that the Reformation in the British Isles was a process simply imposed from above, and largely peaceful in character, is scarcely borne out by the facts" (p. 187). His chapter relates the major stages, each of which was "paid for in tears, sweat, and blood" (p. 187). While constrained by spatial limitations, Marshall makes a convincing case that the Reformation was patchy, forced to overcome greater opposition than is often assumed, and slower to take root than one might imagine. One wishes, therefore, that he would have further expanded upon these ideas by the time he arrived at Mary I. He asseverates, "The idea that Mary's reign was somehow a bizarre aberration (reflected in the curious habit of referring to her as 'Mary Tudor', rather than Mary I), or that the progress of Protestant Reformation in England by 1553 was effectively unstoppable, is an inherited myth, slow in dying" (p. 206). Marshall's view is that Mary could have succeeded in destroying the Protestant movement. While true, the celerity with which Marshall moved through this entire question rendered it difficult to tease out the nuances in modern interpretations. Meanwhile, the treatment of Elizabeth frequently captured the dilemmas faced in her personal and religious decisions. His discussion of her marital prospects as "arousing both hopes and fears among her subjects," was particularly good (p. 213).

Finally, Alexandra Walsham's "Reformation Legacies" examines the impact of Protestant and Catholic claims for renewal and their unanticipated side effects. She immediately suggests that both movements remained "predicated on religious intolerance" (p. 229). This is an insightful interpretation because it runs counter to the deliberate mythology created in part through images. These images generally "reflected and fostered the elevation of Luther and his fellow reformers into a gallery or pantheon of heroes" (p. 227). Conversely, she also succeeds in reminding readers—while avoiding excess sentimentality—that, imagery notwithstanding, people remained capable of overlooking theological differences when it came to helping neighbors, associates, friends, and fam-

ily. One of the strengths of this chapter is Walsham's intimation that our reading of the Reformation also interprets us. She argues, "Modern readers' ears are instinctively tuned to hear voices that anticipate the values which they hold dear" (p. 237). Thus, the difficulties of interpretation. To contemporary Protestants, the Reformation stands for advances in freedom, tolerance, and liberty. Catholics, of course, might question such liberty by pointing to Protestant excesses such as at Calvin's Geneva. What emerged was a slightly schizophrenic Europe. Liberty coupled with intolerance. Walsham suggests that in order to accommodate others, many groups were compelled to separate: "In order to live together it became necessary, both metaphorically and literally, to live apart" (p. 240). A close reading of this chapter causes one to inquire whether we continue to experience that schizophrenia even today as a consequence of the interactions between various groups, national mythologies created by the reformers, intergroup controversies, and excesses in polemics and images. Walsham certainly concurs, noting, "The ripples created by these interactions are still being felt in the twenty-first century" (p. 268).

The book contains a beneficial "For Further Reading" section of works composed in English. Its end pages also offer a chronology, picture acknowledgements, and index. Despite numerous commendations, this reviewer cautions university faculty to peruse the book carefully before assigning it to a university class. It could be worked into an undergraduate course, but the professor would need to carefully construct lectures and other learning material around the content. While the book's strength is its ability to pack substantive content into 268 pages, this also signifies a weakness. A treatment of such brevity must inevitably omit important material. This may pose less of a problem to advanced undergraduate courses or graduate seminars than it would for those encountering the Reformation for the first time. Still, one marvels at the success of this treatment. It both covers familiar terrain while simultaneously challenging a number of antiquated historiographical orthodoxies.

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