

James D. Tracy and Marguerite Ragnow, eds. *Religion and the Early Modern State: Views from China, Russia, and the West*.

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There is a long-standing debate among Tudor historians on the question whether the English Reformation should be viewed as essentially a “top-down” act of state or alternatively, according to recent revisionist interpretation, a “bottom-up” process grounded in popular acceptance and belief. The claims of the latter have tended to prevail in recent decades as evidenced by the proliferation of studies of what is usually termed “popular religion.” Underlying contemporary approaches to this question is the assumption of the intrinsic difference between public or official religion and private or lived religion. This assumed distinction has led in turn to a broad variety of approaches to interpreting the process of mediating the relationship between the two: for example, Protestantization, acculturation, confessionalization. Such categorization tends to reassert a top-down logic, while the notion of a process of “accommodation,” on the other hand, reinforces the sense of popular control of the agenda of religious change. Such are the core interpretative concerns of this collection of essays, but extended to a much broader context which includes the experience of continental Europe, Russia and the Ukraine, as well as the Far East.

This splendid collection of essays appropriately honors a distinguished Tudor historian, Stanford Lehmborg. The task taken up finds its point of departure in the current problematic of English Reformation historiography, and elaborates on this theme by addressing the relationship between lived religion and religion as officially sanctioned by political authority in a global context of both East and West

during the early modern period. The collection constitutes a comparative phenomenology of public religion, and is grouped into three dialectically organized parts: the first examines the contrast of lived and official religion; the second emphasizes the standpoint of the collectivity of religious identity; and the third looks at the shaping of religious belief by social context. By looking at broadly contemporaneous conditions of institutional religion in China, Russia, continental Europe, and England in each of the book's three divisions, the collection suggests some remarkable parallels in institutional practice across the board despite the enormous differences of the content of religious teaching. Especially worthy of note is the revealing cross-application of historiographical paradigms of interpretation which are shown to be commonly useful in parts of the world as different as Ming-Qing China and the Dutch Republic of the early seventeenth century. At the same time, the collection reveals great diversity among modes of worship corresponding to critical differences in respective understandings of the nature of community. Both the identity and difference receive their due.

Richard Shek's treatment of dissent in early modern China traces the origins of the "Eternal Mother" myth and cult, and explores the challenge it posed to patriarchal, familial, and state authority. Interesting correspondences are discernible between the voluntarist communal assumptions and apocalyptic eschatology of this sect and the Puritans of the 1640s discussed by Paul Seaver in a later essay of the collection. Caroline Lizenberger's exploration of the intricacies of Elizabethan Nicodemism has interesting resonances with Susan Karant-Nunn's discussion of the German politics and power of religious ritual with its attendant tension between inner persuasion and external practice. Sara Nalle's treatment of the popular embrace of the piety of "inner persuasion of the heart" in Counter-Reformation Spain is well complemented by Robert Crummey's piece addressing the Russian "Old Believers." Some of the essays focus on a large political scale, as does Frank Sysyn in his consideration of the role of religion in the Ukrainian uprising against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; others are more localized, as with Eamon Duffy's close study of religious dynamics in a single building in the Parish of Salle, Norfolk. The degree of complementariness among the contributions is remarkable given the great diversity of the religions and communities addressed.

This book of essays is constructively innovative in its methodological conception, and provides an immensely rich trove for any student of early modern religion. The collection's global perspective on the interplay of public and private, institutional and popular, and traditional and innovative religious practice affords a useful instrument for rethinking ingrained historiographical assumptions. The offering of contrasting yet parallel views of the interaction of religion with public authority should be richly suggestive of new lines of interpretation and inquiry to specialists accustomed to working in one or another of the global areas addressed. Many instructive interconnections and comparisons between and among these worlds are embedded in this collection and are waiting to be teased into view by

the attentive reader. The standard of scholarship and presentation throughout is impressive.

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