

STEPHANIE KIRK and SARAH RIVETT, eds., *Religious Transformations in the Early Modern Americas* (U of Pennsylvania P, 2014), 360 pp.

The history of empire and religion in the Americas remains as politically relevant as ever. Pope Francis, as the first Latin American pope, was reminded of this last year when he first apologized for the “grave sins committed against the native people of America in the name of God” during his tour of Latin America, and then generated protests a few months later when he canonized Junípero Serra, the controversial eighteenth-century Franciscan friar and missionary in California loved by some and accused by others of suppressing Amerindian culture and imposing Christianity by force.

Over the past 30 years, scholars have sought to understand the history of religion in the Americas in increasingly nuanced ways that move beyond mere accusations, apologies or apologetics. One of the most recent contributions to this scholarship is the new essay collection *Religious Transformations*, which considers not just how European Christianity shaped the peoples and cultures of the Americas, but how their experiences in the Americas reshaped European religious traditions and practice.

In *Religious Transformations*, editors Stephanie Kirk (Spanish Dept., Washington University of St Louis) and Sarah Rivett (English Dept., Princeton University) have brought together renowned scholars to analyze and compare the histories of Ibero-Catholic and Anglo-Protestant empires through what they call the “provocative” lens of religion. The comparative colonial context is uniquely suited to this task. The essays in this cross-disciplinary volume reflect on the complexity and variety of the colonial world in its intimate relationship to Christian belief and practice, “while also maintaining nuanced attention to the particularities of a diverse range of communities and experiences” (20). Through case studies examining cartography, demonology, or missiology among others, each of the essays examines how “Christianity changed as a result of Atlantic transit into new forms of faith, ecclesiology, and theology” (1).

One of the main interests of the collection is to problematize the common assumption that Anglo-Protestantism alone brought modernity to the New World—a part of the exceptionalist paradigm reinforced by the

“Black Legend,” according to which the Spanish regime was particularly brutal and cruel towards Native peoples while the English were more benign. The articles in the book seek to present new connections across what has been seen as “an Anglo-Protestant versus an Iberian-Catholic paradigm,” emphasizing how they were parallel endeavors, linking “religious ideas and legal government to the organization and maintenance of a colonial community that also sought to extend its boundaries through missionary projects” (21). For communities seeking new beginnings in New Spain or New England, the motivations for religious journeys “challenged long-standing structures of authority and religious as well as secular traditions” (3). The fractured hierarchy of authority in New Spain and New England also shaped the possibilities for religious reinvention. Other factors also shaped new religious identities such as “a particular confluence of interaction with foreign landscapes, native tribes and complex indigenous civilizations, and new models of community and social interaction” (6). Moving beyond missionary encounters alone, the diverse essays also look at other ways religion was transmitted, translated but also transformed as it was circulated and recirculated within a dynamic Atlantic world.

A crucial question is the relationship between early modern religious change shaped by the American encounter and modernity. In the first essay, Oxford professor emeritus John Elliott, a major figure in the historiography of Spain and the Spanish Empire, also examines the relationship between modernity, religion, and colonization. He concludes that Protestant (British) America had a greater range of resources than Ibero-Catholics in confronting the challenges that came with winning independence from Europe, better facilitating the transition to democratic and egalitarian forms of government and civil society.

Notre Dame’s Sandra Gustafson gives this argument further substance in her essay comparing the different kinds of republican rhetoric, imagery and beliefs—inspired by either Cicero or Augustine—which were deployed in British North America and the Spanish Empire. She deftly sketches various histories of discourse and practice shaping the modern republic, from Simón Bolívar and John Smith to Puritan missionary John Eliot and Benjamin Franklin. In particular, Gustafson

undermines the idea that the modern republic was entirely a product of Anglo Protestantism, detailing instead how the language and ideals of republicanism had long been popular in Spanish America. Interestingly, she also notes the reception of indigenous forms of governance and statecraft, showing how they were discussed and interpreted by colonial North American authors in light of European ideals of the commonwealth or republic. Yet while the ideal of the “republican” Indian was increasing in British North America, it was disappearing fast in Spanish America for political and religious reasons. Ultimately, republicanism took quite different forms in that context.

The influence of the American encounter on modernity and vice-versa is also the topic of the article by Ralph Bauer on demonology, in which he looks closely at the relationship between the distinctively early modern (not medieval) preoccupation with demons and the creation of the modern subject. Bauer traces how colonial ethnography unwittingly participated in rhetorical battles over Reformation and Counter-Reformation conceptions of human nature and natural reason, arguing that changing concepts of human nature were reflected in how Amerindian peoples and their religions were represented in early modern European publications about the New World. In particular, he shows how English writings move from a merely “pagan” portrayal of Amerindian religions to a Satanic one. The demonization of Native religions helped shape the modern subject in European Christianity.

David Hall’s examination of the Reformed tradition and the politics of writing takes a different approach as he considers the shaping of the modern European subject through encounters and challenges in the New English context. Hall here brings his pioneering work on Puritanism and lived religion together to examine transformations and continuities in theological traditions and religious practice by way of the politics of seventeenth century texts. Along similar lines, Teresa Toulouse analyzes Cotton Mather’s changing concept of providence due to political events in New England as reflected in his work *Pietas in Patriam*. She challenges oversimplified secularization theses by underscoring how political realities of life post-charter altered—but did not eliminate—the idea of providence in Puritan thought.

What neither of these otherwise fascinating accounts do, however, is integrate insights from Native American studies or social history about cultural and linguistic exchange in British North America. Their focus is predominantly on the textual and political relationship between New England and England and the context of New England as geographically apart from England, of course, but I had expected the Native context to play a greater role in their analysis. This very challenge is clearly laid out in the essay by Matt Cohen. Cohen highlights what he calls “stumbling blocks to thinking interculturally” about religion in Puritan studies examining early colonial New England. Cohen asks whether Native and Western forms of spirituality are not only not as different as assumed, but whether both religious traditions were being changed simultaneously as a result of forces of social change both experienced: “What if the settlers were becoming more like Indians were becoming, with respect to religious feeling?” (162) That is, what if the advent of Western modernity was not “the end of it all” but involved a future with Indians?

The case studies from New Spain, by contrast, pay closer attention to the European missionary encounter with Native peoples and how each shaped the other. Asuncion Lavrin, for example, examines the appeal of martyrdom “for Christ” in the context of Mexico and how discourses of martyrdom in Spanish America were situated within the spiritual cause of the Counter-Reformation. A particular view of the idolatrous or even demonic “other” emerged as a result of the American encounter (157). Art historian Carmen Fernández-Salvador discusses the mission encounter in New Spain through the lens of Jesuit cartography, arguing that map making and ethnographic description were employed as tools in territorial reconnaissance and definition. David Boruchoff, after providing an overview of saintly models in Reformation and Counter-Reformation history generally, considers missionary authors in New Spain. Júnia Ferreira Furtado includes the Portuguese colonial experience in her provocative Atlantic narrative about two Brazilian “mulatto” Catholic priests who “return” to Africa for the purposes of missionizing in Benin. Religious transformation in New France, on the other hand, is not part of this collection—nor is its exclusion explained on a methodological basis.

The essays individually are excellent, each one densely researched and well-written, reflecting recent methodological and theoretical questions about religion in the Americas. The heterogeneity of the collection, however, may present some challenges for readers familiar with either the Anglo-Protestant or Ibero-Catholic empires but not both. Scholars and graduate students studying early America, regardless of their regional focus, will find the book's comparative approach enriching, however, and find preconceptions about the differences between religious projects in the Spanish and British empires (still shaped by the "Black Legend" in particular) called into question.

Given the stated interest of the editors in how missionary encounters "defined faith, theology and pious practices, reshaping Christianity into new forms that reentered a

pattern of Atlantic circulation" (3), I had also expected even more of the essays to examine in-depth the nature of missionary encounters or Native American Christianity. Instead, European religious transformations and reinvention as a result of American encounters is the main though not exclusive focus. Nevertheless, scholars and students of early modern European history, American history (North and South America), religious history, Atlantic history, and students of early English or Spanish literature will all find their understanding of the religion and politics in the early Americas greatly enriched. Those interested in uncovering the many roles played by religion in the development of modernity in early modern Europe and the Americas will do well to pick up this excellent book.

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Jennifer Adams-Massmann