

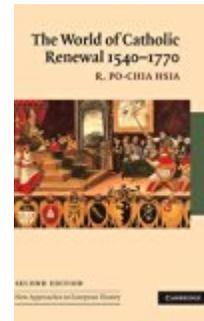
H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



R. Po-chia Hsia. *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. xii + 268 pp. \$28.99 (paper), ISBN 978-0-521-60241-9; \$79.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-84154-2.

Reviewed by Luke Clossey (Department of History, Simon Fraser University)
Published on H-HRE (March, 2006)



Catholic Renewal, Revised

Already with its title Hsia's work reveals itself as an original contribution, and his phrase "Catholic Renewal" now joins "Catholic Reformation," "Counter-Reformation," "Catholic Reform," "Catholic Renaissance," and "Catholic Refashioning" as a description of this important phenomenon. Throughout the book, which is a revised second edition of his 1998 work, Hsia leaves us clues as to his understanding of Catholic Renewal. Social discipline is prominent, as expected given his past work.[1] The implementation of Tridentine reforms is also central, although Hsia stresses that their realization was not immediate and universal, and in a choice example describes abortive attempts to introduce the Tridentine reforms in the diocese of Trent (p. 121). Demographics and identity issues are also in play (see pp. 70-76, 222-234). Hsia most frequently, and perhaps most closely, associates the idea of "fervor" (or "energy") with his Renewal, which gives it a connotation of rejuvenation.

The delimiting dates of the title are also original and striking: 1540-1770. Marking formal papal approval of the Society of Jesus, the start date comes a century after similar surveys, and *World* begins very much in *medias res*. Hsia gives the back-story of individuals (such as Ignatius) and includes the Theatines (founded sixteen years before the Jesuits), but does not give the back-story for the Renewal itself. The result is a dampened explanatory power but a heightened dramatic force. At the other end of Hsia's chronology, the years from 1759 to 1773 envelop the Jesuits' great crisis and thus balance 1540. He also speaks of a "slackening of Catholic vigor ... after the

first decades of the eighteenth century" and a "revived popular Catholicism in the nineteenth century" (p. 167). The chronology of this work, then, encompasses both the Renewal at its peak and its long denouement.

World starts with a straightforward narrative account of the Council of Trent and the establishment of the new religious orders. In this edition Hsia has expanded his earlier account of the Angelics of San Paolo, and the section on the women's orders is intelligent and comprehensive—and even longer than that on the men's orders. More narrative than analysis, these early chapters magnify the book's sometimes extravagant amount of detailed information, which gives texture but sometimes distracts. For example, for the opening days at Trent we have two separate inventories of dignitaries, different though not contradictory ("three archbishops, twenty-one bishops" (p. 10); "no more than twenty-nine bishops and cardinals" (p. 15). The first number impresses for how many there were, the second for how few there were in comparison to the end of the council. At times such detail even seems to overwhelm the author. The first edition misplaced the death of Francis Xavier three times; the second edition corrects only one of these (p. 209, still wrong at pp. xi, 129). More explanation of some of these details would be welcome. For example, Hsia mentions the fascinating debate over whether it is divine or canon law that dictates Episcopal residence (p. 19), but never clarifies why this matters, nor why absenteeism might be beneficial for institutional reasons.

Three chapters dedicated to national histories complete the first third of the book. Highlights include the Polish (expanded for the new edition) and Spanish accounts (which skillfully uses Carranza's story to illustrate broader Iberian trends). The second edition assigns Hungary its own section, and H-HRE readers will appreciate the five-page section on "Germany, Austria, Bohemia," which has been enhanced with new information on Austrian Habsburg propaganda (p. 78). These are mostly discrete, parallel national histories with little synthesis. Yet some remarkable comparisons reinforce uniqueness, and whet the reader's appetite for more. For example, Hsia notes that in Spain religious books had twice the share of total publication compared to Venice (p. 52).

The heart of the book is the next four chapters, which might be described as analyses of collective biography: the papal curia, bishops and priests, Counter-Reformation saints and holy women, beatas, demoniacs. The first of these chapters is particularly well-crafted and instructive. It begins by describing the standard pattern of a future pope's career, then tempers this with variations, and finally rewards the reader with a rich case study detailing Camillo Borghese's path to becoming Paul V. Nevertheless, most early modern Catholics (probably a decreasing proportion of them) fit into none of Hsia's categories. An *Alltagsgeschichte* chapter on lay believers would thus be helpful, and would balance the institutional history that no history of this topic can avoid.

Hsia's analysis becomes somewhat incautious in his chapter on saints, where he attempts to determine contemporary attitudes towards sainthood by counting early modern saints canonized in the early modern period (1540-1770). This methodology, however, is problematic. Someone who died in 1537 but was canonized only two years later would be excluded, while someone who died in 1540 and was canonized 230 years later would be included. A more precise approach would have been to look at all early modern saints canonized within a certain timeframe after their deaths. In addition, Hsia mentions thirty-eight early modern saints canonized between 1600 and 1770, and thirty-eight between 1540 and 1770 (pp. 140, 127). Were none canonized between 1540 and 1600? Also, table 8.1 presents exactly the same information as figure 8.1, but a more useful diagram might have considered saints' numbers relative to national Catholic populations. Such an approach would change the picture for the Poles and French, and strengthen Hsia's conclusions about the Spanish and Italians. These statistical analyses frame the beginning and end of the chapter, but

the middle also has a great deal of informative material. For example, Hsia pays close attention to the creation of Saint Ignatius and the politics of canonization (expanding on the first edition, p.131), and gives the reader an excellent sense of how ideas of sanctity changed during the centuries of Catholic Renewal.

The final third of the book features a valuable survey of Catholic art and architecture, an entirely new chapter that uses censorship lists and French book catalogues to study the global command and market economies for publishing, two chapters on extra-European Catholicism, and a concluding chapter that is most satisfying in its attention to the interests (often material, healing, and prophylactic) of people outside the church hierarchy.

By beginning his study in 1540, Hsia compounds the effects of his tendency to devote little attention to the Protestants except as foils. He only tersely presents the ideas of Martin Luther, who as a Protestant theologian helped provoke the Renewal and as an Augustinian hermit was himself a part of it. Justification by faith alone is explained in a single sentence as an "understanding of salvation" that is "deeply individual and spiritual" and "based on the writings of St. Paul and St. Augustine" (p. 13). This is too radical a correction of Hsia's predecessors' overemphasis on doctrine. Salvation deserves at least a dedicated paragraph, if not a page or a chapter. Similarly, we are told twice on the same page (p. 18) that Calvinism was rapidly strengthening in France, but we are never told what Calvinism was, or why it was distinctive. A reader new to the field may feel as if he had stumbled on a sporting event in a foreign country, where it is unclear why either side is fighting so passionately. What was at stake? What motivations were there beyond the heavy inertia of identity?

World historians picking up a book with "world" in the title can be disappointed when the author uses the word in a vague, non-geographical sense. This usage is neither uncommon nor criminal; Hsia himself writes that "the Catholic world" observed the 1622 quintuple canonization ceremony in St. Peter's Basilica—literally impossible without live satellite feed (p. 133). But Hsia makes plain in his introduction that he takes "world" seriously: "I mean to incorporate the concepts of 'Catholic Reform' and 'Counter-Reformation' under the larger rubric of world history" (p. 7). The same sentence appeared in the first edition. Given recent years' slow but accelerating interest in global early modern Catholicism, Hsia was (and still is) ahead of his time.

The introduction suggests that the world-historical

component is the analysis of the “encounter between the Catholic Europe and non-Catholic civilizations,” (p. 8) for which we are directed to two chapters on “The Iberian Church and empires” and “The Catholic missions in Asia,” both reliable and engaging presentations of the Catholic Renewal’s history outside Europe. Like the chapters on the national narratives, these are divided into regions: the Spanish Americas, the Portuguese seaborne empire, India, the Philippines, Japan, and China. The boundaries between these sections on the different regions are strong, and unfortunately, since India wins her own section in the second edition, an important paragraph comparing that mission to its China counterpart has been excised (first edition, p. 191).

Global Catholic history would profit by reexamining Hsia’s division between “Catholic Europe and non-Catholic civilizations” (p. 8). Not all Europeans were Christian, nor were all non-Europeans non-Christian; Hsia writes, for example, of India’s native Syrian Christians. A more organic world-history approach might thus emphasize instead the distinction between Catholics and non-Catholics, regardless of geography. The raw material for this already abounds in *World*, for throughout the book Hsia skillfully draws examples from around the globe. For example, Rosa of Lima plays an important role in the chapter on saints (pp. 128, 141), while the chapter on art mentions the global market for devotional prints (p. 167). Hsia also deftly shows the variety of European missions, whether to Protestant Poitou or to the Mezzogiorno (pp. 55-60), and the phrase “[a]lien to the world and ways of his parishioners” describes many European missionaries abroad just as well as it does Hsia’s seventeenth-century Lyonesse parish priest (p. 125). Perhaps in the third edition these could be collected into a new prosopographical chapter on missionaries and their intended converts?

As the above discussion surely suggests, the organization of the book is quite complex. When outlining the book in his introduction, Hsia himself starts with chapter 6, then 2, then 7 through 9, before picking up a new theme in chapters 3 through 5. He then introduces chapters 12 and 13 before bringing up 10 and 14. Also, since the national chapters are not a single, unified, chronological overview, they might more profitably be read after the multiple-biography analyses, which would give the reader a sense of the major historical trends. On the other hand, having many, short chapters does increase the book’s readability and usefulness as a thematic reference.

Concluding the book is a three-hundred-item-strong bibliographical essay which is extremely rich and also increases the book’s value as a reference. It is a scholar’s tool; penciled call numbers crowd my first edition’s margins. Students may be put off, as most (55 percent) of the citations are not in English—although strangely the section on the Iberian church has no Spanish-language references. Two key volumes from O’Malley are unfortunately absent, as are recent milestones from global Catholic history.[2]

The Catholic Renewal is a vast subject, and *World* is not so comprehensive as to render redundant its two cousins that appeared almost simultaneously with Hsia’s first edition.[3] Perhaps best is to preface Hsia with the first chapter of Mullett (“Reform in Head and Members: The Medieval Background of the Catholic Reformation”) and to take as a postscript Bireley’s chapters on “Education,” “Evangelization and Popular Piety in Europe,” and “The Christian in the World.”

In both editions Hsia follows the contours of the latest available research, so some of my suggestions in this review are also addressed to the scholars developing this research. *World* is not a perfect introduction for the layman (“sodality” appears 158 pages before it is explained, pp. 67 and 225), but it is an impressive and useful work of scholarship. It will no doubt serve as a convenient summary of the Catholic portions of the much anticipated *Reform and Expansion 1500-1660*, the sixth volume of the Cambridge History of Christianity series, about to appear under Hsia’s editorship.

Notes

[1]. R. Po-chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe 1550-1750* (London: Routledge, 1989).

[2]. John O’Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000) and *ibid.*, ed., *Catholicism in Early Modern History: a Guide to Research* (St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1988). Important global histories include Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Christianity and Sexuality in the Early Modern World: Regulating Desire, Reforming Practice* (London: Routledge, 2000) and Gauvin Alexander Bailey, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542-1773* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2001). Sanjay Subrahmanyam and the late Joseph Fletcher have addressed the possibility of a distinctive early modern religion. Geoffrey Gunn’s *First Globalization: The Eurasian Exchange, 1500-1800* (Lanham: Row-

man & Littlefield, 2003) would complement Hsia's chapter on the Catholic Book.

[3]. Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999); Michael A. Mullett, *The Catholic Reformation* (London: Routledge, 1999).

Copyright (c) 2006 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For other uses contact the Reviews editorial staff: hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-hre>

Citation: Luke Clossey. Review of Hsia, R. Po-chia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770*. H-HRE, H-Net Reviews. March, 2006.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=11494>

Copyright © 2006 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.