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(eds.). *A Linking of Heaven and Earth: Studies in Religious and  
Cultural History in Honor of Carlos M. N. Eire*

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Michelson, Emily, Scott K. Taylor, and Mary Noll Venables (eds.).

*A Linking of Heaven and Earth: Studies in Religious and Cultural History in Honor of Carlos M. N. Eire.*

Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012. Pp. 250. ISBN 978-1-4094-3943-1(hardcover) £58.50.

Over the past three decades, Carlos M. N. Eire's scholarship has demonstrated an uncanny ability to address any topic in early modern religious history, from the most physical to the most celestial, ranging from the gruesome details of Philip II of Spain's final days to the history of eternity. The thirteen essays gathered in this Festschrift do justice to this versatility; each contribution is grounded in the same careful analysis of culture and religion that has defined Eire's own research. The volume's introduction nicely draws connections between these essays and the themes of Eire's work, whether on the use of religious images in the spirit of his *War against the Idols* (1986), or on death, dying, and the afterlife in the spirit of *From Madrid to Purgatory* (1995) and *A Very Brief History of Eternity* (2010).

Alison Weber's essay examines the development of "icono-enthusiasm" in sixteenth-century Spain, where clerical authorities chose to celebrate holy images over and against the iconoclasm of Protestants, in a context where Jewish and Muslim converts came to Spain from "iconophobic" traditions. Emily Michelson studies two sermons of an Italian preacher, Francesco Visdomini—one given on the occasion of the reconciliation of England to the Catholic Church in 1555, the other on the occasion of Mary Tudor's death in 1559. Michelson is interested not only in how Italians perceived the English schism, but also in how these sermons reveal notions of divine providence. William A. Christian Jr. presents a case study of a Castilian village in the sixteenth century to demonstrate how villagers experienced analogous systems of patronage with the royal court of Charles V and the heavenly court above. In both cases, villagers relied upon mediators, with saints interceding for villagers in heaven much as secular patrons would on earth. In "The Gadarene Demoniac in the English Enlightenment," H. C. Erik Midelfort describes the controversy that developed over how to interpret the biblical episode wherein Jesus encounters a man (or men) possessed (Mk 5:1–9; Mt 8:28–34; Lk 8:26–39). Because some authors used this episode to challenge traditionalists' reading of Scripture, Midelfort suggests this controversy led to interest in the "historical Jesus" and

the explosive possibility that “Jesus had been so thoroughly human and so thoroughly Jewish, that he had no divine knowledge or access to eternal truths” (57).

Two of the most intriguing contributions to this volume examine material culture. Martin Nesvig studies the cultural adaptation of peyote in New Spain, where peyote went from having a communal, ritual use in the indigenous world to being used by individuals for practical ends in the colonial period. Scott K. Taylor, meanwhile, investigates how people used tobacco in early modern Europe. Contemporaries recognized the signs of tobacco use on a person’s body, which they could describe with existing medical language, but they could not explain its strangely addictive nature. Lacking medical terms for addiction, contemporaries instead turned to spiritual language and described compulsive use of tobacco in terms of vice.

Special mention must be given to Ronald K. Rittgers’s contribution: “‘He flew’: A Concluding Reflection on the Place of Eternity and the Supernatural in the Scholarship of Carlos M. N. Eire.” Considering an essay in which Eire studies accounts of Christian holy men and women levitating, Rittgers declares that by daring to examine the “history of the impossible” and taking stories of levitation seriously, Eire is able to point out the limits of what historians can and cannot see in the past. In Rittgers’s words, Eire demonstrates how historians cannot “write an adequate history of the ‘impossible,’ precisely because we believe that things such as levitation and sorcery are ridiculous” (210). In this specific case, for example, Rittgers believes Eire is open to the possibility that Joseph of Cupertino *actually* flew. It is Eire’s “openness to the transcendent,” Rittgers suggests, that offers methodological opportunities for historians of premodern Europe.

Other essays in the volume include Bruce Gordon examining Heinrich Bullinger’s treatment of the afterlife; Ping-Yuan Wang on the death notices and spirituality of Visitandine sisters in Brussels; Mary Noll Venables on the writings of Sigismund Evenius, a Lutheran who lived through the Thirty Years War and counselled individual penitence in the face of calamities rather than quiet endurance; Jodi Bilinkoff on the apostolic work of Teresa of Avila during her life, which she tailored to female contemplatives; Darren Provost on Erasmus’s commitment to “spiritual warfare,” which was intended to remake Christians in *imago Dei*; and David D’Andrea on a seventeenth-century Italian compendium of miracles, which points to the persistence and importance of miracles

in Catholic Europe after the Reformation. The volume contains an index and a comprehensive bibliography as well as footnotes accompanying each essay.

On the whole, the quality of the essays collected in this volume is high. They appear less ambitious in their aims than Eire's work, but then what could rival his histories of the impossible? The thirteen authors treat a wide variety of topics here; and given this range, not to mention the geographic area covered (from New Spain to Magdeburg), one wonders how this volume would be used by historians. Still, scholars will undoubtedly find these essays rewarding, and the final piece by Rittgers might fruitfully be read in conjunction with Eire's own work. This volume makes for fascinating reading, and would appeal to anyone interested in Eire's scholarship.

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