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# Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World: An Alternative History of the Reformation

*By Nicholas Terpstra*



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## Religious Refugees in the Early Modern World: An Alternative History of the Reformation By Nicholas Terpstra

The religious refugee first emerged as a mass phenomenon in the late fifteenth century. Over the following two and a half centuries, millions of Jews, Muslims, and Christians were forced from their homes and into temporary or permanent exile. Their migrations across Europe and around the globe shaped the early modern world and profoundly affected literature, art, and culture. Economic and political factors drove many expulsions, but religion was the factor most commonly used to justify them. This was also the period of religious revival known as the Reformation. This book explores how reformers' ambitions to purify individuals and society fueled movements to purge ideas, objects, and people considered religiously alien or spiritually contagious. \* Aims to explain religious ideas and movements of the Reformation in non-technical and comparative language. \* Moves Jews and Muslims to the centre of the traditional Reformation narrative, and considers how the exile experience shaped early modern culture, art, politics, and cities. \* Traces the historical patterns that still account for the growing numbers of modern religious refugees.



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"This enormously rich, thoughtful, and penetrating book offers a strikingly new perspective on the Reformation by probing its abiding obsession with purity, contagion, and purgation. These instincts, common to many faiths, were the stimulus to massive movements of populations, and in the process helped reshape both contemporary society and the European mind. If we want to know how massive human suffering can emerge from the best of intentions, we could do no better than start with this book."

Andrew Pettegree, University of St Andrews

"Through his grand themes of social purification and exile, Nicholas Terpstra gives us a daring new way to understand early modern times. He shows us with fascinating detail the similar processes at work among Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, and Jews. The world they reshaped speaks deeply to our own time."

Natalie Zemon Davis, Princeton University, New Jersey

"Terpstra's exciting new book offers a broad and compelling vision, a reinterpretation of the Reformation and of the early modern era generally. Covering a wide swathe of history in an imaginative, accessible way, it treats a phenomenon of enormous contemporary concern: projects in social purification and their massive consequences for humanity."

Benjamin J. Kaplan, University College London

"This exciting book puts purification, exile, and expulsion at the center of the story of the Reformation and early modern Europe. Terpstra offers a masterly synthesis and a bold, provocative, and timely thesis, which will stimulate and challenge scholars and students alike in a world beset by the plight of refugees."

Charles Zika, University of Melbourne

#### **About the Author**

Nicholas Terpstra is Professor and Chair of History at the University of Toronto. He has been a Visiting Professor at Tel Aviv University, the University of Sydney, the University of Warwick, and the Harvard Center for Italian Renaissance Studies. His books have shown how Renaissance cities handled orphans, abandoned children, criminals and the poor in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. His most recent book, *Cultures of Charity: Women, Politics, and the Reform of Poor Relief in Renaissance Italy* (2014), won prizes from the Renaissance Society of America and the American Historical Association.

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