

remarkable annulment of Wladislaw of Bohemia's bigamous marriages the pope still had to justify his decision in formal legal terms.

The broad thrust of d'Avray's thesis is compelling and opens up various lines of inquiry. For example, his intriguing claim that popes might dispense for marriage below the age of consent (chapter 11) could be further investigated. He also deems the Trent ruling that local bishops had to put into effect papal dispensations a 'new requirement' (chapter 15) but was it merely formalising the long-standing practice of bishops or other commissaries executing such papal graces? D'Avray's claim that popes often refused marital dispensations to political opponents is persuasive, especially when one considers Ludwig of Bavaria's struggle to marry his son to Margaret of Maltausch (albeit not a case considered by d'Avray), but it would be interesting to know how popes justified this legally, particularly given Skinner's legitimisation idea. More generally it is worth exploring how far the thesis advanced here applies lower down the social scale. D'Avray suggests that annulments were more easily obtained from local church courts, which those below royal status normally used. Such litigants also probably had less restricted grounds for annulment, the most common in English church courts being pre-contract, which d'Avray says was rarely pleaded in royal marriage cases. He adds that clandestine marriages were rare amongst royalty, but they were common in later medieval English society, allowing opportunities for 'self-divorce' not since such marriages were invalid but their existence was hard to prove; English medieval church court records contain many cases of plaintiffs trying to enforce such marriages against errant spouses, usually men. Nevertheless, d'Avray's view of rising availability of dispensations from kinship and correspondingly declining availability of annulments on kinship grounds is well documented lower down the medieval social scale. Specialists will undoubtedly have other queries about points of detail, but there is no denying that this is a highly significant contribution to a growing body of historiography on medieval marriage, and one with which all historians of politics, religion and law in the medieval and early modern periods will need to engage.

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Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin and Robert Armstrong eds., *Christianities in the Early Modern Celtic World*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014, pp. xiii + 254, £63.00, ISBN: 9781137306340

This collection of eleven essays, framed by an introduction and conclusion, each by one editor, takes us from Cornwall to the Western

Highlands via extensive detours in Wales (four essays) and Ireland (three essays). The volume is arranged in two sections: six essays are concerned directly with religion and essentially with the decline of traditional religion, and five deal more generally with matters of culture and belief in the post-Reformation world. Here one might argue that the essay on Cornwall by Alexandra Walsham, dealing as it does with language, memory and landscape, might be better placed in the second of these categories. We move from the late fifteenth century church in Wales to the departure of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists from the Established Church in the early nineteenth century, though the time scales of the Irish and Scottish essays are confined to the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The volume arises from the Insular Christianity Project located at UCD and TCD, which explores the emergence of religious heterogeneity in the British archipelago at a time of increasing political integration. That heterogeneity is well expressed here in the Gaelic Calvinism of the Scottish Highlands and the renewed Catholicism of Ireland, each drawing on European influences, whether from Rome or from Geneva, and rarely, if at all, from London, Oxford or Cambridge. The exception here is Wales, where Oxbridge educated bishops encouraged early publication of a Welsh *New Testament* and *Prayer Book*, but even with these the difficulties of providing a Welsh speaking reformed ministry meant that progress remained slow and traditional beliefs, customs and sacred landscapes retained a strong hold on the population throughout the sixteenth century, as the essay by Katharine Olson reveals. Here not only did rood screens and the like survive but, as at Capel Meugan, the sacred survived destruction. Pilgrims continued to visit the nearby lake, as they did the image of Derfel Gadarn at Llanderfel which stood by the communion rails in the church until the mid eighteenth century and later, still venerated but also used as a prop in parish festivities by then. It is examples of these usable pasts which perhaps have most interest to readers of this journal, for history was a contested space throughout the Long Reformation, and especially so in the Celtic regions. The well at Madron in Cornwall dedicated to St Cleer was still frequented in the mid eighteenth century by those seeking cures, but a famous cure wrought there in the 1630s demonstrates this contested past well. The Franciscan Francis Coventry attributed the cure to the intercession of the saint, but the bishop of Exeter, Joseph Hall, saw it as evidence of God's direct providential intervention, a Protestant miracle which, as Alexandra Walsham reminds us here and elsewhere, had no need of intercessory explanation. The miraculous could be embraced by Protestant as well as Catholic. Learned engagement with such examples of traditional and popular practices could even move beyond the archipelago. Lloyd Bowen's essay relates the discovery of a tombstone during the rebuilding of St Peter's in the 1570s which caused a rift between the

English and the Welsh Catholics there; the English identifying it as the tomb of Caedwalla, King of Wessex, and the Welsh maintaining that it belonged to Cadwallader, the last king of the Britons, both of whom died at Rome in 689 while on pilgrimage. This became the basis of a struggle for control over the college in Rome which, unsurprisingly, the Welsh lost; revealing the limits to which Celtic Catholics could withstand the force of an English, albeit illegal, Catholicism.

Monuments and landscapes were freighted with memory in the post-Reformation worlds, but so also were texts. Bowen's essay reminds us of the importance of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History* to both Welsh Protestants and Catholics, and Bernadette Cunningham draws attention to the work of those Irish scholars, mostly Franciscan, based in Louvain in the early seventeenth century who both recovered and renewed Gaelic scholarship, in particular hagiographical accounts. Some of these scholars, such as Tadhg O Clerigh, came from families which had been hereditary historians but who had lost secular patronage after the flight of the earls. At a time of the plantation, it showed God to be on the side of the Catholic Irish against the English settlers, but it also refuted the claims of Thomas Dempster that those early Christian 'Scoti' who had spread Christianity throughout central Europe had been Scottish rather than Irish. These works did not just address the religious politics of contemporary Ireland or within the various Celtic traditions, but also had a devotional purpose, whereby the cult of the saints enriched private devotions and identified local saints as protectors of their communities. Thus was a tradition of Gaelic scholarship combined with a Counter Reformation one to produce a devotional life about which Raymond Gillespie has written so eloquently.

Two texts are given chapters to themselves, Sim Innes discusses the *Book of the Dean of Lismore* and Salvador Ryan the *Book of the O'Conor Don*, the first a product of the early sixteenth century and the second of the early seventeenth century. Innes shows that the Lismore compilation was almost equally divided between older, pre-1400 material, and more recent religious poetry, and that the balance between Irish and Scottish sources is also fairly equal, though interestingly no Scottish material is found in equivalent Irish compilations of the period, raising interesting questions about the cultural interaction between Gaelic Scotland and Ireland at this time. Innes identifies seven poems, from the 12th to the 15th centuries, also found in the *O'Conor Don* compilation which Salvador Ryan demonstrates was concerned with the preoccupations of the Louvain Franciscans, as revealed in the catechetical literature they produced. This was particularly so on the question of confession and sinfulness on which the new wine of the Counter Reformation catechists was still being served in the old wine of the late medieval bardic tradition.

There is much rich material here, rightly undermining any easy assumption of any pan-Celtic or Gaelic common religious culture. Two points are perhaps worth raising. Firstly, though the project is focused on the archipelago some reference if not a full chapter might be made to the Breton experience and the work of Elizabeth Tingle on another Celtic tradition facing a centralising political power. Secondly, as the work of Augustine Baker reveals, recovery of late medieval devotional literature to inform seventeenth century debates was not confined to the Celtic parts of the archipelago, any more than was the search for a distinctive historical tradition. Brief mention of these in the editorial sections would have enhanced an already rich volume.

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Mary C. Erler, *Reading and Writing During the Dissolution: Monks, Friars, and Nuns 1530-1558*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. xi + 203, £55, ISBN: 978 1 10703 979 7

Using a relatively small body of written evidence to trace the multiplicity of responses to Henry VIII's programme of dissolution, as well as the networks of association and influence among religious and laypeople during the English Reformation, is a massive endeavour. The scattered and fragmentary evidence that remains in letters, inscriptions within books, bequests, and dedications, for example, furnishes only a small number of clues which can shed light on a wider and more complex landscape of shifting belief and policy that distinguishes this turbulent period. For this reason, Mary C. Erler's *Reading and Writing During the Dissolution* stands as a singular accomplishment, presenting a series of case studies which meticulously weave together evidence from letters, chronicles, and devotional texts to create vivid and nuanced portraits of professed men and women seeking to negotiate unprecedented changes in religious life. Six chapters survey writing in various genres by male and female religious whose loyalties run the spectrum from openly embracing reformist belief to actively defending traditional orthodoxy.

London's last anchorite Simon Appulby and his *Fruyte of Redempcyon* are the focus of Chapter 1. Erler's title 'Looking Backward?' signals her interrogation of an individual whose vocation and writing appear deeply conservative and more in tune with the religious climate of the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. Just