reads more fluently than the cover promises, though peppered with just the amount of technical jargon to stop it being a thoroughly enjoyable read. It is the published form of a doctoral dissertation completed at the University of Hamburg in 2021, and focuses intensively on the seventeenth-century Orthodox Cretan scholar who became Metropolitan bishop of Philadelphia (hierarch in charge of the Greek community in the Venice region), who lived at different times in Candia when Crete was under a siege from the Ottoman Phanar (a military campaign that ultimately lasted twenty-one years), as well as in Venice and Corfu. The work uses, at first-hand, and very professionally, archival material from the libraries of Heraklion and Athens as well as the Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine studies in Venice, the Venetian State Archives and the Biblioteca Marciana. It is undoubtedly a deep analysis of Gerasimos Vlachos's scholarly and political world (particularly of the hierarch's extensive personal library), and points the reader to extensive bibliographic support material. The scholar-bishop emerges as a man of liberal and ecumenical spirit, though siding with Catholic theological trends (which he saw as in general harmony with the ancient traditions) and consistently hostile to Protestant ideas. He had admiration for the learning of the Jesuits and his library contained many of the major theological writers of the medieval West alongside a core of patristic texts. His leadership of the Greek Venetian community was one that was determined to emphasise (and support) Hellenism's intellectual and cultural heritage, but also to advocate the necessity in this time and era of forming alliances with the Catholic West in the face of Ottoman domination to the East and Protestant expansion in the West. He held the Republic of La Serenissima in high esteem and both valued and learned from its open-minded culture. His overarching cultural aim was to rally the Greek community (much in the traditional Byzantine manner) by a double appeal to the Hellenic spirit of *paideia* and the patristic sense of ecclesial fidelity. This is a work that will be useful to both Ottoman and Modern Hellenic studies.

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Friends, neighbours, sinners. Religious difference and English society, 1689–1750. By Carys Brown. (Studies in Modern British History). Pp. x + 284 incl. 10 figs. Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022. £75. 978 1 00 922138 2

Voltaire's *Letters on the English* famously recorded the religious differences in England, and noted that the ease between various groups was remarkably different from in France. In this book, adapted from her doctoral thesis, Carys Brown advances two claims about the interactions between people of differing faiths in England. First they were 'mediated through language and behaviour common to the period' and secondly that religious differences shaped aspects of eighteenth-century life and culture. The first claim is not surprising; the second is more intriguing. In a world of growing politeness and sociability, expanding wealth and increasing emphasis on 'improvement', Brown sees the eighteenth century as an era of cultural change. An element in this was religious toleration, which

allowed religious differences to become more apparent. The act of 1689 also hardened differences by legitimising Dissent, and created tensions within and between Christian groups. For Brown, religious differences had social and cultural implications. One of these was the degree to which Protestant dissenters were part of 'public religion' that was present nationally and in most parishes. Brown argues that some inclusive forms of behaviour could also underscore religious differences; consequently, in an era of religious toleration, prejudices and even conflict were only just below the surface of society.

In the aftermath of the Toleration Act, as Jeremy Black's *Charting the past* has recently shown, Dissenters were eager to present themselves as moderate supporters of the Revolutionary and Hanoverian settlements. Gone was the Calves Head Club, except in the minds of High Church Tories. Competition replaced conflict. In a few, largely urban, areas Brown shows that there were occasional jostlings for space between churches and meeting houses. And in some cases there were arguments over whether Dissenters could be buried in churchyards. But there is no evidence to indicate the number and extent of these tensions. Brown's discussion of manners, especially hypocrisy and politeness, suggests the degree to which engagement in politics, commerce and society rested on an awareness of an individual's religion, and could therefore be used to endorse or deny involvement. In society at large, sociability was often constrained by religious differences – though the degree to which those in trades (of all sorts) limited their profits by excluding people of other religions is unclear. Social interactions of friends and neighbours were, Brown argues, often subject to complex religious gradations and distinctions.

All of this is interesting to historians of religion and society. However Brown does not consider in detail two important aspects of religious difference. First she pays little attention to theology, and the numerous and powerful ways in which it defined and shaped religious differences. It could, for example, act as a bridge between groups, so that some Dissenters regarded Bishops Burnet and Hoadly warmly. Evangelicals, of all sorts, could have overlapping theological commitments – hence Wesley's claim to have lived and died in the Church of England. Secondly, Brown's approach seems principally to rest on a secular social model. Religion is considered almost exclusively as an instrumental feature of society: space, social interaction, politeness, commerce and neighbourliness are examined in isolation from faith. The idea that men and women saw their salvation (or damnation) as directly affected by, for example, the oaths they took, where and how they worshipped, and where they were buried is largely absent. Yet we know that salvation was the most pressing preoccupation of Christians of all shades in the eighteenth century. Brown does not address this and assumes that the eighteenth-century view of religion was 'a matter of debatable opinion' (p. 106). If this was the case, the distinctions Brown explores are smaller than she claims.

More positively, Brown's view that religious differences were part of the everyday functioning of eighteenth-century society is an important one. Brown is right that religion in the period had an ambient quality and was therefore often uppermost in people's minds. The recovery of this preoccupation is an important and welcome aspect of Brown's book.

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