

Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie, eds. *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*.

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“This is a book about how people in early modern England and Scotland prayed when they weren’t in church” (1). Thus reads the first sentence of the editors’ introduction, but they acknowledge that the topic is difficult to pin down. The authors of the essays that follow approach this subject by focusing on a variety of times and places, with a variety of sources and methodologies, sometimes writing more conceptually and often times simply documenting practices. Most of the twelve essays deal with England, but one deals with Scotland, and one cites examples from both Scotland and Ulster.

Ian Green’s essay pays special attention to biographical writings to plot the places, times, and approaches of domestic prayer. Green catalogs a variety of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century approaches to household and individual prayer. Jane Dawson’s essay on Scotland offers the observation that for people living in crowded houses, private prayer might be found in quite public places, especially gardens (36), a topic repeated in the next essay (59).

Erica Longfellow grapples with the transformation of key terms and concepts, and the concerns early Protestant ministers expressed over the potential dangers of people being left alone to their own spiritual devices. The posthumously published prayers of Charles I played on the sympathies of its readers since the text presented the king’s solitude as an essential attribute of his sufferings (57).

Alec Ryrie's essay on sleep and dreams addresses these issues, which were made problematic because they "are spiritual borderlands: borders between the voluntary and involuntary, between consciousness and unconsciousness, between the universal and the particular, and between life and death" (73). The key aim may be summarized "to sleep, and to waken, correctly" (79), or, to let "your body sleep in sin, your soul might watch with God" (92).

Micheline White examines Anne Lock's translation of *Sermons of John Calvin, upon the songe that Ezechias Made*, printed early in the reign of Elizabeth, which sought to "correct" Catholic usage of the same biblical texts that formed a part of the dirge (104). Jessica Martin tackles some of the difficulties Protestants faced in transforming the Passion into a "proper" theological perspective. Martin cites a passage by Thomas Bilson, Bishop of Winchester: "Only Papists adore 'the matter and forme of the crosse', he remarks; they neglect what he calls 'the force and effects of Christ's death, which is remission of our sinnes'" (120).

Tara Hamling's essay requires us to rethink the boundaries of Reformation iconoclasm as she identifies domestic and household objects that aided memory, especially of biblical texts, in private prayer. Kate Narveson responds to "the triumphalist" story of the clergy, endeavoring to bring the laity into a culture of Bible reading to consider the misgivings voiced by the clergy over lay access to the Word of God. Of course, numerous aids were printed to guide those lacking a university education through the scriptures, but, as Narveson writes, "the culture of Scripture reading was in a state of flux" (178).

Jeremy Schmidt's essay begins with the example of an English Protestant family that lost a nineteen-year-old daughter after a prolonged illness. Mother, father, and dying daughter turned to the Bible for support, but they all found their support in different passages. This pattern promotes the question of how readers engaged the Bible, and Schmidt reveals the struggle that the reading process of this distressed early modern family exhibited as they turned to writing to aid their understanding. Paratextual framework, guides, marginalia, etc., also helped direct readers in their study. Hannibal Hamlin looks at the penitential Psalms, which remained central to "private and domestic devotions" regardless of theological transformations (235). Beth Quitslund looks at singing the Psalms, a complex topic, and a practice that many early modern commenters thought might be accomplished with more reverence and devotion. The final essay by Alison Shell examines the manner in which John Austin's *Devotions* represents a text that found appeal across confessional lines. Shell states, "Austin ought to be given greater prominence as a missing link between medieval office hymns and the hymn-writers of the nineteenth-century Catholic revival" (280).

In aggregate, these essays offer some intriguing insights into the subject matter. The end result is a collection that brings many unexpected observations to the fore, while at the same time cataloging patterns of praying that may appear obvious to many readers.

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