

immense interest and use, both to those who are limited to English and to those who are not.

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The dissolution of the monasteries. A new history. By James G. Clark. Pp. x + 689 incl. 33 colour plates. New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2021. £25. 978 0 300 11572 7

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This substantial volume, the result of prolonged research, aims to provide a detailed and definitive account of the final years of monastic life in England. In so doing the author has provided a chronological, step-by-step examination of the successive developments before, during and after the actual closing of all the religious houses. The resulting details are impressive, although the reader may, from time to time, find himself in danger of losing the broader vision in the midst of the profusion of fascinating illustrative details.

The first 140 pages are devoted to a lengthy description of the historical background in which details of the round of daily life within the cloister are examined together with the impact of its physical presence on the surrounding community. Many of the members living locally were dependent, at least in part, on the neighbouring monks and nuns for their livelihood. In addition, the monastic contribution in the fields of hospitality, charity and health care were far from negligible.

The second section, of more than 200 pages, traces in detail the unfolding sequence of events that culminated in the final complete closure of 1540. In so doing Clark suggests that, along with the growing difficulties arising from Henry VIII's divorce from his Spanish wife, Katherine of Aragon, there were increasing signs of the development of a new relationship between the crown and the religious communities. The author sees a growing uncertainty on both sides arising from the succession of changing policies and directives issued by the former and the not surprising hesitation and lack of collective policy or action on the part of the latter. In addition, the English monastic community received little or no support from the papacy, which became concerned with the divisive international ramifications of the royal divorce. As a result, the English monastic community was bereft of support. Clark also draws attention to an earlier Tudor interest in monastic reform on the part of Henry VII and Archbishop Morton, who had become concerned about a renewal of monastic observance. This had the, perhaps, unexpected effect of paving the way for future intervention in monastic affairs, for example in making appointments to ecclesiastical office and in their constant supervision. These activities were probably a significant factor in the otherwise surprising lack of collective resistance on the part of the religious houses.

The first round of suppressions in 1536 led to a few scattered uprisings and also increasing agitation and division of opinion among and within many monastic communities. This was soon augmented when the greater monasteries awakened to the impending threat that their future existence might also be at stake. This became clear when they were also subjected to a detailed visitation ordered by the king and his advisers. All monastic properties and possessions were to be recorded and evaluated by assigned royal commissioners. In the space of four

years the remaining religious houses were closed and individual members who had not already departed were expelled.

Clark suggests that Henry and his advisors may earlier have had in mind a new form of monasticism in which the administrative aspects of all the religious houses would have been subject to him and them. He concludes that what most probably drove the monasteries to the final surrender was the impending threat of a permanent and unceasing control over their daily administrative lives. For his part Henry may have been visualising their continuity but subject to his terms. The final closure brought an increase in the crown's revenue but also in unforeseen problems.

The third and final section provides a detailed account of the course of events that followed in the wake of the suppression. These proved difficult to piece together due to the lack of surviving contemporary records. There were long and painful delays suffered by the ex-religious before receiving pensions and also for many former monk priests before obtaining faculties of secularisation. Small groups of former monks and nuns surreptitiously continued a form of communal life; some became dependent on family connections; a small number fled abroad; and a few managed to continue their university studies at Oxford and Cambridge. In the final pages Clark refers to the comments of later writers towards the end of the sixteenth century in their views of the achievements of the Tudor monarchy.

There are a few problems to which the reader's attention should be drawn. Some of the footnotes and footnote references are inadequate and unreliable. A number of books referred to do not appear in the bibliographies with the result that an interested reader is unable to seek for further information. This is a regrettable failure in an otherwise illuminating study.

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Biographies of a reformation. Religious change and confessional coexistence in Upper Lusatia, 1520–1635. By Martin Christ. (Studies in German History.) Pp. xiv + 261 incl. 14 ills and 2 maps. Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. £75. 978 0 19 886815 6

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The Reformation was a tense process that produced a variety of confessional contexts and forms. The historical dissertation under review exemplifies this with the example of Upper Lusatia. In doing so, it takes as its object of study a territory that 'has received little scholarly attention, especially by Anglophone historians', and which at the same time can be considered as 'a further example of a region where a clear confessionalization process is difficult to detect' (p. 14).

For this reason, the monograph examines how religious coexistence in Upper Lusatia developed and how exactly a religious change took place in the period 'from the first Lutheran stirrings in the early 1520s to the change of rulership from the Bohemian crown to the Saxon dukes in 1635'