

Reviews

Religion and the household. Papers read at the 2012 summer meeting and the 2013 winter meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society. Edited by †John Doran, Charlotte Methuen and Alexandra Walsham. (Studies in Church History, 50.) Pp. xxxii + 504 incl. frontispiece and 49 figs. Woodbridge: Boydell Press (for the Ecclesiastical History Society), 2014. £45. 978 0 95468 102 9; 0424 2084
JEH (67) 2016; doi:10.1017/S0022046916000154

Conceived on a substantial scale, this volume brings together a wealth of current scholarship on the relationship between religion and the household in the form of thirty-one essays and a very useful introduction. The best pieces recast our sense of both sides of the equation, leaving us with a clearer idea of the qualities and attitudes which define both domestic and religious practice. Many of the pieces simply put a spatial or familial lens against an aspect of their author's wider project, or provide a case study of an individual household or type of household, but these too are valuable: the detailed investigation of household practice that they permit allows them to deal with domestic specificity, essential when addressing the household as a topic; they make it possible to unpick the hour-by-hour closeness of domestic life. The focus of these essays, then, offers a useful methodology: analysis of lived religious experience on a 'household scale' – for instance of Anne Gladstone's annotated bible, or the range of emotional and professional responses to the death of Charlotte Bloomfield, daughter of the British ambassador at Stockholm.

The spine of this volume, which articulates relationships between these otherwise potentially disparate case studies, is the arc of English Christian domestic attitudes and practices springing from interpretation of key biblical passages, most coherently from Roman times to the twentieth century. Nuanced by comparison with other faiths and countries, this central focus is strikingly referential through longer and shorter periods of time – medieval reworking of the early Christians' writings; Foxe's use of Lollard practices; the Oxford Movement's harking back to pre-Reformation celibacy. Responding to the same textual precedents, these views of the household speak naturally to one another in ways that make useful comparative reading for those studying any of the periods covered.

The disciplinary range of the subject matter here is also impressive, exploring the different media through which domestic models and practices were conveyed within the household: drama, music, needlework, religious art and wall paintings together permit dense thematic readings which build a complex picture of the qualities of domestic piety for periods in which the coverage is most complete.

An interest in the relationship between textual and physical shaping of experience – the configuration of spaces in relation to the structure of prayers for instance – can be traced through several chapters. As the biblical grounding demands, however, it is the relationship between books and the household that is strongest here, and the Bible is variously explored in relation to explicit pedagogical practices, as sung and recited by Catholics and Lollards, and bled out of its book form into the material of the houses themselves, its texts applied to objects and walls: multi-sensory interactions ‘rooted in the paraphernalia and bustle of domestic life’ (p. 212).

Strong thematic issues stand out across the volume as a whole, ones which should make this book of interest to a wide audience of and beyond historians of religion. First, there are many interesting insights into the question of the boundaries of the house and their porosity. Responses to printed injunctions to domestic prayer nuance our sense of that fraught dynamic between the public and the private – it is a binary not often considered from the perspective of heaven and earth, or in relation to the inner life of the soul. The way in which various media cross domestic boundaries is explicitly considered through amusements available in the nineteenth-century house, for instance, where the sinful world is patterned against the pure household, and consumer culture too appears differently through the lens of religion – in aids to prayer, or the role of material culture in episcopal households in a crucial three centuries for the development of mass-produced consumer goods. Hospitality is considered as a further complicating factor in public/private divisions in the story of Sarah Terrett, founder of the White Ribbon Army, and in the contrast between different concepts of ‘hosting’ in Chinese and Christian religious life.

Another key theme laid bare by the scope of this volume is domestic reproducibility: of spaces, families and modes of behaviour across time and generations. We see continuity in relics passed on between parents and children in the Early Church, but the obvious focus here is on the fractures of the Reformation, with case studies of the Syon household at Denham, or Catholic music in a Northamptonshire gentry household. A poignant sense of loss and threat to household and practice also comes across in later periods, however: through peripatetic missionary households in Congo that failed to sustain a familiar model of the European home, or through women’s narratives of loss of faith, where family no longer offered ‘a conduit for a chain of religious memory’ (p. 488). Gendered ideals of behaviour and practice which aim to shape individuals’ pedagogical role in these processes are explored too: the Decalogue’s underlining of the power of the father figure and the way in which this role transfers to Muslim Indian households; or the religiously-prompted cycles of care often undertaken by women around food preparation or the maintenance of saints’ relics. And domestic routines are revealed as central to these processes of reproducibility – papal meals, Jewish practices around bread – enactments of objects and spaces which form identities and suggest communities of practice that link individual households together. The essays also present a range of ‘model households’ intended to offer instructive patterns for emulation – the college of cardinals, the Cathar households of ‘the perfect’, or the domestic clerical seminaries in late Georgian England. The inspiration that these households offered and the extent to which

they served as beacons in a hostile environment permit interesting and instructive comparisons.

There are many implicit suggestions for extensions of this work – later centuries and comparisons with other religions in particular perhaps – but *Religion and the household* makes essential reading, and this short review has only gestured towards the themes that it clarifies and refocuses. It sets religious practice at the centre of a topic that has often been confined to analysis of the secular, and domestic life at the core of everyday spirituality.

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Remembering Paul. Ancient and modern contests over the image of the Apostle. By Benjamin L. White. Pp. xxiii + 351. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. £48. 978 0 19 937027 6
JEH (67) 2016; doi:10.1017/S0022046916000567

We have long been aware of the fact that students of the past inevitably bring to their work concerns of the present. This is not something that can be avoided but must be acknowledged in a self-critical way. In this elegant and thoughtful book, White gives voice to the consequences of this observation for the study of Paul. He notes how pursuits of the real Paul in modern scholarship stem from the work of F. C. Baur, who, taking up work begun by Schleiermacher, argued for a set of four genuine or ‘Hauptbriefe’ by Paul, to be distinguished from pseudonymous and secondary epistles. It was these texts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians, which contained the essential message of Paul, exemplified in the idea of justification by faith. Far from this Baurian vision being an account of the real Paul, so White argues, it was in fact an argument in favour of a Protestant Paul, near to Baur’s heart and to subsequent generations of scholars. Such scholarship, however acute and however erudite, reflected the setting out of which it came, and has continued to influence the way in which scholars study Paul and his corpus.

In engaging in such an interpretation of Paul, Baur was doing little more than theologians of the second century, the time in which it is possible to see Paul and his letters becoming the subject of interpretation as Paul himself became a figure of Christian tradition, exemplified in a fairly widespread view of him as the sanctified and martyred Apostle. White’s point is a telling one because Baur and many of those who followed him saw second-century writers as either uninterested in Paul or as misunderstanding him. White rejects both claims, arguing that what the second century presents is a series of images of Paul, of diverse interactions with the extant *oeuvre* and developing tradition. To this effect he homes in on what he takes to be two proto-orthodox interpretations of the Apostle, that evidenced in 3 *Corinthians* and in Irenaeus’ *Adversus Haereses*. Both these writers reflect an image of Paul allied to his ‘orthodox’ defence in the wake of gnostic and other ‘misinterpretations’, and they take as the major elements of their defence the image of Paul which emerges from epistles like the pastorals rejected by Baur. The Paul transmitted from the past mixes with elements of the present to produce a complex image of the Apostle sitting beside other complex images.