

Natalie Mears and Alec Ryrie (eds.), *Worship and the Parish Church in Early Modern Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 272, ISBN 978-1-4094-2604-2 (hbk).
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This collection of essays on worship and the parish church in early modern England acts as a sister companion to Martin and Ryrie (eds.), *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012). The cover of Mears and Ryrie's edited collection of essays shows a seventeenth-century woodcut depicting the people and minister at prayer. It is an apt image which covers both the overall aim of the collection (namely to reconstruct the 'ordinary parish church on a Sunday morning') as well as suggesting something of the ambiguous intersections between public and private, exterior and interior, lay and clerical that mark communal worship in the early modern period. As such, this collection flows as a new tributary into the recent stream of studies which examine popular and public religion in the period as well as the cultural impact of the Book of Common Prayer. It pays attention to the complex relationship between 'lived experience' and 'what was legally required or customarily expected' (p. 5). This complex relationship helps contributors to renegotiate the historical reconstruction of worship in early modern England: the institutional liturgy of the Reformed Church of England emerges not simply as a fixed grammar through which people had to learn to parse their public faith, but rather as surprisingly flexible, mutable and equivocal in its forms and reception. The collection offers, then, a significant and scholarly contribution to what constituted the lived reality of early modern religion.

Mears and Ryrie's introduction opens with a bold paradox which acts as the provocation for this collection: 'we know everything and nothing about religion in early modern England' (p. 1). For Mears and Ryrie, the explosion of print culture means that we know a great deal about what early modern people believed through the literature that they produced. Yet, paradoxically, we know nothing 'because although religion is a matter of identity, of belief and culture, it is also a matter of lived experience' (p. 2) and we only hear echoes or uncover vestiges of those experiences. In light of this paradox, each of the ten chapters aims to uncover some aspect of the 'Sunday morning' experience and the intricate, sometimes contradictory or unexpected elements within it. The topics range across the theology and use of liturgical texts, the use of devotional primers, the place of fasting and music, as well as lay and clerical attitudes to bell-ringing and bodily posture and gesture over the Elizabethan period into the 1650s. As such, the collection strives to connect established public devotion with quotidian practices and conflicts, seeing conformity as protean in practice. Hannah Cleugh's opening essay, for example, explores the tension between the teachings of the Articles of Religion about predestination with the inclusive communal identity emphasized within the Book of Common Prayer, especially in baptism and funerals. Natalie Mears goes even further: extraordinary commissioning prayers for special occasions in England, Wales, and Ireland between 1533 and 1642 show that 'special worship was a form of state-sponsored nonconformity' (p. 55). Other essays similarly unveil the surprising degree of fluidity between conformity and nonconformity, the public and private, or the theological and pastoral. Alec Ryrie's chapter on fasting suggests a tension between civic and religious policy: he argues

that, despite Protestant theological claims about abstinence, public fast days were perhaps preserved in parts of England and Scotland as a result of the support Lenten observance gave to the fishing industry. Essays on music by Peter McCullough and Jonathan Willis similarly show the ambivalence shown to the public role of music within Protestant circles.

The real strength of the collection remain the breadth of sources used, ranging across official documents, liturgical forms, private devotional materials, as well as the architectural or silent features of 'Sunday morning' worship such as belfries, gesture and attire. The limit of the collection comes largely from Mears and Ryrie's acknowledgement that any 'view from the pew' remains curiously elusive. While this lacuna acts as the provocation for this collection of essays, it also sets a tough limit. The response to this limit remains instructive, however. John Craig's chapter in particular expands on his previous study of the sounds of the English parish church with an exemplary chapter on 'the mechanics of prayer' (p. 178), paying attention to vocal and bodily gesture, as well as the role that hats played in asserting social significance and the tensions they aroused with the biblical injunction to uncover heads in worship. As Craig shows, the Vestiarian Controversy is not all that can be said of the role of attire in worship. The final two chapters by Trevor Cooper and Judith Maltby respectively trace other negotiations over public worship. Cooper skilfully compares the private devotional practices of the Little Gidding community of the 1630s with the design of the church they used. In turn, Maltby focuses on the emerging 'Anglicans' of the 1640s and 1650s who felt a loyalty to the Prayer Book tradition and yet who were liberated by the abolition of the Act of Uniformity to adjust, amend and experiment with it.

Unlike its interdisciplinary sister volume, Mears and Ryries' collection is predominantly written by historians and theologians. As such, this collection will prove of interest to cultural historians and theologians and exhibits solid scholarship. Yet, the collection perhaps would have benefitted from more interdisciplinary perspectives. Overall, however, this collection establishes a nuanced narrative about how public worship and conformity was embraced, wrestled with, or even subverted in the parish pew. It is also a welcome addition to the often better documented cases of nonconformity among recusants, Puritans and separatists. Indeed, the collection tells the story of how ordinary parish churches on a Sunday morning cast early modern religious conformity as a profoundly variegated phenomenon in its own right.

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Jeffrey W. Driver, *A Polity of Persuasion: Gift and Grief of Anglicanism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), pp. 171, ISBN 978-1-61097-403-5.
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'Can two walk together, except they be agreed?' asks the prophet Amos, a refrain taken up by zealous church reformers throughout the centuries. But where many