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Getting Along? Religious Identities and Confessional Relations in Early Modern England ? Essays in Honour of Professor W. J. Sheils

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The Reformation Studies Institute at St Andrews was founded in 1993, and since 1995 the Studies in Reformation History series has quite rightly earned a reputation for producing fascinating and scholarly collections, not simply for those interested in religious history and the reformations, but for those working on the early modern period more generally. Representing their commitment to innovative methodologies and interdisciplinarity, recent publications have included monographs from two of Peter Marshall?s PhD students: Matthew Milner?s *The Senses and the English Reformation* and Jonathan Willis? *Church Music and Post-Reformation Protestantism*.(1) The series also publishes primary sources, research volumes and thematic collections. *Getting Along?* represents a publication of the latter type ? a thematic collection in honour of Professor W. J. Sheils, recently retired Head of History at the University of York.

The editors are Adam Morton and Nadine Lewycky, both with PhDs from York where they were supervised by Sheils, and the theme they have selected is a tribute to one of Sheils? more recent essays (2), in which he argues that we could have a better understanding of the complexities of the ?ecumenicity of the everyday? if we replace the discussion of ?toleration? with that of ?neighbourliness?. With this in mind, the editors

explain that their volume ?examines the impact of the English Reformation on social interaction, familial and community harmony, and the unsteady and contested process in which religious identities were formed? (p. 1).

Morton and Lewycky first position the collection in the context of the broader historiography relating to the development of religious toleration, embracing the current revisionist trend that characterises ?toleration? as ?a behaviour forged in relations between people? (p. 7). The editors subsequently place their volume amongst the burgeoning field of scholarship, including Benjamin Kaplan?s *Divided by Faith* and Keith Luria?s *Sacred Boundaries*, which emphasises that accommodation and compromise outweighed confessional division.(3) The editors then move on to situate the collection alongside recent works within English historiography, such as Alexandra Walsham?s *Charitable Hatred* (4), which highlight negotiation between confessional groupings and emphasise the complex balancing act between tolerance and intolerance visible in the period. Morton and Lewycky also engage with the historiography of post-Reformation Catholicism and nonconformity, where they emphasise that the conclusions in this field mirror those found in narratives on tolerance, and conclude that all fields are dominated by ?accommodation and negotiation, rather than confrontation? (p. 16). Finally, the editors place the volume within the historiographical debates surrounding ?confessionalisation?, where they suggest that the presence of so many ?others? within the English parishes during the period had the effect of heightening awareness of confessional identities and argue that ?religious see-sawing? in the period ?was the well-spring of English pluralism? (p. 20).

Put simply, Morton and Lewycky state that their volume ?highlights the tension and degree of accommodation amongst ordinary people? and that the collection is ?based on the premise that the development of religious identities in the early modern period is best understood by examining ordinary life at the parish level? before concluding with the claim that ?as such, this volume engages with the long-standing contention that religious toleration, so long considered the cornerstone of the Enlightenment, should truly be considered the preserve of early modern European society? (p. 1). Nevertheless, most of the ten essays within this collection ? contributors include reformation heavyweights such as Alexandra Walsham and Peter Marshall, as well as York-trained early-career scholars such as Katy Gibbons and Simon Johnson ? are not so limited in their scope or conclusions. The subsequent investigations span the social hierarchy, reach beyond the confines of the English parochial system to the continent and even stretch to the literary sphere of polemic and ideology, before ultimately concluding that there is more occurring within the period than simply ?getting along?.

The first chapter within the volume sets the bar high, as Alexandra Walsham succinctly embraces the theme in a wide-ranging and expert analysis of communion, community and sociability across the confessions in post-Reformation England. She begins with an exploration of how the theological rupture of the reformations and attitudes towards the Eucharist played out in both polemic and at parochial level. Walsham agrees with John Bossy when she argues that the growing emphasis on more frequent communion for both Protestants and Catholics catalysed the demise of the Eucharist as a symbol of parish unity. Walsham then extends her analysis to complicate Bossy?s thesis by highlighting how, rather than being seen simply as the chief agent of change, Protestantism might be viewed through its capacity to engender *communitas* and social unity among its adherents, and that the process did not so much undermine traditional notions of community as redefine them. Walsham closes her chapter with a fascinating discussion of Catholic and Protestant sociability that could only have been improved by a more lengthy discussion of the places and spaces where Catholics and Protestants were ?sociable? ? and I am sure that this will provide a topic for further scholarly study.

In the second chapter Peter Marshall also takes us to the heart of inter-confessional relations in a thorough examination of parish registers to explore the burial practices of English Catholics during the long 17th century. By revealing the various ways in which Catholics had to adapt to the practicalities of burying their dead in the aftermath of the reformations ? from illicit night-time ceremonies to straightforward parish bribery ? Marshall also complicates another Bossy thesis: rather than viewing the desire of Catholics to secure interment in parochial churchyards as a case-study in ?anti-confessionalising impulses? (p. 75), Marshall argues that this is also an illustration of how burial choices both underline as well as undermine the

differences between Catholics and Protestants. Through choosing to bury their dead in the same place, Marshall argues that churchyards became a microcosm of these larger issues of confessional negotiation and the construction of religious identities.

The following three essays in this collection take us to the realms of micro-history and further emphasise that there was as much not getting along as getting on within the period. In chapter three Robert Swanson explores the ?fissures and crannies? and ?gaps and weaknesses? (p. 77) within the parish layer, by drawing attention to the tensions and negotiations surrounding parochial provision within pre-Reformation parishes and chaplaincies. Whilst evidently an important contribution to late medieval scholarship its relation to the 'impact of the English Reformation' is unclear and it may perhaps have held more interest if the chapter had extended the analysis to a comparison with the post-Reformation period. It would have been fascinating to explore how these parish boundaries and chapel provisions were accommodated and renegotiated in the midst and aftermath of the reformations.

In chapter four, Emma Watson focuses upon Elizabethan ecclesiastical courts to highlight the lay-clerical relationship within the diocese of York. Watson has selected examples of cases brought by the laity against their local parish clergy in the diocese in the 1560s and 1570s and subsequently attempts to reinvigorate the dormant scholarship on anti-clericalism, which was largely laid to rest by Christopher Haigh in the 1980s. Watson?s analysis, whilst an interesting snapshot, does not add much that is new as she largely adheres to Haigh?s conclusions that individual cases often resulted from particular tensions and cannot be used to support any one thesis on lay-clerical relations. The capacity for such a localised study to make generalisations on social and religious (dis)harmony is limited and despite Watson?s proposal that there might be scope for further work on the issue of ecclesiastical discipline and its role in lay-clerical relations in the 16th-century diocese of York, a more wide-ranging analysis would have generated broader conclusions.

Chapter five takes us to Northampton and focuses on two anti-clerical and anti-authoritarian verse libels. Andrew Cambers utilises this case to further question just how much 'getting along' there was in the period. The main body of this chapter is dedicated to a narrative of ?The Case?. At the end of 1607, the anti-puritan lawyer John Lambe (later a staunch supporter of William Laud) made presentments and subsequently a formal bill of complaint to the Star Chamber. Lambe described two assaults upon his person: the first was a violent disruption of the collection of tithes to which he was entitled while the second consisted of two libels, which he argued were directed against him, some members of the 'godly' clergy and various other knights and justices of the peace. Lambe claimed these had been composed by his enemies to gain revenge following the outcome of the first grievance regarding tithes. Whilst the overall outcome of this complaint is unknown, Cambers describes the lengthy account of the dissemination of these libels. Although quite interesting, this long narrative comes at the expense of what might have been a more nuanced analysis, despite Cambers? astute reflections within the final pages of this chapter, which rightly identify the complexities inherent within notions of 'authors', 'writers', 'contrivers' and 'publishers' during the period. Nevertheless, Cambers? claim that this case ?betrays any notions of puritans and their enemies getting along in the early seventeenth century? (p. 131) is a little sweeping. As Emma Watson highlighted in her chapter, localised grievances directed against clerics and others in positions of authority might not have necessarily been wholly religiously motivated and could incorporate all manner of complexities.

The next two essays within the volume also focus on the literary culture of the period. In chapter six Rosamund Oates explores polemical histories penned in England and abroad by both Protestants and Catholics, who in this turbulent and complex period were attempting to make the past their own. Oates? contribution to the topic of 'getting along' is thought-provoking. Tracing the narratives and confessional debates inspired by the histories of Parker, Foxe, Verstegan and Parsons, Oates explores their impact across the confessional divide ? demonstrating that for men and women residing in parishes across England, these 'quasi-official' histories helped to fashion their own multifaceted interpretations of the Church. Moreover, Oates highlights that, for the majority of Elizabethan parishioners, it was not simply the details of the histories of Foxe or Parker which shaped historical discussion, but their apocalyptic vision of the Church. Whilst this vision was evinced by Foxe in his Book of Martyrs, Oates demonstrates how this was only one facet to the shaping of the history of the Church in Elizabethan England. Furthermore, she utilises the

renegotiation of the national calendar to demonstrate how this refashioning was a reciprocal top down and bottom up process which highlighted how the past mattered to the parishioners of England as much as it did to the polemicists of the Tudor church.

The search for the historical 'truth' of the Church is also explored in chapter seven and Peter Lake?s unusual contribution to the volume. In a detailed but somewhat insular analysis of the play *Sir John Oldcastle, pt 1*, published anonymously in 1600 (but written by Michael Drayton, Richard Hathaway, Anthony Munday and Robert Wilson), Lake highlights how the past could also be used to make detailed commentary on the present and how theatrical performance could put ?the politics of conscience on the public stage?. Lake addresses the theme implicitly and makes some fascinating comments on the ability of theatre to act as a microcosm for the tensions between ecclesiastical and royal power. Whilst Lake also demonstrates the play?s ability to highlight the division between politics and religion and the subsequent complexities of public and private belief and practice, it would have been more relevant to the volume?s theme perhaps to have had fuller consideration of the wider impact of these types of performances, rather than simply to extrapolate from one playscript. As it stands, it could be contended that this type of theatrical religious and social commentary occurred in isolation, which is surely not the case.

In chapter eight, Katy Gibbons ensures that the subjects of her contribution do not remain in isolation as she traces the complex process of the negotiation of religious identity between post-Reformation English Catholics and their exiled compatriots on the continent. Gibbons highlights how in the period, despite official proclamations that those travelling abroad were traitors and the exhortations against compromise by some leading Catholic polemicists, there was room to manoeuvre and some Catholics embraced the dual identities of conforming church papist whilst in England, and then enjoyed the freedom to practice their faiths openly when abroad. Moreover, this manoeuvre meant that there were a multitude of scenarios in which Catholics had to ?get along? with their Protestant neighbours and compromise with their co-religionists, as well as negotiate with their Protestant hosts abroad. In her analysis, Gibbons succinctly reminds us of the problems associated with the imposition of monolithic identities within this period, as well as emphasising that there is more to English Catholicism than is currently being identified within the borders of England.

The final two essays (by Stuart Carroll and Andrew Hopper and Simon Johnson) also explore Englishmen abroad. By sketching the lives of two 17th-century missionaries in chapter nine Carroll and Hopper cast new light on the life of John Harwood ? a itinerant Quaker preacher, whose interrogation within the Bastille is translated and printed for the first time as an appendix to this chapter ? and reveal much about the experience of Quakerism in Yorkshire as well as its missions to France. Through the investigation of Harwood?s life, Carroll and Hopper have identified a hitherto unidentified Quaker network and, moreover, further underline Gibbons? conclusions of the previous chapter that 'place' has an important role to play in the fashioning of religious identities.

Finally, in chapter ten, Simon Johnson?s contribution explores the life of Thomas White (alias Blacklow). Condemned by Anglicans as a republican and by Catholics as a heretic, White has been posthumously vilified. Nevertheless, in exploring the life of this contested figure, Simon Johnson reveals much about the governance of the English Catholic Mission and White?s role in England. Johnson?s fascinating sketch demonstrates how White?s campaign for tolerance for English Catholics, which included his denial of papal infallibility and subsequent excommunication from the Catholic Church, reveals the tensions inherent within the English Catholic community itself and, as Katy Gibbons also emphasised, firmly reinstates English Catholic exiles within the narratives on post-Reformation Catholicism.

In Ronnie Hsia?s review of the collection of essays composed in honour of another University of York Professor, John Bossy, edited by Simon Ditchfield and also published as part of the St Andrews Studies in Reformation History series, Hsia exclaimed that ?a good Festschrift is like a successful birthday party: chosen for their friendship and congeniality, the guests/contributors bring their distinct voices to a common encomium of the person being honoured; they remember themes common to the interest of all and add fresh excitement to a retrospective of a life?s achievements?.(5) Bossy?s contributors were praised for

representing such a ?felicitous occasion? and this can quite confidently be extended to the plethora of ex-students and colleagues brought together to honour their mentor and friend, Professor Bill Sheils. By using ?Getting Along**?**? ? emphasis on the ??? ? as a category for analysis, the results within this volume have in fact been far more insightful than much other work on ecumenicity. The guests at Sheils? party remind us that whilst compromise was crucial, there was still a vast amount of *not* getting along in a period of heightened confessional sensitivity and one in which subtle manipulations, aggressive negotiation and straightforward confrontation were still important elements of the everyday, at all levels of society - things which must not be forgotten in the face of a burgeoning tendency in recent scholarship to promote the 'blurring' of confessional divisions and boundaries.

Notes

1. Matthew Milner, *The Senses and the English Reformation* (Farnham, 2011); Jonathan Willis, *Church Music and Post-Reformation Protestantism* (Farnham, 2010).Back to (1)
2. W. J. Sheils, ??Getting on? and ?Getting along? in parish and town: Catholics and their neighbours in England?, in *Catholic Communities in Protestant States*: *Britain and the Netherlands, c.1570-1720*, ed. Benjamin Kaplan et al. (Manchester, 2009), pp. 67?83.Back to (2)
3. Benjamin Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 2007) and Keith Luria, *Sacred Boundaries: Religious Coexistence and Conflict in Early-Modern France* (Washington, DC, 2005) .Back to (3)
4. Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500?1700* (Manchester, 2005).Back to (4)
5. Ronnie Hsia, ?Review of *Christianity and Community in the West: Essays for John Bossy*, ed. Simon Ditchfield?, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 55, (2004), 187?9.Back to (5)

Adam Morton thanks Emilie Murphy for her review, and does not wish to comment further.

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