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**Walsham, Alexandra. Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain: Catholic Christendom 1300–1700**

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**Walsham, Alexandra.**

*Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain: Catholic Christendom 1300–1700.* Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014. Pp. xviii, 490. ISBN 978-0-7546-5723-1 (hardcover) £80/\$139.95.

That there was a paradigm shift from recusants and martyrs to church papists and degrees of conformity, and a rise in interest in the survival and revival of Catholicism in Elizabethan and Stuart England, is largely due to the work of Alexandra Walsham—as represented by the familiar but revised essays in this compilation. From about the 1970s, led by the works of John Bossy and Christopher Haigh, Catholicism in England was viewed as a shrinking pool of idle bystanders unwilling or unable to follow the lead of heroic Jesuit missionaries and brave priests combatting the spiritual infection of Protestantism. Walsham (with Shagan, Questier, and others) re-examined the full range of available materials and found instead an interesting and unique duality to real Catholic endurance. Neither apolitical nor apathetic, English (British) Catholics pursued varied strategies (including recusancy) and consequently the faith, patronage, and political networks survived. An extensive and historiographical introduction reveals the context underlying the revisions looking at the relationship between events in Britain and in the wider world of Catholic rejuvenation, as Counter-Reformation forces like Trent and the Jesuits intersected Catholic Reformation forces like revised monasticism, individual piety, and national political compromises. And, as part and parcel of the revised paradigm, Walsham demonstrated the real mutual influences that existed between Catholicism and Protestantism in England and traced the changes made necessary in pursuit of the faith as a result of its transformation from state church to minority sect. The eleven essays of the collection are divided into four themes, each of which could easily generate further books, articles, and research.

Part 1 delves into questions of conscience and conformity through focused attention on occasional and nuanced conformity (as advanced in the works of Thomas Bell), on the importance of Nicodemites, and on the consequent rise of personal conscience, mutual toleration, and compromise between the faiths. English Catholics faced charges of spiritual perjury and heresy from Continental authorities (e.g., Jesuits) but they also stood as pre-cursors to the inter-confessional peace and coexistence that blossomed much later. In part 2, Walsham examines the work of missionaries and the careful adaptation of popular cultural

memes, like miracle or angelic visitation stories and relics, to recapture or re-ignite the popular Catholic imagination. This was part of a wider European experience in which reformation and humanist satire had long stripped hagiography of its pseudo-pagan and supernatural aspects, forcing a change to an emphasis on the heroic and/or virtuous. In Britain, stories and relics (as well as the lack of priests) subsequently influenced an unofficial confessionalization and a kind of Catholic *priesthood of all believers* inimical to Tridentine revisionism. As native Catholics adopted older forms of piety, missionaries latched on but turned these into warnings against excessive conformity—at odds, however, with an increasing acceptance of minority status. Roman Catholicism sought ways and means to prepare England for the triumphant day to come, emphasizing clerical and central spiritual oversight, while the English tried to engage official toleration. Essay 6, on Holywell, is an interesting case study. Holywell survived dissolution to emerge in the later Tudor and Stuart periods as both an intact place of pilgrimage with a deep sacred history and a site of emergent Welsh nationalism; as an example of adapted sacred geography and an example of the secularization process (from spiritual pilgrimage to medical pilgrimage site). Part 3, communication and conversion, reveals another interesting duality at work.

On the one hand, Catholic writing was useful both as a substitute for priests and official sermons and as a means of asserting institutional controls and spiritual discipline. Nominal independence from clerical structures allowed writing also to become a means of combatting illiteracy and influencing a type of personal autonomy and piety that did not necessarily rely on clerical structures and institutional controls (particular where these were obviously lacking). Walsham used the Douai-Rheims Bible (emphasizing its marginalia) to highlight how interpretative misunderstandings were illustrated, how the laity could be educated, and how theological positioning (e.g., *sola scriptura* v. scripture and tradition) was carried out. Finally, part 4 looks at instances of translation (a more detailed concentration on print culture and biblical translation) and the transmutation of official Catholicism to meet distinctive English needs. Jesuits and Douai priests, resident in noble households, acted as if the structure and organization that Tridentine decrees required would one day return, while native priests adapted their actions to the reality of non-conformist sectarianism. The need for caution and obfuscation by Jesuits inverted the traditional lay/clerical relationship—while their offering of private masses defied Tridentine decrees banning such acts and gave them a direct pastoral

supervision of at least some Catholics, allowing households to serve as parish or diocesan headquarters. Native itinerant priests who serviced the countryside, adapting to geo-political realities, brought change (e.g., in traditional gender roles) and influenced the development of pseudo-regular organizations outside of tradition clerical oversights. Catholicism survived not because of the firm recusancy of the few but due to the occasional conformity, mutual toleration, and recognition of the political realities by the many.

Every essay in this collection features text and language both scholarly and easy on the eye; each has a pleasing flow, which not only enhances the academic value of the work but also solidifies Walsham's reputation as a major voice in the revision of early modern British Catholic studies.

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**Wandel, Lee Palmer.**

***The Reformation: Towards a New History.***

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. viii, 281. ISBN 978-0-521-71797-7 (paperback) \$26.99.

In *The Reformation: Towards a New History*, Lee Palmer Wandel sets out to reorganize the way in which the history of the Reformation is told and to integrate two important sixteenth-century histories: the history of Europe's discovery of and expansion into the Americas and the history of the fragmentation of European Christianity into multiple competing Churches. Her treatment of the Reformation is divided into three parts: the first, "Beginnings," describes late medieval Christianity, the impact of Columbus's voyages and Spain's expansion into the New World, and the state of Bible printing and distribution by the beginning of the sixteenth century. The second part, "Fragmentation," describes the clash of competing interpretations of and approaches to Scripture and the resulting reordering of familial and subject-ruler relationships. The final section, "Religion Reconceived," elucidates the changes in how sixteenth-century Europeans defined what it meant to be Christian, how they interacted with sacred objects and spaces, and how they approached the Eucharist.