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Felicity Heal. *Reformation in Britain and Ireland.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. xviii + 568 pp. \$125.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-826924-3.



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The Oxford History of the Christian Church sails on its way with all the majesty that the Cunard Line brought to crossing the Atlantic in the last century; the blue riband adorns the dust-jackets of successive volumes as it has done since the 1970s, and still on the bridge are the two Chadwick brothers, former Regius Professors at Oxford and Cambridge. Yet there is no sense of a period piece about Felicity Heal's volume, which is unlikely to be challenged in general outline for decades. This is a superb achievement based on a staggering range of reading: clear, and consistently sensible and judicious. It is a fitting complement to Owen Chadwick's recently published volume on the Reformation in the rest of Europe (and, it must be said, Heal provides a structured and easily comprehensible narrative, in comparison with Chadwick's rich but quirky panorama). The overall plan of the Oxford History series means that the story ends in this volume around 1600. Although this is a slightly later terminus than Chadwick's, who tends to draw stumps in the 1560s or 1570s, Heal is thus perforce unable to survey what it has become fashionable to see as a "Long Reformation" stretching into the seventeenth or even the eighteenth century. Yet she is able to make a virtue of this necessity, rightly arguing (p. 478) that by the end of the sixteenth century, after much variety, adjustment, and growing self-definition, there was finally "little cultural space" anywhere in the islands to be anything else

but Romanist or Protestant, and so there is some point to making an end at this point. Moreover, the restricted time-frame gives Heal a chance to provide a detailed and well-controlled picture of the whole archipelago of islands which used to be known as the British Isles: this is not just an account of the English Reformation with a few grudging appendices on the other two kingdoms of the islands, but a proper consideration of the wider picture, particularly alert to interactions and fruitful comparisons. The "Atlantic Isles" dimension is essential to understanding the dramatic changes of the sixteenth century. Scotland provides a Reformation in purer and more clearly articulated form than England, while Ireland affords the unique spectacle in Europe of a Counter-Reformation coming to fruition despite the efforts of the central government, an achievement of resistance more generally associated with Protestantism. Heal's general approach to these different but increasingly intertwined experiences might crudely be termed "post-revisionist"; she has absorbed the useful lessons which a thirty-year assault on the cruder forms of Protestant triumphalism has taught us, but she is evidently aware that some revisionists had to build Aunt Sallies before knocking them down, and she recognizes the often-maligned A. G. Dickens as a rather more subtle historian than he is often portrayed. There is an occasional note of sharpness, for instance, towards historians who have described the Refor-

mation as a moment in which the broad mass of the laity lost control and initiative in the Church, because Protestantism dissolved devotional guilds.

This is not a book for beginners. It seems consciously intended for those who already have a grounding in Reformation knowledge, for it can be allusive, for instance not explaining on page 325 what a "Castilian" might be in the context of Scottish politics. To make sense of an interesting remark about the private chapels of the nobility, the reader will be expected to know that the Elizabethan Earl of Bedford was a Puritan and the Earl of Arundel a Catholic. But students thirsting to give shape to unformed information will find it a boon. The account of the theology throughout the Churches of the islands (chapter 8) is the best summary account now available, superseding the much more extensive but now seriously dated and in many respects misleading description in the first volume of Horton Davies's *Worship and Theology in England* (1961-75). Other highlights which will earn student gratitude are, for instance, the crisp survey of current knowledge on that most ambiguous of events, the dissolution of monasteries by Henry VIII, or the introduction to iconophobia and iconoclasm.

Errors are very few. At pp. 328-329, elevation of the host is said to have been abolished in English liturgy by the Second (1552) *Book of Common Prayer*, whereas the 1549 Prayer Book, otherwise cautious in its liturgical changes, had already brusquely forbidden this key moment of the old Mass. Heal, like others (including myself), has been too ready to listen to Roger Bowers, who in an influential article (*Historical Journal*, 2000) argued that

Elizabeth I used the 1549 Prayer Book in her Chapel Royal in the first year of her reign while the shape of the Elizabethan religious settlement was being decided. Bowers's argument was based on an *a priori* assumption that some particularly sumptuous musical settings of the 1549 liturgy could not possibly have been written in 1549-52, and must post-date musical innovations in the Catholic restoration of Queen Mary. This is rather undermined by the fact that one of his examples, a "Second Service" by John Sheppard, is most unlikely to have been written for Elizabeth, since Sheppard made his will a fortnight after Elizabeth's accession and died a fortnight later (Bowers has mistaken his date of death). Sheppard probably had other concerns in his dying weeks than providing music for the Chapel Royal. If Sheppard's elaborate music can thus be reassigned to the period 1549-52, there is no reason why any of the other supposed 1559 settings of the 1549 texts should not also. If I were to indulge in that reprehensible reviewer's practice of rewriting Heal's book for her, I would have said more about the influence of the English cathedrals in providing the setting for that ideological revolution of "Arminianism" which proved so significant for the tangle of English religious identities later known as Anglicanism. Conversely, I would give more weight to religious radicalism, the Melchiorite unitarianism and its allied beliefs which so terrified England's rulers in 1549-50 and which did maintain some presence thereafter. It may also be that that most entertainingly mysterious of radical groupings, the Family of Love, deserve more prominence than it receives here. But these are the carpings of envy at such a monumental, definitive, and elegant survey of a complex story.

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