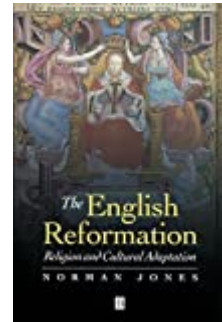
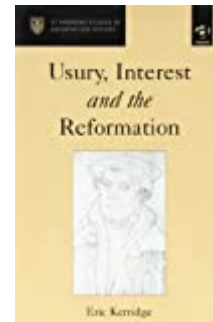


Norman L. Jones. *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaption.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002. xv + 253 pp. \$119.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-631-21042-9; \$48.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-631-21043-6.



Eric Kerridge. *Usury, Interest and the Reformation.* Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2002. ix + 191 pp. \$84.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7546-0688-8.



Norman Jones. *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002. xv + 253 pp.

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Bridges for Historians

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Norman Jones's *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation* and Eric Kerridge's *Usury, Interest and the Reformation* make for strange companions in a single book review. The two, however, provide an interesting contrast in approaches to the Reformation and in tone.

Jones's book encapsulates current thinking on the English Reformation for a broad audience and makes an original contribution to the social and cultural history of religious change by exploring generational difference. Jones handles with a light touch certain vehement historiographical debates and emphasizes the middle ground rather than the "noisy minorities" of the period (p. 6). He imagines three generations attending a wedding feast in

the late 1570s to gauge how a largely Catholic country became a largely Protestant one. He provides brief biographies of individuals, some of them prominent in the cultural and intellectual history of England, such as Thomas More and John Donne, to show how acceptance of and reaction to change created “a post-Reformation culture” (p. 31). Adaptation and amalgamation resulted in “a very different set of life choices for people in 1610 than there had been in 1510” (p. 31), an interpretation quite unlike Christopher Haigh’s dismissive remark about “some Re-formations.”[1]

In shifting to social groups, Jones begins with the family, dealt a “blow” (p. 33) by the Reformation. Families negotiated “private treaties of internal toleration” (p. 33) although tensions flared between husbands and wives, and parents and children. Conscience guided religious choices and made resistance to social superiors possible. Family experiences led members of Parliament to temper anti-recusancy legislation, showing how the family shaped politics and religion. Negotiation of ideological difference also occurred in religious foundations and among corporate groups. Individuals and corporate bodies acceded to “pragmatic adaptation” (p. 97), avoiding civil war while flinging epithets. In companies, universities, inns of court, and religious guilds, adaptations led to a “new political culture” (p. 133). The reinvention of public virtue turned on “practical politics” (p. 137) emphasizing private conscience and “Christian virtues of social harmony” (p. 139). Women figure prominently in analysis of the family, yet more attention to women in parishes and church courts would help us to understand individual and corporate adaptation or resistance to religious change in the sixteenth century.[2]

By contrast, Eric Kerridge’s study is specialized in focus and argumentative in tone. The book is part argument and part original documents, with English translations if necessary. Kerridge corrects scholars on usury, particularly R. H. Tawney who “could not have crossed the *pons asinorum* formed by the distinction between usury and interest” (p. 23). This corrective, however, is “nothing compared to the transcendental importance of acquitting Christians of the charge of having countenanced usury and usurers” (p. 76).

In summarizing the history of the condemnation of usury Kerridge analyzes anti-Semitism. He claims “it was all too easy to lead the common people into the detestable sin of anti-Semitism,” especially since “when they [the Jews] later [after the time of Edward the Confessor] had the chance, Jews had no scruples in practising usury

upon the English” (p. 20). Since “Christianity transcends races, no one of which is chosen by God above the others” (p. 16), Christians considered usury a sin. Anti-Semitic religious narratives, as analyzed by Miri Rubin, are not discussed.[3] His desire to acquit Christians of usury renders the link between Jewish money lending and anti-Semitic violence, without mention of the broader cultural context and causes of anti-Semitism, unsettling.

Kerridge argues that with the Reformation, no significant change in attitudes, remedies, or laws occurred. Reformers accepted the existence of sin, however, and that “to have held an inquest on every commercial or financial transaction would have enmeshed trade and industry in a net that caught both innocent and guilty alike” (p. 52). In noting the variety of commercial and financial transactions in the sixteenth century, Kerridge opens the door to inflation and economic change. He notes that Christians avoided “interest,” preferring instead to describe “such and such a number of pounds in the hundred” (p. 53). An economic and social history detailing lending, by merchants, widows, churchwardens, even if they collected “true interest,” would indicate attitudes regarding money lending outside theological circles, since even those who condemned usury noted that “usurers” distanced themselves from these terms. Testaments offer some evidence of lending, and guilt over injurious practices like usury, although not so clearly in early modern London, say, as in Renaissance Siena.[4] In discussing the English and usury, Kerridge moves rapidly through centuries; what social and economic developments may have triggered complaints in certain periods?

Kerridge approaches the Reformation through the theology of leading reformers and sees little change over time in attitudes relating to usury. Jones instead focuses on individuals, some of whom partook of theological debates, and social groups to ponder how *so much* changed over time. Jones practices in his historical writing the values of toleration and “private treaty” he finds in his subjects, thus leading readers over the bridge to better understanding of the experience of the Reformation.

Notes

[1]. Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 295.

[2]. Diane Willen, “Godly Women in Early Modern England: Puritanism and Gender,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 43, no. 4 (1992): pp. 561-580; Susan Wabuda, “Shunamites and Nurses of the English Refor-

mation: Activities of Mary Glover, Niece of Hugh Latimer,” in *Women in the Church*, ed. W. J. Sheils and D. Wood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 335-344; Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England, 1500-1720* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993); and M. B. Rowlands, “Recusant Women 1560-1640,” in *Women in English Society, 1500-1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), pp. 149-180.

[3]. Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999).

[4]. Samuel K. Cohn, Jr., *Death and Property in Siena, 1205-1800: Strategies for the Afterlife* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 51-53.

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