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Martin, Jessica and Alec Ryrie (eds.). Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain

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See table of contents

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The sustained excellence of Martin's introduction is marred by two small errors. It is surely misleading to say that a BA degree entitled Marlowe "to style himself 'Sir Christopher Marlowe'" (11). (Constance Kuriyama, whose 2002 Marlowe biography Martin follows here, is referring to a not-for-export academic title, an English equivalent to the Latin "Ds." or "Dominus"—but in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, the faux-cleric Sir Topas is not in anyone's estimate the social equal of a knight or baronet like Sir Toby Belch or Sir Andrew Aguecheek.) Secondly, it seems uncalled-for to describe as "conspiracy theories" the analyses that have led to the conclusion that Marlowe's death was a political murder, rather than the result of "a quarrel over lunch" (13): one can take issue with the views of scholars like David Riggs, but labelling of this kind is not the way to do it.

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Martin, Jessica and Alec Ryrie (eds.).
Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain.
St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History. Farnham, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012. Pp. xi, 285 + 11 ill. ISBN 978-1-14094-3131-2 (hardcover) $134.95.

For the last 30 years, reappraisals of the Reformation by historians and literary scholars have produced some of the richest and most fascinating work in the field of early modern studies. For the most part, however, this research has focused on structural issues, notably theology, ecclesiology, and (perhaps especially) doctrine. This has done much to illuminate our understanding of essential sites of political and cultural contestation, and of the relationship between religion and state power; yet this preoccupation with structure has left several significant questions largely unaddressed. What, for instance, were the effects of the Reformation on the lives of individual believers? What can be said to constitute the experience of a Reformed faith among members of the laity? *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, a collection of essays edited by Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie, establishes important groundwork for this conversation by calling attention to the subject of religious practice within

the household: collective daily devotions, the experience of solitary prayer, and prayer shared only by husbands and wives. Drawing on an impressive array of manuscript and printed sources taken from social, political, and confessional contexts, these essays identify a texture of conflict and continuity at the heart of private devotion that hints at the truly complex shape of Reformation-era religious belief. While the trend in much recent scholarship has been to challenge the understanding of the Reformation as intelligible according to simplistic and totalizing binaries (Catholic vs. Calvinist, northern vs. southern England, "elite" vs. "popular," etc.), nowhere is this vocabulary more seriously inadequate than in the domestic sphere, as these essays clearly show. Households and individual believers in England and Scotland created approaches to personal devotion that combined elements of the institutional Church with individual and familial innovations, with input from parish clergy and household chaplains, and even with aspects of pre-Reformation piety.

The collection begins with two valuable surveys of Reformation-era domestic devotion: Ian Green discusses England in the first, and Jane E. A. Dawson addresses Scotland in the second. In both countries, Reformed attitudes toward private devotion are shaped by dialogue between public and personal approaches to worship as well as between the present and the Catholic past. This dialogue is the focus for many of the essays here. Hannibal Hamlin examines the penitential psalms and their continued significance as a distinct group of devotional texts for evangelicals. Micheline White discusses Anne Lock and argues that her confessional ideology is remarkable for the series of responses that it offers to Catholic devotional practices, especially those associated with the Office of the Dead. Jessica Martin reads devotional tracts and sermons as well as more traditionally "literary" texts in order to assess Reformed responses to the complex devotional problems posed by the Passion. Tara Hamling argues persuasively that early modern domestic devotion relied, even in Reformed homes, on an apparatus of visual aids, notably carefully-crafted household objects imbued with spiritual significance. In the only chapter on post-Reformation Catholic practice, Alison Shell reads John Austin's *Devotions*, used by both Catholics and evangelicals, as a text that illustrates the difficulty of drawing confessional lines in the practice of private devotion in the seventeenth century, even if such lines might be drawn in doctrine.

Several of the essays examine the significance of Reformed attitudes toward private devotion within larger cultural debates, notably those surrounding

privacy itself. Though both the Church of England and the Kirk encouraged private prayer and reading of the Scriptures, political and cultural suspicions of secrecy, combined with a reverence of communal worship, created official attitudes toward private devotion that were conflicted to say the least. Erica Longfellow argues that *Eikon Basilike* draws upon these suspicions in order to portray Charles I's solitary prayer while held captive as a result of monstrous political coercion. The role of the institutional church in prescribing forms of private devotion is also crucial to Kate Narveson's essay, which considers the efforts of Reformed clerics to regulate reading practices in order to make clear the relationship between interpretation and Reformed doctrine. This inclination to discipline the private self emerges in Alec Ryrie's fascinating essay on evangelical thinking about sleep and dreams. Sleep was occasionally regarded as welcome rest, but more often with suspicion as a moment in which believers were at their most spiritually vulnerable. Not all attention to the issue of privacy was negative, however. Beth Quitslund shows how metrical psalms were intended by English versifiers to be specifically domestic devotional texts, and Jeremy Schildt provides a riveting survey of Bible-reading practices in the mid- and late- seventeenth century.

This collection defines a malleable yet fundamentally cohesive subject of study and introduces its audience to key questions that may stimulate further discussion. Individual essays are very strong and provide valuable points of departure for future work. Admittedly, the collection has its biases—little is written about private devotional practice in Wales or post-Reformation Catholic practice, for example, and most of the pieces tend to lean heavily on evidence from the seventeenth century—but to emphasize these gaps too strongly would be to miss the point. The volume's function is to identify an area of study that has been overlooked in recent years and, perhaps more importantly, to explain why it is that our limited understanding of this area constitutes a serious deficiency in our knowledge of the Reformation as a whole. This it does, and very admirably. Without a sense of how the structural changes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries affected the lives of individual believers, any portrait of the period is necessarily incomplete.

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