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Edited by

PATRICK COLLINSON and JOHN CRAIG

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Preface

It was John Craig, at about the time that John Major won his election in 1992, who first suggested to his former PhD supervisor, Patrick Collinson, the generation and production of a collection of essays on the Reformation in the English towns. John's thesis had dealt with the impact of the Protestant Reformation on four East Anglian towns: Bury St Edmunds, Hadleigh, Mildenhall and Thetford (none of them, as it happens, represented in this volume). Patrick's interest in the religious history of towns in the Elizabethan period had begun no later than the summer of 1952 when, freshly down from Cambridge and about to undertake postgraduate research in London, he cut his palaeographical teeth on the Great Court Book, Assembly Books, and Treasurer's and Chamberlain's Accounts of his native Ipswich, sitting in the Ipswich Reference Library under the watchful eye of the town archivist, a certain Mr Collinson (no relation). The material he transcribed in those early days has featured in more than one of the books he was to publish many years later. But in 1976, returning to the English university scene from Australia, he failed to write the essay on the urban Reformation which had been commissioned for an earlier Macmillan collection, *Church and Society in England from Henry VIII to James I* (1977). Fortunately Bill Sheils, another former pupil, stepped into that breach. Patrick would later write what he might have contributed to the Macmillan volume in 'The Protestant Town', the second chapter of his *The Birthpangs of Protestant England*, which Macmillan published in 1988.

Patrick Collinson and John Craig have been fortunate in attracting an excellent team of mostly younger and relatively unpublished historians whose work has centred on the religious history of the early modern town, or which has touched significantly on that subject. They include Mark Byford, whose Oxford DPhil thesis, completed before he was lured into the City of London (which, for the purposes of this volume does not count as an English town), was an early harbinger of the post-revisionist stage into which English reformation studies have now moved; David Lamburn, whose thesis on that jewel of the later English Middle Ages, Beverley, and what happened to its great

churches after the Reformation, was supervised in York by Professor Claire Cross; Caroline Litzenberger, whose Cambridge thesis on the impact of religious change on the laity of sixteenth-century Gloucestershire will shortly be published by the Cambridge University Press; Jeanette Martin, for whom the invitation to contribute to this volume was an opportunity to bring to fruition work begun long ago on the Reformation in Reading; Patrick Carter, another Cambridge PhD, who is an expert on Henry VIII's bright idea to place a permanent and differentially punitive tax on the clergy; the late Sir Geoffrey Elton's pupil Peter Cunich, whose doctoral work on the Court of Augmentations has led to postdoctoral research into the dissolution of the chantries; Beat Kümin, a Swiss pupil of Peter Blicke of Berne and of Patrick Collinson in Cambridge, whose book *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish c.1400–1560* both inaugurated an important new series, 'St Andrews Studies in Reformation History', and set new standards for the rigorous study of the financial records of the English parishes; and Adam Fox, a Cambridge pupil of Keith Wrightson, whose book on early modern oral culture will appear shortly. The team could only be strengthened by the accession of four relative veterans: Claire Cross and Bill Sheils (reinforced on this occasion by Sarah Sheils) who between them know almost all there is to be known about the Church in the north in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; Thomas Cranmer's biographer, Diarmaid MacCulloch; and a leading authority on the public affairs and public architecture of the early modern town, Bob Tittler.

It is not the fault of any of these contributors that it has taken so long to put this collection of essays into the hands of the reader. If there is to be any blame it must be attached, if not to the editors, to their circumstances. We had no sooner set the whole enterprise in motion than John Craig began to teach in Canada, and not just Canada but what Arabs would call the Maghreb al Aqsa of Canada, British Columbia. The eight-hour time difference alone between Collinson in Cambridge and Craig in Simon Fraser University complicated editorial communications, and with John Craig teaching his first courses and Patrick Collinson his last, as he wound up affairs in Cambridge and moved house, matters did not progress as might have been hoped. And then, when everything seemed to be in place, it emerged that we had all written (if our copious endnotes were taken into account) more than Macmillan were able to publish. To extricate ourselves from these difficulties required more generous forbearance from contributors and

the difficult decision to jettison John Craig's revisionist essay on the Reformation in Hadleigh and its most famous reformer, Dr Rowland Taylor, which will tell us that, unlike the idealised account of Hadleigh written by John Foxe, the struggle for reformation in this East Anglian cloth town was so fiercely contested that the energies for further reform under Elizabeth were all but dissipated. This essay will now appear in another place. In spite of these difficulties, we are at one with all editors in the series 'Problems in Focus' and 'Themes in Focus' in enjoying and acknowledging the professional help and guidance of the commissioning editors of Macmillan Press and their staff, mentioning particularly Vanessa Graham, Simon Winder and Jonathan Reeve.

Each author makes his own acknowledgement of the help of institutions and individuals which went to the making of his essay. (And, in what follows, for 'his', always read 'his and her'.) What may be said in general is that every historian who attempts to write local, and especially urban, history on the basis of local archives discovers two things. As he jostles for a seat among those hordes of amateur genealogists, always working in pairs (but where would our county record offices be without them?), he invariably finds among the staff not just friendly courtesy but a standard of professional expertise which was rarer when some of us first started. And he is only too liable to find (as Patrick Collinson found in his Shrewsbury study) that usually there is some local historian or antiquarian on the spot who knows far more about the subject than he is ever likely to learn, and who is not over-possessive of his knowledge. We are glad of this opportunity to thank all these helpful people. And, finally, warmest thanks to all our contributors and to our publishers.

PATRICK COLLINSON
JOHN CRAIG