and education was to be provided through the medium of Gaelic in Ireland. Furthermore, when the north Wales schools began to receive support from the rates in 1870, the Trust diverted its contributions to fund a boarding school for girls in Dolgellau. Mention is also made of the early acceptance of women as readers, though it took until 1944 to appoint a woman as a trustee. By the mid-nineteenth century the library also had international readers.

Argent records how, by the late-twentieth century, the Trust had repositioned its activity away from supporting dissenting ministers to the promotion of academic research making use of the specialist collections (not restricted to the history and theology of dissent) housed in the Library. Perhaps the development of academic specialism is best reflected in the establishment, in 2004, of the Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies in collaboration with Queen Mary, University of London. A number of publications emerged from the Centre, while the Dissenting Academies project is of particular note. It is regrettable that the Centre was disbanded in 2015.

Combining a wide knowledge of dissenting history, a close, decades-long acquaintance with the Library and an analysis of a variety of manuscripts associated with the Trust, Argent has produced a comprehensive, scholarly but captivating account. *Dr Williams's Trust and Library: A History* is attractively written and provides a detailed and not uncritical narrative of the Trust's activity, ending with the retirement of the then Director in 2021. What is clear throughout is that financing the aims of Dr Williams's will has proved to be a constant challenge. Even in the 1730s, Argent suggests, "DWT was living hand to mouth" (57). Despite ownership (and subsequent sale) of several properties as well as the sale in 2006 of the Shakespeare First Folio, once the property of Daniel Williams himself, for £2.5 million, the library continued to struggle financially. The plan to modify the building in order to generate additional income was thwarted by a structural survey conducted in 2017 which discovered defects requiring significant investment to put right.

Both the Dr Williams's Trust and Library now have a worthy history, handsomely produced and illustrated. The past has been well-covered. While precisely what happens in the future is unclear at the time of writing (with the Gordon Square property about to be sold), it is to be hoped that such a unique collection, representing an important if often ignored aspect of English religious history, can be preserved. Its loss would be nothing short of tragic.

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ALEX W. BARBER. *The Restraint of the Press in England, 1660–1715: The Communication of Sin*. Studies in Early Modern Cultural, Political and Social History 47. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2022. Pp. 352. $115.00 (cloth).
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2023.204

Consistently interesting, *The Restraint of the Press in England, 1660–1715*is in part a call to arms against public sphere theory and some of the more closed elements of recent historiography, not least the tendency to downplay religion and to emphasize secularization. Alex Barber tackles the established accounts of newspaper history and the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688–89. The system of press control was greatly weakened when William III (of Orange) seized power. He indeed brought a mobile printing press with him when he invaded as he knew the value of publications. As a consequence of the "Glorious Revolution," it is possible to relate the rise of press freedom to the end of Stuart authoritarianism. Nevertheless, once in control, William

moved to revive the machinery of press control. The "Glorious Revolution" had led to the appearance of newspapers, many short-lived but all of them favorable to William. However, the revival led to attacks on unlicensed works, Richard Baldwin finding himself in trouble with both Secretaries of State and Parliament in 1690–1, despite his Whig credentials.

Because the existing system for the supervision of printing was felt to be inadequate, plans were drawn up to prepare a new regulatory act, only for them to be killed due to parliamentary divisions and a lack of parliamentary time. As a result, the Licensing Acts lapsed in 1695. Linked to this, it is readily apparent that newspaper development could have gone on several different paths in England. No one path was inevitable. Instead, the key context explaining English distinctiveness was that of politics, with religious politics and political economy part of the equation. These provided the context for the independent initiative of entrepreneurs, and thus for a press focused on free market, liberal principles. There were subsequent calls for new legal restrictions, and these led Daniel Defoe into contrary arguments, notably in two works published in 1704, *An Essay on the Regulation of the Press*, and *To the Honourable, the C–-s of England . . . Relating to the Bill for Restraining the Press*. In the event, in 1704, and more generally, the proposed legislation failed. In the first, Defoe affirmed the value of publication:

> To put a general stop to public printing, would be a check to learning, a prohibition of knowledge . . . the high perfection of human knowledge must be at a stand, improvements stop, and the knowledge of letters decay in the kingdom, if a general interruption should be put to the press (*An Essay on the Regulation of the Press*, 3).

Much of the discussion of political issues in the English press, and particularly by the late-seventeenth century, was handled in pragmatic terms, with detailed, specific instances, reasons, and means of cause and effect playing a major role accordingly in the discussion. At the same time, the context was generally that of moral factors presented in terms of Christian values, while religious partisanship was also an important filter of information.

The result was the development of what has been termed a "public sphere" in which printed opinion played a major role. This is an exaggeration as many were not comprehended in such a sphere. Instead, it was more an "élite and some others sphere" (Jeremy Black, *The English Press: A History* [2019], PAGE).

Newspaper readership certainly developed after the lapse of the Licensing Act. Despite attempts in 1697, 1698, 1702, 1704, and 1712 to revive a licensing system, attempts that drew on members of both political parties, the press, nevertheless, remained free of pre-publication supervision, although Customs officers confiscated unwelcome "printed papers" as they arrived into the country. Moreover, there were many specific attempts to influence publication on particular issues or by individual titles.

Barber focuses on the ecclesiological placing of the discussion of the press and of publication as a whole. This was a new iteration for discussion that had preceded printing but was greatly accentuated by it. Many members of the Church of England regarded the changes from 1689 as a threat not only to their position, but also to the religious orthodoxy, moral order, and socio-political cohesion that the Church was seen as representing and sustaining. This perception that the Toleration Act was but part of a longer-lasting crisis contributed to a feeling of malaise and uncertainty. The individual quest for salvation, depicted by Bunyan, side-tracked, and thus evaded, the intercessionary role of the Sacraments, administering clergy, and the ceremonial context in formal sacral spaces. Thus, clerical ideology was challenged, although some clerics (and laity) refused to accept the new system and became Non-Jurors. The writings of radical Whigs, such as Toland, sharpened a sense of anxiety, as did Dissenter practices and alleged ambition. Occasional Conformity, the loophole that allowed Dissenters to avoid restrictions on non-Anglicans, particularly troubled many commentators favorable to the Church of England.

https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2023.204 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Barber argues that a liberal interpretation of the press has been deployed too insistently as part of an inherently secularist account of the past and of British history. Instead, he favors an account of the early English enlightenment in terms of a narrative of churchmen maintaining religious shibboleths whilst simultaneously accepting the needs of civil peace. Indeed, Barber suggests that what in effect was press legislation was passed in the early eighteenth century but that it was passed by Whig churchmen preventing High Churchmen from criticizing church policy. At the same time, Barber appreciates that government, in the broadest sense, in the period understood the value of information flows for the operation of successful political economy.

Barber's argument for moving beyond a liberal versus authoritarian account of the press is well-taken, and he is certainly correct to emphasize the role of ecclesiological ideas and such figures as Matthew Tindal. Moreover, I sympathize strongly with his stress on a revisionist account of the "Glorious Revolution" and the need to read this forward into the 1700s. My caveats are that he may well have overegged his case to the extent that the autonomy and importance of political events are underplayed, while I would have welcomed a treatment that included discussion of the situation elsewhere, not least in the American colonies as well as in the United Provinces (Netherlands). However, this is an important, indeed path-making, book that deserves considerable attention.

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Carys Brown. *Friends, Neighbors, Sinners: Religious Difference and English Society, 1689–1750*. Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. 330. $99.99 (cloth).
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2023.197

Straddling the divide between religious and social tolerance, Carys Brown's book makes a strong case for understanding eighteenth-century England as a place where religious conflict remained significant, notwithstanding its superficially peaceable veneer. Beginning with the passage of the so-called Toleration Act of 1689, Brown shows how this temporary and uncertain political compromise evolved into a religious pluralism that everyone had to cope with in some way in their daily lives. To recover this quotidian experience, Brown sampled a variety of local sources from across England: church and court records, diaries, journals, commonplace books, and correspondence. Combing through them with a keen eye for awkward moments when religious difference suddenly rent social harmony, Brown argues that post-1689 England was not becoming increasingly secular, nor was religion becoming more personal. Long after the days of violent persecution had come to an end, one's religious affiliation continued to shape one's broader social experience.

Jews are not included in this study, while Roman Catholics figure primarily as a "popish" point of comparison. Popery represented the unreasonable alternative that all English Protestants abhorred, even when they could not always get along with each other. However, Brown explains that the focus here on Protestant Dissenters is justified by the peculiar circumstances created by the 1689 Act. Unlike Roman Catholics, they were now officially tolerated and recognized. Unlike Jews, they were also fellow English people who could easily be assimilated into the established Church and dominant culture. Where Catholics used assimilation to prevailing norms of politeness and sociability to bridge the gulf created by their un-tolerated religious difference, Dissenters fought to avoid the assimilation made possible by their new

https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2023.204 Published online by Cambridge University Press