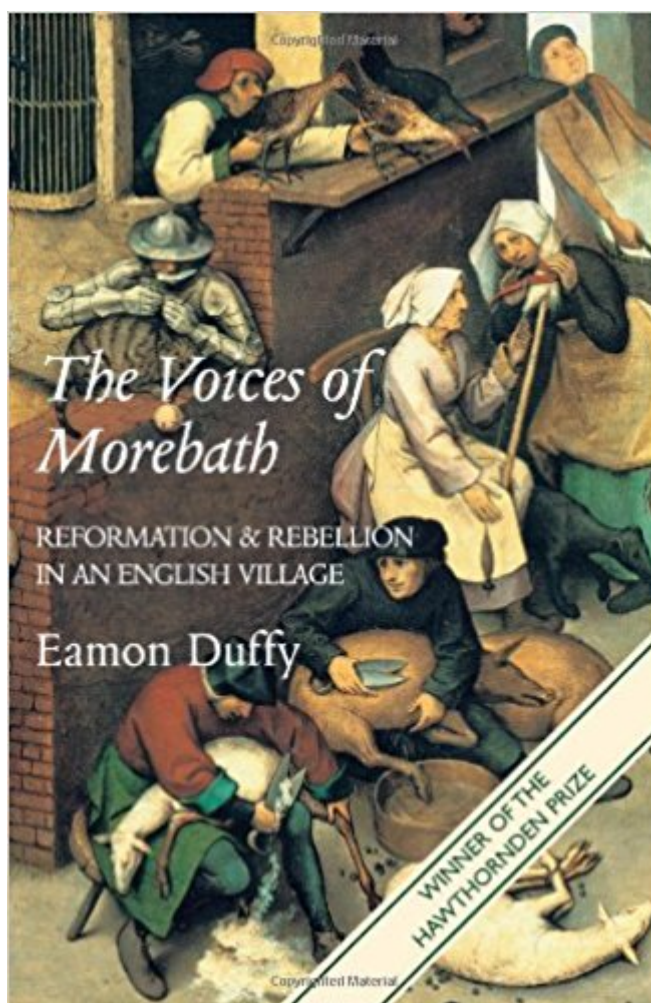


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The Voices Of Morebath: Reformation And Rebellion In An English Village



Synopsis

In the fifty years between 1530 and 1580, England moved from being one of the most lavishly Catholic countries in Europe to being a Protestant nation, a land of whitewashed churches and antipapal preaching. What was the impact of this religious change in the countryside? And how did country people feel about the revolutionary upheavals that transformed their mental and material worlds under Henry VIII and his three children? In this book a reformation historian takes us inside the mind and heart of Morebath, a remote and tiny sheep farming village on the southern edge of Exmoor. The bulk of Morebath's conventional archives have long since vanished. But from 1520 to 1574, through nearly all the drama of the English Reformation, Morebath's only priest, Sir Christopher Trychay, kept the parish accounts on behalf of the churchwardens. Opinionated, eccentric, and talkative, Sir Christopher filled these vivid scripts for parish meetings with the names and doings of his parishioners. Through his eyes we catch a rare glimpse of the life and pre-Reformation piety of a sixteenth-century English village. The book also offers a unique window into a rural world in crisis as the Reformation progressed. Sir Christopher Trychay's accounts provide direct evidence of the motives which drove the hitherto law-abiding West-Country communities to participate in the doomed Prayer-Book Rebellion of 1549 culminating in the siege of Exeter that ended in bloody defeat and a wave of executions. Its church bells confiscated and silenced, Morebath shared in the punishment imposed on all the towns and villages of Devon and Cornwall. Sir Christopher documents the changes in the community, reluctantly Protestant and increasingly preoccupied with the secular demands of the Elizabethan state, the equipping of armies, and the payment of taxes. Morebath's priest, garrulous to the end of his days, describes a rural world irrevocably altered and enables us to hear the voices of his villagers after four hundred years of silence.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In the early 1990s, Eamon Duffy's monumental *The Stripping of the Altars* provided a new slant on the English Reformation. Duffy has now dug deeper into the same fascinating period. *The Voices of Morebath* is the story of a hamlet buried deep in the heart of Devon. The parish priest Sir Christopher Trychay remained in office through the troubled times of the mid-16th century. During his long tenure he carefully recorded the impact of national events in his ordinary rural community. Trychay's account is unique because it is not a personal diary but a record of the parish accounts. Sir Christopher, however, was talkative and opinionated, so the accounts are laden with the minutiae of parish life. Duffy weaves these otherwise cryptic details into the wider tapestry of events of the time, and by analysing the result shows the devastating revolution that took place in ordinary people's lives. As the drama unfolds we see the folk of Morebath forced from their secure Catholicism into the new religion of King Henry. After Edward's brief reign the villagers breathe a sigh of relief and haul out all their Catholic paraphernalia, grateful that Mary Tudor has restored the Catholic faith. Then it all goes for good once Elizabeth takes the throne. Duffy has given us history that is absorbing, readable, and complete. His own enthusiasm for his topic gives the book a zest that takes it beyond the usual academic tome. Anyone the least bit interested in English history must not neglect this important book. --Dwight Longenecker, .co.uk --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Stories like the one Duffy skillfully tells here, for historian and general reader alike . . . bear remembering." --Paul Lewis, *New York Times Book Review*"Stories like the one Duffy skillfully tells here, for historian and general reader alike . . . bear remembering. And it is a story that can still be seen. . . . Duffy's map of the parish in Tudor times remains accurate today." --Paul Lewis, *New York Times Book Review*"Social history at its most compelling." --*Sunday Telegraph*"This is an absorbing portrait of one small Devon village in the sixteenth century as it faced up to daily life and the upheavals of the English Reformation. . . . A series of vivid snapshots of ordinary life during a time of extraordinary change." --*The Sunday Times (London)*"Duffy's scholarship is meticulous and exact. . . . This is a book to be read by enthusiasts and general readers alike. . . . It is vital to understand, for example, that the piety of

the people clustered around the saints of the region as if they were an emanation of the soil itself. As more historians begin to discover this territorial imperative, then new forms of history will be written. The Voices of Morebath is a significant and striking example." Peter Ackroyd, The Times (London) "Dr. Duffy's presentation of the journals is quite brilliant. . . . The book is never dull: on the contrary, it reads like a very good novel. . . . This book should be assured of a place in the library of every Catholic school, primary as well as secondary. . . . Not to have read it will reduce one's claim to be a well-informed English Catholic." Mentor Magazine "[R]ichly detailed." America "A unique and valuable record. . . . Eamon Duffy has written a classic account of how one small parish adapted to the bewildering changes of the Reformation." Roger B. Manning, American Historical Review "This is an immensely appealing book, both for its physical appearance and its contents. . . . [Duffy] offers a plausible reading, that makes good use of these wonderful records." Catholic Historical Review

This is wonderful book that explain what people were think in this middle town around the reformation. I love this man work, that I wrote to him and reply back. If you into English history or just reformation this good book to own

Doctor Duffy has written an interesting slice of the history of a small English village, Morebath in Devon, during a period of social upheaval which he refers to in his subtitle of "Reformation & Rebellion in an English Village". The slice shows a period of social decay (although some will not see it as that) which starts with coercion and ends with a slow attrition. PBS is presently reshowing Michael Woods' "Story of England" a longer term history of the Village of Kibworth in Leicestershire and the most recent episode covered the period following the destruction of the Plague in the area. Part of the follow up showed how several of the small indentured farmers of Kipworth were "upgraded" to leaseholders by the owner of the village, Merton College of Oxford, and how a portion of the lease rentals were dedicated to the support of a chantry which was to provide for prayers to be said for the victims of the Plague. This practice came to be seen as a threat and wrong to certain powers that be and had to be stamped out. The silenced Voices of Morebath tell that story.

Here is a chance to see a clear example of English Reformation and the effects of the pendulum swings of Mary and Elizabeth on one small community. Certainly, it is unclear if the experiences of the residents of Morebath are typical. But they are poignant for anyone interested in the religious and social changes of the period.

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