

The Historical Journal

<http://journals.cambridge.org/HIS>

Additional services for *The Historical Journal*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



The Ambiguities of Early-Modern English Protestantism

Nicholas Tyacke

The Historical Journal / Volume 34 / Issue 03 / September 1991, pp 743 - 754
DOI: 10.1017/S0018246X00017593, Published online: 11 February 2009

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0018246X00017593

How to cite this article:

Nicholas Tyacke (1991). The Ambiguities of Early-Modern English Protestantism. The Historical Journal, 34, pp 743-754 doi:10.1017/S0018246X00017593

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

REVIEW ARTICLES

THE AMBIGUITIES OF EARLY-MODERN ENGLISH PROTESTANTISM

Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans: Seventeenth Century Essays. By Hugh Trevor-Roper. London: Secker and Warburg, 1987. Pp. xiv + 317. £17.50.

Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order. By Margo Todd. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. Pp. x + 293. £27.50.

Protestantism and the National Church in Sixteenth Century England. Edited by Peter Lake and Maria Dowling. London: Croom Helm, 1987. Pp. vi + 231. £25.

Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London. By Andrew Pettegree. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. Pp. xii + 329. £25.

A Protestant Vision: William Harrison and the Reformation of Elizabethan England. By G. J. R. Parry. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. Pp. x + 348. £27.50.

Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker. By Peter Lake. London: Unwin Hyman, 1988. Pp. x + 262. £25.

To judge by the six books under review here, Tudor and Stuart religious history flourishes. Certainly they show little sign of that collapse into sterile antiquarianism which has been alleged recently of English historical studies generally.¹ Partly this is due to the fact that the authors all take ideas seriously, but even more so because they recognize the reality of intellectual conflict and its consequences. The most wide-ranging of the six is the collection of essays by Hugh Trevor-Roper, Lord Dacre of Glanton. As the senior by far of the authors represented he might be thought of as the survivor from some prelapsarian age. What, however, strikes one about Trevor-Roper is the extent to which his own views have shifted over the last half-century. This can be seen particularly clearly in his treatment of Archbishop Laud, the subject of a book length study by him originally dating from 1940 and recently republished in a third edition.²

Trevor-Roper's *Archbishop Laud* was very much a product of its time. To describe the philosophical assumptions of the work as Marxist would probably be an exaggeration.³ Nevertheless the positive influence of R. H. Tawney's *Religion and the rise of capitalism* is explicitly acknowledged, in the famous phrase that 'Calvin did for the bourgeoisie of the sixteenth century what Marx did for the proletariat of the nineteenth'. (Tawney

¹ D. Cannadine, 'British history: past, present – and future?', *Past and Present*, 116 (1987), 169–91.

² H. R. Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud, 1573–1645* (London, 1940, 2nd edn 1962, 3rd edn 1988).

³ In his valedictory lecture as regius professor of modern history at Oxford University, Trevor-Roper recalled his exposure to the Marxist interpretation of history while an undergraduate at Christ Church during the 1930s. H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'History and imagination', in H. Lloyd-Jones, V. Pearl and B. Worden (eds.), *History and imagination: essays in honour of H. R. Trevor-Roper* (London, 1981), pp. 358–60.

himself, of course, wrote from a Christian Socialist standpoint.) Archbishop Laud 1940s style was conceived of as the religious spokesman for a socio-economic *ancien régime*, soon to be swept away in the 'revolutionary crisis' of the English Civil War. Moreover Trevor-Roper deployed the notion of ideas as the superstructural reflexion of an economic base. Religion is 'the ideal expression of a particular social and political organisation', and to be understood in terms of its 'material basis'. The life of Laud 'coincided with the period in England when the social changes initiated by Henry VIII were reaching their climax'. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth 'the progressive classes, the improving landlords, the shrewd speculators, the manufacturers, traders, and colonists, who consecrated their individualism by the profession of a strenuous Protestantism, ... set the pace'. The new 'middle classes' plundered the church and 'individualism' ran increasingly wild. Opposed to all this was the paternalistic 'Catholic system', espoused by Laud and Charles I in their abortive attempt to 'restore the old social framework'.⁴

But by the early 1950s Trevor-Roper had broken decisively with Tawney's thesis concerning the rise of the gentry and the associated interpretation of the English Civil War as a bourgeois revolution. That conflict was now to be understood, so he argued, as the last despairing fling of a declining social order – the 'mere' gentry, epitomized by Oliver Cromwell. Far from advancing the march of capitalism the puritan triumph might even have retarded it.⁵ Yet *Archbishop Laud* was reissued as a second edition in 1962, the text essentially unaltered save for 'some superficial adjustments'. Furthermore the new preface broadly endorsed the picture painted in the book of Laud's 'conception of society'. Indeed as late as 1978 Trevor-Roper can be found characterizing Laud as an opponent of 'economic individualism'.⁶ Are we then to conclude that Cromwell and Laud were really on the same side, both reacting against the general thrust of English socio-economic development? Or, alternatively, should Laud, the nephew of an Elizabethan lord mayor of London, be conceived of as in some sense an ally of capitalism? *Catholics, anglicans and puritans* does not provide a full answer to such questions, although it contains some clues. For Trevor-Roper has increasingly emphasized the 'intellectual liberalism' of Laud and his associates – an accolade which he is reluctant to bestow on the puritans. Introducing the current collection of essays, he suggests that it was the Laudians who were the true 'moderns'.⁷

It could be argued that the battering received by all parties to the gentry controversy has ruled such ideas firmly out of court for the foreseeable future. Yet they continue to inform the ever-growing mass of writing by Christopher Hill. Moreover, their comparative neglect by recent writers is part of the historiographical indictment presented by David Cannadine.⁸ The collapse of statistics based on the counting of manors of variable size, and the indeterminate nature of 'aristocracy' in an English context, do not of themselves invalidate possible links between religion and society. Or putting the matter another way, the Tawney of *Religion and the rise of capitalism* was not necessarily sunk along with the Tawney of the 'Rise of the gentry'. Indeed a case can

⁴ Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud* (1940), pp. 2–3, 7, 12, 15–21, 27, 434–6.

⁵ H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'The gentry, 1540–1640', *Economic History Review*, Supplement 1 (1953), 33–4, 42–3, 51–3.

⁶ Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud* (1962), pp. vii–ix; H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'Archbishop Laud', Friends of Lambeth Palace Library lecture 1978, pp. 19–20.

⁷ Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud* (1962), p. x; H. R. Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, anglicans and puritans: seventeenth century essays* (London, 1987), p. xiii.

⁸ Cannadine, 'British History', pp. 172–3, 183.

be put for regarding Tawney's formulation of the relationship between religious and other changes as more satisfactory than that made famous by Max Weber. Unlike Weber, Tawney was willing to conceive of a secular ideology of the market place operating alongside the rival religious confessionalisms of the age. In a crucial passage, he wrote that 'it was in the long debate provoked by the [sixteenth century] rise in prices and the condition of the exchanges that the psychological assumptions, which were afterwards to be treated by economists as of self-evident and universal validity, were first hammered out'.⁹ Although the analysis of the English economic historian and that of the German sociologist overlaps, the role of religion is differently portrayed; Weber emphasises the transformation in economic attitudes allegedly wrought by Calvinist teaching on predestination, while Tawney talks of the 'sanctification' of existing business values – 'thrift, diligence, sobriety, frugality'. The rational pursuit of 'forever renewed profit' was, according to Tawney, at least in part an ideal evolved out of commercial experience rather than the by-product of a Calvinist drive for personal assurance of salvation.¹⁰

Research in recent years has challenged Weber, and to a lesser extent Tawney, on a number of fronts. Investigation of English Restoration religious writing indicates that it was the anti-Calvinist authors who most wholeheartedly endorsed the capitalist ethos, particularly as regards the consecration of work. Micro-analysis of wills from the Elizabethan period also reveals a definite puritan resistance to the taking of interest on capital. Again study of leading anti-Calvinist members of parliament during the 1620s, individuals that is to say hostile not only towards puritanism but in addition opposed to the Calvinist predestinarianism deemed so important by Weber, suggests 'close capitalist and modernist links' on their part. Such was at least one facet of the gentry support for the Arminian policies associated with Archbishop Laud.¹¹

Paradoxically, however, the socio-economic dimension has tended to drop from view in Trevor-Roper's more recent writing. Politics and religion are still reckoned to be closely associated, but not apparently economics. This can be seen most clearly from the essay 'Laudianism and political power', included in the volume under review here. Laudianism, argues Trevor-Roper, was an 'intellectual movement' with 'Erasmian' roots, which helped to destroy the Elizabethan 'consensus' by challenging the 'Calvinism' of the establishment. Beginning as a university phenomenon in the closing years of the sixteenth century, this neo-Erasmianism combined, so it is suggested, with a revived clericalism which sought to restore the power and wealth of the English church. Hostility towards puritanism was the driving force of the alliance and subsequent events in the United Provinces were to conspire to give it the name of 'Arminianism'. In this process the Dutch Hugo Grotius was to play the role of a latter-day Erasmus, and Trevor-Roper is clear that the English and Dutch versions of Arminianism were doctrinally allied. Both rejected absolute predestination. At the same time he makes the point that James I was 'intellectually a Calvinist', who

⁹ J. H. Hexter, 'Storm over the gentry', in J. H. Hexter, *Reappraisals in history* (London, 1961), pp. 117–62; R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the rise of capitalism* (London, 1926), p. 177.

¹⁰ Tawney, pp. 108–12; M. Weber, *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*, trans. T. Parsons (London, 1930), pp. 17, 98–115.

¹¹ C. J. Somerville, *Popular religion in Restoration England* (Florida, 1977), chs. 6–7; C. J. Somerville, 'The anti-puritan work-ethic', *Journal of British Studies*, xx, no. 2 (1981), 70–81; N. Tyacke, 'Popular puritan mentality in late Elizabethan England', in P. Clark, A. G. R. Smith and N. Tyacke (eds.), *The English Commonwealth, 1547–1640* (Leicester, 1979), pp. 86–9, 232; N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: the rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590–1640* (2nd edn Oxford, 1990), pp. 140–5.

promoted clerics of that persuasion to the 'highest' posts in the church. The Arminian 'breakthrough' only came at the very end of his reign. Here Trevor-Roper invokes the role of a 'reversionary interest' represented by Prince Charles, but fails to note the fact that by 1624 James himself was supporting the Arminian Richard Montagu.¹² There are difficulties too with the interesting suggestion that English Arminianism derives from Erasmianism. Trevor-Roper correctly points out that the *Paraphrases* of Erasmus on the Gospels were one of the official books of the Elizabethan church, authorized by the injunctions of 1559. Yet the *Paraphrases* were not apparently reprinted after 1552, which suggests that royal wishes remained a dead letter on this issue.¹³ Nor, incidentally, do the *Paraphrases* convey a clear sense of Erasmus's own teaching on spiritual free will. Nevertheless it makes good sense to say that English Arminianism acquired much of its 'political' significance from becoming so closely associated with the secular policies of the regime, especially after 1629. Laudianism was part of a 'new synthesis', Trevor-Roper argues, whereby the support of the church was thrown behind the modernizing 'absolutism' of Charles I.

As Trevor-Roper recognizes, the whole question of Arminianism has become more complicated since he originally wrote. Religious ideas as such are now given greater prominence, at least in some quarters, although the 'rise' and even the existence of Arminianism is contested.¹⁴ Trevor-Roper accepts the reality of Arminianism as an intellectual movement, yet it could be said that he rather glosses over the period of Erasmian eclipse. What precisely happened between the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I? In his view, Queen Elizabeth and her ministers subscribed to an Erasmian ideal in religion: 'tolerant, unsuperstitious, rational', and in doctrine 'liberal, professing free will and universal grace'. But this ideal became 'half-smothered' due to the political exigencies of the later sixteenth century. Calvinism recommended itself instead at a time when the very survival of protestantism was threatened. As circumstances eased, however, Erasmians were able to reassert their teachings from the 1590s onwards, and ultimately came to be called Arminians. Nevertheless other historians are less happy with the concept of Erasmianism, and Trevor-Roper himself notes that contemporaries first used the term 'Lutheran' to describe their anti-Calvinist opponents.¹⁵ The latter may well contain an important clue, pointing as it does back to mid-century protestantism and more specifically to the Edwardian reformation of the English church. For English Arminians were later to invoke the names of Bishop Latimer and others – a claim to doctrinal affinity which should not be dismissed too lightly.¹⁶ Thus it is clear that doctrines concerning predestination and free will were disputed among Edwardian protestants, although there are indications that the Calvinist wing were winning out by 1553.¹⁷ The restoration of Roman catholicism under Mary and the exile of many English protestant leaders accelerated the Calvinist theological trend within their ranks. The subsequent Elizabethan settlement of

¹² Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, anglicans and puritans*, pp. 40–119; K. Fincham and P. Lake, 'The ecclesiastical policy of King James I', *Journal of British Studies*, xxiv (1985), 201–6.

¹³ E. Cardwell, *Documentary annals of the reformed church of England* (Oxford, 1844), 1.214. I base my conclusions on the revised *Short-title catalogue of English books, 1475–1640*, although the situation remains puzzling.

¹⁴ P. White, N. Tyacke, 'Debate: the rise of Arminianism reconsidered', *Past and Present*, cxv (1987), 201–29. ¹⁵ Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, anglicans and puritans*, pp. 42–7.

¹⁶ J. A., *An Historical Narration of the Judgement of Some Most Learned and Godly English Bishops, Holy Martyrs and Others... concerning God's Election* (London, 1631).

¹⁷ D. D. Wallace, *Puritans and predestination: grace in English protestant theology, 1525–1695* (Chapel Hill, 1982), ch. 1.

religion, however, combined a number of differing religious strands.¹⁸ On various occasions Elizabeth claimed that she personally subscribed to the Augsburg Confession and Lutheran arguably describes her position better than does the label Erasmian.¹⁹ At the end of the reign Elizabeth's long-serving minister William Cecil was to emerge as a leading supporter of the 'Lutheran' Peter Baro, whose views are indistinguishable from later Arminianism.²⁰ Granted that the Lutheranism in question is that of Philip Melancthon and not Martin Luther, the description has validity. A number of early Elizabethan bishops, notably Richard Cheyney and Edmund Guest, were also accused of Lutheranism both as regards the eucharist and predestination.²¹

The fact that such bishops were in a *minority* is, however, very important. The indications are that Calvinism was the majority view of the Elizabethan episcopate and not just the more 'puritan' wing. Under Elizabeth what we appear to have is an episcopate and supreme governor of the English church who are in the main out of step doctrinally. Had Elizabeth been succeeded by someone in the same religious mould the ascent of Arminianism *avant la lettre* would probably have been much faster. As it was their leading lights, like Lancelot Andrewes who privately identified with Baro during the 1590s, had largely to contain themselves in silence under the Calvinist James I.²² The Calvinism of the king has also been denied but his own published views tell a different story. Moreover at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 he had initially been willing that the Thirty-nine Articles of the English church be altered in a more Calvinist direction, although the compromise ultimately adopted was a revised Calvinist commentary on them by one of Archbishop Bancroft's chaplains – Thomas Rogers.²³ The Calvinist predilections of James I were also to manifest themselves in his generally hostile attitude towards Dutch Arminianism. As a ruler it was virtually impossible for politics not to weigh in the scales, yet in this case politics and religious consideration tended to reinforce each other. Only during the last years of James did they go out of kilter, with the king now backing the English Arminians in his search for a peaceful resolution of the Thirty Years War. Religion and politics remained somewhat out of line in the first years of Charles I, from 1625 onwards, with the new king throwing his support behind the English Arminians while pursuing an aggressive and largely protestant foreign policy. In his personal religious preferences, Charles seems much closer to the Lutheranism of Queen Elizabeth than he was to the Calvinism of his father. Moreover these different monarchical views help to expose the inadequacy of any attempt to explain the doctrinal position of the English church in terms of the so-called *via media*. For the religious mean between extremes was capable of taking a great variety of forms. Nor was the mid point constant, depending as it did on the definition of polar opposites. As Trevor-Roper's essay on 'Laudianism' shows, the doctrinal history of the English church is marked by discontinuities.²⁴

The other essays in *Catholics, anglicans and puritans* cover a related constellation of themes – particularly that on 'The Great Tew Circle', whose members Trevor-Roper

¹⁸ W. P. Hugaard, *Elizabeth and the English Reformation: the struggle for a stable settlement of religion* (Cambridge, 1968), esp. ch. 3; N. L. Jones, *Faith by statute: parliament and the settlement of religion 1559* (London, 1982).

¹⁹ *Cal. S. P. Spanish, Elizabeth*, 1.61–2. Cf. Jones, *Faith by statute*, pp. 57–8.

²⁰ H. C. Porter, *Reformation and reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1958), pp. 385–6; White and Tyacke, 'Debate', p. 204.

²¹ P. Collinson, *The Elizabethan puritan movement* (London, 1967), p. 206.

²² Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, pp. 20, 45.

²³ *Ibid.* pp. 23–7.

²⁴ Cf. G. W. Bernard, 'The church of England, c. 1559–c. 1642', *History*, LXXV (1990), 183–206.

sees as transmitting to the Restoration all that was best in the Arminian tradition. 'Rationalism' is regarded by him as the keynote. Over against this stands both the old Calvinist world represented by Archbishop Ussher and the radical puritan vision of John Milton, each of whom are the subject of further essays. Some ragged edges, however, remain. At least two alleged members of the Great Tew group, Thomas Barlow and George Morley, appear to have remained strong Calvinists.²⁵ Similarly Milton embraced Arminianism, as Trevor-Roper acknowledges. Writing of Ussher, he memorably recalls the *mentalité* of prophetic history – 'the great cosmological drama of the divine purpose' – and regards this as already out of date by the 1630s. Thus it comes as something of a shock to find Archbishop Sancroft, no less, and Bishop Lloyd of St Asaph, seemingly in all seriousness, debating during early 1689 whether current events in Europe had been foretold in the Book of Revelation and therefore meant the imminent overthrow of Antichrist! Yet as Trevor-Roper also points out Sancroft acquired many of Ussher's papers, and arranged for the publication of some of them.²⁶ A more general question also arises concerning the significance which he wishes to ascribe to the Great Tew group – that 'somewhat esoteric graduate reading party in the country'. We may accept that they were not mere 'dilettanti', but what exactly was their role? To them is ascribed the undoing of the alliance between Erasmianism and clericalism, which had reached its apogee under Archbishop Laud, as well as the abandonment of political absolutism. Their ideas, especially thanks to the support of Clarendon, are said to inform the Restoration settlement in 1660. An alternative view, however, is that the Restoration marks the forging of a new alliance between parson and squire, born of mutual hatred of puritanism. Clerical pretensions were, if anything, now greater, as is clear from the total rejection of non-episcopal orders. Nor, as the reign of Charles II unfolded, did bishops as a group reveal much hostility to the prerogative claims of monarchy.²⁷ It is also striking how peripheral the 'club' of Great Tew was to one of the most notable intellectual developments of the day, namely the seventeenth-century scientific revolution. This blind-spot appears the more surprising given that Laudian Oxford is now known to have provided such a favourable scientific environment, and that Falkland's house at Great Tew was in some degree an extension of the university. Here it could be said that Trevor-Roper is less than generous to Archbishop Ussher, who among other things preserved the scientific papers of the first Savilian professor of astronomy at Oxford – John Bainbridge.²⁸ The great interest of Ussher in chronology led him to turn to astronomers in particular, for advice concerning ancient eclipses of the sun and moon as a means of dating other historical events. While Robert K. Merton's extension of the Weber thesis, concerning Calvinism and capitalism, to the realms of scientific change fails to convince, we must however resist the temptation to erect an alternative Arminian explanation.

Like Christopher Hill, Trevor-Roper is interested in the politics that lie behind the

²⁵ T. Barlow, *The genuine remains* (London, 1693), pp. 84–93, 577–82. The evidence for the Calvinism of Morley is less direct, depending mainly on his patronage of the opponents of George Bull. See, for example, T. Tully, *Justificatio Paulina* (Oxford, 1674), dedication.

²⁶ A. T. Hart, *William Lloyd, 1627–1717: bishop, politician, author and prophet* (London, 1952), pp. 245–6; Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, anglicans and puritans*, p. 162.

²⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 166–230; R. A. Beddard, 'The Restoration Church', in J. R. Jones (ed.), *The restored monarchy, 1660–1688* (London, 1979), pp. 155–75; N. Sykes, *Old priest and New presbyter. Episcopacy and presbyterianism since the Reformation with special relation to the churches of England and Scotland* (Cambridge, 1956), ch. 5.

²⁸ N. Tyacke, 'Science and religion at Oxford before the Civil War', in D. Pennington and K. Thomas (eds.), *Puritans and revolutionaries* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 73–93.

poetry of John Milton. But where Hill portrays Milton as a populist, for Trevor-Roper he is an elitist. Both are obliged to wrestle with the complexities and apparent contradictions of their subject; Milton's religious heresies especially fascinate them. Trevor-Roper has great fun with Hill's picture of Milton the populist heretic, 'basking in radical pop-culture on a tavern-stool, like a Balliol undergraduate (class of 1968) holding forth in the King's Arms'. He sees him instead coming out of the same protestant stable as Archbishop Ussher, with its belief in prophetic history, while combining this with 'classical humanist philosophy'. Trevor-Roper also stresses the extreme 'egotism' of Milton, following here in the critical footsteps of Dr Johnson. This he argues helps to explain the anti-clerical outbursts of *Lycidas* and a number of other causes, such as divorce, which Milton made his own, as well as his almost schizophrenic attitude to Italian culture. The millenarian views of Milton only fully emerge in his anti-episcopal pamphlets of 1641-2, while his continuing humanist commitment underlies his fairly rapid rejection of the presbyterian alternative and his enthusiastic support for the republican regime in 1649. Egotism, according to Trevor-Roper, also explains why Milton the elitist came to advocate toleration; he wished to protect his own *private* heresies. Hence, too, the willingness of Milton to serve Oliver Cromwell. With the restoration of the Stuarts, however, he was forced to retreat into the epic poetry which part of him had always aspired to write. So 'we have those two great poems, *Paradise Lost* and *Samson*, in which that marvellous wealth and power of language, purged at last of its brutal application, finds its ideal subject: himself'. These last works also mark his abandonment of prophetic history. It is certainly a compelling reading of Milton.²⁹

The remaining essay, on Nicholas Hill, is a fascinating piece of detective work as well as containing some hilarious passages. Yet the connexion between this Roman catholic advocate of atomism and the other topics of the volume is somewhat unclear. Thus his views are not used to argue for a catholic strand in the scientific revolution.³⁰ Nor is the alleged utopianism in Hill's thought fully established. These, however, are minor criticisms. In conclusion, perhaps one of the most important contributions of these essays is the discussion of that neglected topic Socinianism, which crops up at a number of points. Particularly welcome is Trevor-Roper's definitional distinction between Socinianism in the 'wide' and 'strict' senses, the one representing 'the use of reason generally in matters of faith' and the other denial of the Trinity.³¹ For Socinianism was a central seventeenth-century concern. Increasingly it took over from Arminianism as the bugbear of orthodox Calvinist divines. Both, according to Trevor-Roper, were intellectual descendants of Erasmus.

Margo Todd also pursues an Erasmian theme in her interesting book *Christian humanism and the puritan social order*. Todd's case is that the social values often associated with puritanism are part of an Erasmian heritage common initially to both catholics and protestants. A split only occurred after the Council of Trent, and in England not until the rise of 'Laudianism'. This is a contentious area, not least because in recent years historians have tended to minimize post-Tridentine differences between catholic and protestant attitudes to welfare - one of the litmus tests used by Todd. While she draws on this literature, Todd does not directly engage with its sometimes

²⁹ Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, anglicans and puritans*, pp. 231-82. Cf. C. Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (London, 1977).

³⁰ Cf. C. Webster, 'Richard Towneley, (1627-1707), the Towneley Group and seventeenth-century science', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, cxviii (1966), 51-76.

³¹ Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, anglicans and puritans*, p. 188.

contrary findings.³² Certainly the book offers a refreshing contrast to the traditional idea of a link between protestantism and capitalism, although it is not entirely clear whether she still wishes to smuggle in a bourgeois revolution by the back door. An epilogue on the Restoration would have been helpful here. None the less Todd provides an excellent analysis of the social teachings of Erasmus, at the same time highlighting their more radical implications which were to strike an answering chord in mid-seventeenth-century England. Unlike Trevor-Roper, she portrays the thought of Erasmus as positively hostile to monarchical absolutism. Clearly the Erasmian legacy was a complex one. Thus Todd recognizes that 'Puritan theology proper' was not 'in any significant sense Erasmian'. But *were* the 1630s a time of 'conservative reaction', socially speaking? Much depends on the definition of 'reformism' and Todd's concluding argument is somewhat compressed. There is, however, a danger of exaggerating the novelty of the thinking of Laudians on subjects other than religion, whether in terms of reaction or progress, as indicated by the attempt to explain away here Laud's 'support of apprenticeship programs for poor children, provisions of work for the able poor, and municipal education'.³³

Rather misleadingly Margo Todd, in her index, refers to the 'Tawney-Weber thesis'. Yet, as we have already had cause to remark, the arguments of these two writers are by no means identical. Tawney was willing to give more weight than did Weber to material factors. What Todd calls Erasmianism can also, at least in part, be seen as a European-wide response by secular magistrates to urban social problems. In this respect it is striking how little she has to say about Italy, where indeed the ideas of Erasmus as such seem to have had minimal impact. Apparent differences between protestant north and catholic south may also reflect their divergent demographic histories during the seventeenth century. Whereas in the sixteenth century the pressure of people on resources posed a common problem to authorities everywhere and especially in towns, the subsequent population reverses tended to be much greater in the Mediterranean lands. Nor is it obvious why medieval catholic ideas on holy poverty and the value of alms deeds should have gone into universal eclipse at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Might it not be a question partly of survival rather than Tridentine revival in catholic areas? But this is notoriously difficult scholarly terrain and Todd's book has the great merit of reopening debate on the subject.

Whereas both Todd and Trevor-Roper move from a period of assumed 'consensus' to one of conflicting ideas and politics, the volume of essays edited by Peter Lake and Maria Dowling is concerned with the sixteenth-century upheavals of Reformation England. The editors describe their book as being about the 'spiritual dynamic of Protestantism'. Andrew Hope opens with a useful review of the Lollard contribution. His own detailed social analysis of Lollardy in the Chilterns indicates that the movement was 'disproportionately strong among the wealthy', something which Imogen Luxton's study of Coventry had already suggested.³⁴ At the same time he confirms the real constraints which existed on Lollard growth, such as the lack of 'literary output'. Maria Dowling examines the 'evangelicals' in the Henrician court circle and provides some important revisions, especially as regards the role of Sir

³² B. Pullan, 'Catholics and the poor in early modern Europe', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., xxvi (1976), 15-34.

³³ M. Todd, *Christian humanism and the puritan social order* (Cambridge, 1987), ch. 7 and pp. 251-2.

³⁴ I. Luxton, 'The Lichfield Court Book: a postscript', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XLIV (1971), 120-5.

Anthony Denny after 1540. Denny's faction in the privy chamber provided important continuity between the Cromwellian 1530s and Edwardian protestantism. She also deflates the concept of 'Erasmian humanism', while cautioning against talking of 'Protestants' so early. Catherine Davies explores the surprising sense of beleagueredness among English protestants even in Edward VI's lifetime. In so doing she also introduces the main theme of the volume, namely the awareness among protestants themselves that they were perforce a minority. The Marian exile, discussed from different aspects by Joy Shakespeare and Gerry Bowler, amply confirmed the idea of the true church under the cross. Shakespeare analyses the explanatory role of 'sin', while Bowler portrays 'violent resistance' as a form of self-help in these circumstances. Bowler offers a particularly welcome reminder of the political radicalism latent in protestantism. The role of godly gentry in advancing protestantism is examined by Ron Fritze, in the context of Hampshire. Bearing in mind the warning issued about terminology, it would have been helpful if he had provided more chapter and verse for his early 'Protestants' such as Sir William Goring. Nevertheless the local activity revealed is the counterpart of Dowling's study of court developments

In some ways the linchpin of *Protestantism and the national church* is the admirably lucid account by Jane Facey of the ideas which inform John Foxe's *Acts and monuments* – that apocalyptic account of the English Reformation. Foxe is part and parcel of Trevor-Roper's Elizabethan consensus, but as Facey shows his views were fraught with ambiguity. How, in essence, were the needs of a 'national' church to be reconciled with the ideal of a 'true' church, the reprobate and the elect to be housed under the same roof? Excellent as this piece is, the palm must go to the concluding essay by Peter Lake. Elizabethan presbyterianism represents a national attempt to resolve the tensions present from the outset of the Reformation. Parochial 'discipline' was the presbyterian answer. Undergirding the attempt, of course, was a form of experimental predestinarianism. This presbyterian challenge spawned in response a *iure divino* theory of episcopacy, culminating in its most extreme form under Archbishop Laud. Hand in hand with this went an increasingly exalted view of monarchy. As always Lake writes with flair and conciseness, bringing this excellent volume to a rounded conclusion. Yet the book also has a wider importance, because of the recent revisionist onslaught concerning the very idea of a sixteenth-century Reformation. We are repeatedly told by the school of Christopher Haigh about the strength and endurance of catholicism and the small impact of protestantism, with or without the help of government.³⁶ What however Lake and Dowling, and their contributors, remind us is that protestantism was a revolutionary creed which won.

Book-length treatments of subjects related to the Lake and Dowling collection of essays are provided by Andrew Pettegree and G. J. R. Parry. A predominantly institutional study, Pettegree's *Foreign protestant communities in sixteenth-century London* is a model of its kind. Covering a period roughly from the accession of Edward VI to the early years of Queen Elizabeth, the book examines the history of French and Dutch protestant immigrants through the medium of the 'stranger churches'. Especially under John a Lasco's superintendency, these provided a paradigm for English religious reformers. Later, under Elizabeth, they afforded an example of the 'discipline' in action – as Pettegree shows in a fascinating chapter on 'Social concern and social control'. The foreigners, not all of them religious refugees, also contributed to the economy of London and other urban centres. Pettegree suggests that their religious

³⁶ C. Haigh (ed.), *The English Reformation revised* (Cambridge, 1987).

idiosyncracies were tolerated by the authorities partly at least because of the perceived economic contribution of the immigrant community. At the same time their significance for Elizabethan puritanism is played down. Pettegree also refers to the religious practice of 'prophesy' or weekly exercise introduced by Lasco, but does not say what if any relationship this bore to its English namesake of the 1570s. The question is not an idle one since support for the allegedly populist prophesyings was to prove the undoing of Archbishop Grindal, who had also been superintendent of the stranger churches.³⁶ This is a densely packed and richly rewarding book, which demonstrates that importance is not to be measured merely by numbers. Pettegree writes of the 'enormous creative energies' of the foreign communities, who perhaps comprised as many as fifty thousand immigrants between 1550 and 1585. He provides a mercantilist rather than a Weberian explanation, however, of their economic contribution; 'the encouragement and management of the refugee influx was probably the most significant act of state in the social or economic sphere'.³⁷

Parry's study of William Harrison is largely based on a single but very important manuscript, namely the previously unknown 'Great English Chronology' by Harrison. This enables Parry firmly to locate his subject in the context of sixteenth-century prophetic history, itself such a characteristic feature of Elizabethan protestantism. The book falls into two parts, firstly Harrison's protestant 'vision' in general and secondly its implication for England in particular. There are important similarities but also significant differences here with the thought of John Foxe. Like Foxe, the concept of the 'two churches' set Harrison distinctly at odds with the Elizabethan church as it emerged. While drawing the line at presbyterianism, both men remained critical of episcopacy. Compared with Foxe, however, Harrison was much more hostile towards the laity and by extension all secular rulers; his extremely unflattering account of the Emperor Constantine is very revealing here. In his last two chapters Parry turns to social and intellectual topics, which overlap with the arguments reviewed above of Todd and Trevor-Roper. Harrison was a humanist critic of contemporary social ills with an apocalyptic difference, and certainly provided no support for economic individualism. The latter was indeed satanic, from his point of view. Only in the concluding chapter, entitled 'A reformed natural philosophy', does Parry explore the wider implications of his findings, appropriately invoking the names of Weber and Tawney. He emphasises the relatively underdeveloped nature of the Tudor economy, and consequent lack of regular employment. The time-work discipline of capitalism was simply not appropriate to this state of affairs. Harrison 'conceived of godly labour in the context of a static economy', as well as denigrating the exercise of mere carnal reason in the sphere of nature. Parry suggests that biblical teachings conditioned both the economic and scientific attitudes of Harrison, illustrating the latter proposition with some very interesting material concerning the Hermetic philosophy. His conclusion is that while Harrison's 'radical Protestantism freed him from the search for occult powers and endorsed instead the recovery of objective facts amenable to rational explanation according to regular laws, it also limited the scope, interpretation and application of that knowledge'.³⁸ Thus scripturalism was ultimately no less inhibiting than Hermeticism.

³⁶ A. Pettegree, *Foreign protestant communities in sixteenth-century London* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 63–71; P. Collinson, *Archbishop Grindal, 1519–1583: the struggle for a reformed church* (London, 1979), chs. 7 and 13.

³⁷ Pettegree, pp. 299, 308.

³⁸ G. J. R. Parry, *A protestant vision: William Harrison and the Reformation of Elizabethan England* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 297, 326.

Discussions of the religious history of early-modern England often take place within the parameters of Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans, as evidenced by the title of Trevor-Roper's volume of essays. The last two categories, however, have caused very considerable problems of definition for historians. Anglican, unlike Puritan, was not a contemporary term. Nor would the designation Puritan have been readily accepted by some of those whom modern writers so label. The problem is compounded by a tendency to assume that the definitional content of these terms remained constant over time. Conscious of these difficulties, Peter Lake has inserted a question-mark in the title of his book *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English conformist thought from Whitgift to Hooker*. In part this study is the book of the essay which concludes the volume edited by Lake and Dowling, reviewed above. *Anglicans and Puritans?* also develops further some of the insights contained in Lake's previous book *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge, 1982). Working from an interrelated body of contemporary printed sources, Lake demonstrates a genius for teasing out the significance of what in other hands might have produced a rather pedestrian account of the Elizabethan debate over church government. Instead, this challenging analysis breathes new life into an old subject. The book is also very well structured, with a helpful introduction and conclusion. The second round of the Protestant Reformation provides the subject matter. What were the institutional structures most appropriate for advancing the gospel? The radicals sought to solve a very real administrative problem by resort to the New Testament, as providing a governmental model for the English church. Their schemes, however, largely remained on paper and it was episcopalianism which emerged triumphant, in part due to the longevity of Queen Elizabeth. Not only did defenders of the existing establishment increasingly counter-claim scriptural warrant for bishops, but in the writings of Richard Hooker they found a new *raison d'être*.

This is an extremely subtle and nuanced book, which any bald summation runs the risk of misrepresenting. Among its many virtues is a willingness to engage constructively with the increasingly complicated modern historiography of the English church during its formative years. Although concentrating here on Presbyterianism, Lake favours a fairly broad definition of Puritanism and certainly one that remains applicable to a section of English Protestant opinion after the demise of the Elizabethan classical movement. His standpoint makes good sense. Lake's chief protagonists, aside from the special case of Hooker, are the conformists John Whitgift, John Bridges, Richard Bancroft, Matthew Sutcliffe, Hadrian Saravia and Thomas Bilson, over against Thomas Cartwright, Walter Travers, Dudley Fenner, John Udal and Martin Marprelate. Considerably more space is devoted to the conformists, whom Lake considers to have been unduly neglected. He accepts that, with the partial exception of Hooker, all these writers were operating within an agreed Calvinist framework, but argues convincingly that important differences of doctrinal emphasis still separate them. The 'quietism' and even 'fatalism' of Whitgift, for instance, marks him off from the 'activism' of Cartwright. The 'experimental' predestinarian position of Bridges was different again, and closer to that of Cartwright. It was Hooker, uniquely among these apologists for episcopacy, who broke with the 'Calvinist style of divinity which dominated the Elizabethan Church', and thereby helped prepare the way for English Arminianism. Hooker 'invented' the type of 'Anglicanism' that came to characterize the Restoration church. Indeed Lake's interpretation of Hooker promises to be the most controversial aspect of this splendid book. Nevertheless the case for Hooker as 'innovator' carries conviction. The *Laws of ecclesiastical polity* is strikingly described as

consisting of a 'sort of sleight of hand whereby what amounted to a full-scale attack on Calvinist piety was passed off as a simple exercise in anti-presbyterianism'. The 'manoeuvre' was necessary if Hooker was to escape the fate of other contemporary anti-Calvinist writers, such as Peter Baro or Richard Thomson, who remained unpublished in England. The *Polity* also provided a novel positive content to the conformist case, in the form of a 'sacrament- and prayer-centred piety', which looks forward to the Laudian ascendancy of the 1630s.³⁹

Like Trevor-Roper, Lake posits a link between religion and politics. According to Lake, Puritans held an inherently 'populist' view of the sources of power, while apologists for religious conformity increasingly moved towards a position of monarchical 'absolutism'. He recognizes that the contractualist position of Hooker does not fit this model, but sees him as still very much an Elizabethan in his political thought. Defenders of episcopacy, however, came almost ineluctably to stress the unlimited nature of royal authority.⁴⁰ The further implication is that the great S. R. Gardiner's notion of a 'Puritan Revolution', occurring in the mid seventeenth century, is not far wrong. *Anglicans and puritans?* effectively ends with the accession of James, but Lake is currently engaged on a sequel which will trace the development of conformist thought up to the English Civil War. Meanwhile others are embarked on recharting the history of early Stuart puritanism, especially in its more radical aspects.⁴¹ A new synthesis, therefore, appears to be in the offing.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON

NICHOLAS TYACKE

³⁹ P. Lake, *Anglicans and puritans? Presbyterianism and English conformist thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London, 1988), pp. 38-9, 42, 121, 129, 196, 227, 239; White and Tyacke, 'Debate', p. 203.

⁴⁰ Lake, *Anglicans and puritans?*, pp. 53-64, 135-9, 197-206, 245-6.

⁴¹ K. L. Sprunger, *Dutch puritanism: a history of English and Scottish churches of the Netherlands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Leiden, 1982); N. Tyacke, *The fortunes of English puritanism, 1603-1640* (London, 1990).