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*Radicalism, Reform and National Identity in Scotland, 1820-1833*, by Gordon Pentland (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2008; pp.xi + 234. £50.00).

Gordon Pentland's excellent book offers an innovative approach to politics in the age of reform in British history, by investigating the Reform Act (Scotland) of 1832 as a means of exploring the evolving relationship between England and Scotland. By concentrating on the thirteen crucial years after the 'Radical War' of 1815-20 in Scotland, he is able to probe in detail the campaign for reform and its political context, the passing of the Act, and its outworking in the first year after its legislation. He concludes that this was a vital period in the development of Scotland's political position in Britain, exposing various kinds of patriotism through its events. He argues that Scottish national identity was expressed, not in separatism, but in calling for a closer union with England, to the extent that he suggests that the reform campaign in Scotland can be described as 'Scotland's first mass unionist-nationalist movement' (p.155). For instance, Pentland shows that Scottish reformers wished to acquire 'English' liberties through political (and also religious) reform, and that they drew on instances in both English and Scottish history in making their case for reform. Conceptualising British and Scottish identities as wholly discrete is therefore, as he says 'inadequate' (p.194). On the other hand, Britishness was not simply imposed on Scotland from above, but Scots shaped British identity for their own ends, using it to make demands on the British state. The issue cannot, therefore, be reduced to a notion of assimilationist reformers submitting to the English model of a Reform Bill, opposed by patriotic anti-reformers. Pentland shows that the flaws in the Scottish Bill arose at least in part from the struggle between English Cabinet ministers trying to conform the Scottish Bill to the English Bill as much as possible, and the Scottish Whigs who were trying to accommodate Scottish differences of context.

Besides this original addition to work on national identity, Pentland has also made an important contribution to existing studies of the Reform Acts of 1832 by approaching the British reforms from the Scottish experience. Michael Brock's book, *The Great Reform Act* (1973) is still the standard work, and succeeding, more local studies of reform in 1832 have also been

largely Anglocentric. It is refreshing as well as highly instructive to read the popular and Parliamentary campaigns for reform from the point of view of Scotland's interaction with Westminster – through, for instance, the correspondence of leading Scottish Whigs such as Francis Jeffrey, the Lord Advocate in the Whig administration, and Henry Cockburn, the Solicitor General, between themselves and with English ministers such as Earl Grey and Lord Melbourne, and also the speeches opposed to reform of Scottish Tories such as Lord Melville. Moreover, Pentland succeeds in relating the narrative of events in a much richer way than has previously been managed in treatments of the age of reform in standard Scottish histories, by providing far more than an account of events. It is deepened, for instance, by an analysis of the arguments for and against reform made by campaigners inside and outside Parliament – showing, among other things, the distinctively Scottish providentialist and Covenanting language used in Scottish reform arguments alongside popular constitutionalism and patriotism, and Paineite rationalism. Pentland also highlights in the letters and speeches of Jeffrey and other Scots the uncomfortable manoeuvre that the Whigs had to achieve, from arguing for reform before 1832, to defending moderation after 1832, against criticisms from radicals with whom they had worked to campaign for reform, because of the difficulty otherwise of passing reform legislation through a Tory-dominated House of Lords.

The narrative is also greatly enriched by the demonstration that 'reform' in Scotland in the 1820s and early 1830s meant much more than reform of the Parliamentary franchise but also encompassed, among others, local reform (burgh reform, police reform), the abolition of slavery, the eradication of corruption in many spheres of life, economic reform, the campaign for freedom of opinion, together with, crucially in Scotland, religious reform. Pentland is intensely aware that Disruption in the Church of Scotland followed only fourteen years after the passage of the Reform Act (Scotland), and he argues that the Voluntary movement really only 'took off' after parliamentary reform had been passed (p.179), and was led by many of those who had been prominent in the earlier campaign. Indeed, the appearance of the same *dramatis personae* in many of these reform campaigns is effectively demonstrated by Pentland's setting of political reform in the context of reform more broadly conceived, and vindicates this approach by showing the same impetus behind the different campaigns. At the same time, the distinctive Scottish context and reform campaigns allow Pentland to discuss the delicate and plastic nature of the Anglo-Scottish union at this time, since they show that the Whig government had to

grapple with a question more often associated with much more recent times – how was the reformed Parliament to legislate on such particularly Scottish issues as reform of the Church of Scotland and of the burgh franchise? and yet, how was the reformed Parliament to avoid disappointing the hopes of many Scots who expressed great faith in its proper fulfilment of the 1707 Union by ensuring that Scottish liberties matched those in England? These various threads of argument are woven clearly around each other and around the narrative of events, while the mass of detail is firmly contained and directed lucidly to support the line of reasoning. This is a splendid book, which deserves to be an essential point of reference for this period in Scottish politics.

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