

*The Reformation in Historical Thought*. By A. G. DICKENS and JOHN M. TONKIN with the assistance of KENNETH POWELL (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985; pp. vii + 443. £35).

EVER since the publication in 1948 of Wallace K. Ferguson's masterful synthesis on *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, scholars interested in the Reformation period have frequently bemoaned the conspicuous absence in the available literature of a work surveying and discussing the development of the historiography of the Reformation from its inception to the present. At long last Professor Dickens and Dr Tonkin have shouldered the awesome task of filling this lacuna. Faced with the lasting, although by no means canonical importance of Jacob Burckhardt's research on the Renaissance, Ferguson was able to combine intricately many of the major thematic and chronological aspects of his study by relating them in one way or other to Burckhardt's lifetime and work. However, like the Northern Renaissance, the Reformation has had no Burckhardt – at least not yet. The authors have thus wisely given priority to a chronological approach, although they have perhaps done so at the occasional expense of devoting due space to the discussion of thematic issues, such as the relationship between the Reformation tradition and the rise of science, Puritanism, or the impact of the Reformation on education, which are considered in a rather cramped twenty-page appendix.

The book is divided into three parts. Part One is entirely devoted to the historiography of the sixteenth century. We encounter the Strasbourg diplomat and chronicler Johannes Sleidan, the martyrologists Jean Crespin and John Foxe, as well as a host of less well-known pioneers in historical scholarship on the Reformation. A rather brief second part covers the period 1600–1840, in which the authors highlight the historical assessment of the Reformation by stalwarts of the Enlightenment, whence they move on to Guizot, Macauley, and Carlyle, and emphasize against this background the novelty and importance in its time of the research carried out by Ranke. The longest section of the volume, Part Three, covers the modern era. It ranges broadly from Ignaz von Döllinger to Joseph Lortz, from Albrecht Ritschl to Heiko A. Oberman, from Friedrich Engels to Max Steinmetz, taking in Max Weber and R. H. Tawney, and last but not least from Canon Dixon to Patrick Collinson, to mention only very few of the authors discussed. Due consideration is given to the burgeoning and ever more diverse scholarship of the last three or four decades. Even this very brief survey suggests the uphill struggle which Drs Dickens and Tonkin have faced in completing this lengthy and well-documented work without the help of any preparatory studies of a broader scope. Although the authors make it clear that their survey represents in several respects a provisional rather than a definitive assessment, this should by no means detract from the significance of their achievement; neither should the following comments.

Considering the scope of their work, the authors should not be faulted for not always including the most recent secondary works, especially since in some cases (to mention only Bodin, Sarpi, Ranke and Weber) they would have had to wend their way through jungles of very specialized and rather self-contained research. But this partly explains the fact that not all chapters will capture the reader's imagination to the same extent. A certain unevenness is also due to the essentially chronological structure of the work, which

occasionally seems to run against the authors' attempt to highlight regional and national variations in the historiography they are concerned with. I am thinking in particular of their treatment of the eighteenth century (Chapter Six). This is written all too one-sidedly in the scholarly tradition established by Paul Hazard and continued by Peter Gay, and, as a result, the authors fail to differentiate sufficiently between the French, German and English Enlightenments in matters pertaining to religion. Similarly, their underlying notion of Italian Renaissance humanism in my opinion owes too uncritical a debt to the Burckhardtian view, as when such notions as 'Italianate rationalism' are adduced. Charles Trinkaus's research should make us think twice about such general labels. Elsewhere, however, the authors ably dismiss H. A. Enno van Gelder's thesis of a rational intellectual continuity between Renaissance and Enlightenment, which challenges the importance of the Reformation, by questioning the 'rationality' of the outlook adopted by one of van Gelder's heroes, Lorenzo Valla (p. 334). They nevertheless seem to insist on such continuity in claiming that 'the writers of the Enlightenment, like none of their predecessors except perhaps the scholars of the fifteenth-century Renaissance, were acutely aware of their distinctiveness, their radical break from the past, their crucial importance for the future direction of European thought' (p. 120). Are such minor inconsistencies the price to be paid for co-authorship? It is difficult to imagine that Dr Dickens, at any rate, would ever go as far as to discuss sixteenth-century thinkers, such as Guillaume Postel, Sebastian Castellio and Jean Bodin, in terms of their 'liberal' and 'rational' outlook (see page 75).

In general, the authors have succeeded admirably in steering a firm course between the related temptations of either sacrificing too much unfamiliar material to the exigencies of style and readability, or overloading their work with information, as did Eduard Fueter in his all too densely-written classic, *Geschichte der neueren Historiographie* (which, incidentally, is cited only once in a French translation, without reference to the original, on page 354, n. 15). The second kind of temptation becomes, perhaps inevitably, most apparent in the last chapter concerned with the recent social history of the Reformation, although I should add that I found this chapter lively and appealing owing to the enthusiasm with which the subject is approached. At points, however, this enthusiasm is mitigated through the authors' assumption of a rather magisterial outlook, culminating in the caveat: 'Are not social historians in danger of falling into sentimentality, idealizing rural magic, and banishing any talk of "popular superstition" as obscene?' (p. 314) – a timely reminder that today's Reformation historians are as yet far from agreeing about such basic categories as 'religion', 'church' and 'confession'. The same reservation must apply to the notion of clericalism. The Reformation movement, as Oberman has recently reminded us, did not take long in developing its own brand of clericalism. It is from this vantage point, I believe, that we ought to interpret the authors' assertion, made in one of their final paragraphs, that 'the central element in the Protestant Reformation was a conscious, essentially religious, mission: to steer Christianity back in line with biblical sources after many centuries of hierarchical manipulation' (p. 327).

These brief comments show that informed readers will undoubtedly want to reorganize in their own minds some of the emphases and judgements made in this work. This should not, however, obscure the present reviewer's convic-

tion that *The Reformation in Historical Thought* represents much more than a humble beginning in the footsteps of Ferguson's work on historical scholarship on the Renaissance (as the authors modestly claim in their Preface). It offers stimulating reading and is a substantial achievement, which will be welcomed by all historians interested in the Reformation period and in its subsequent historical assessment.

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*Revolution Reassessed: Revisions in the History of Tudor Government and Administration.* Edited by CHRISTOPHER COLEMAN and DAVID STARKEY (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1986; pp. viii + 219. £22.50; pb. £7.95); *Reassessing the Henrician Age: Humanism, Politics and Reform, 1500-1550.* By ALISTAIR FOX and JOHN GUY (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986; pp. 242. £22.50).

THESE two books are a remarkable tribute to the staying power, after thirty years, of Sir Geoffrey Elton's concept of a 'Tudor Revolution'. The contributors are for the most part Sir Geoffrey's own pupils, paying him the tribute of taking issue with his concepts. The 'Tudor Revolution' has been a rather elastic term. It began as a description of the administrative changes of the 1530s, which were held to mark the transition from an essentially 'household' to a 'bureaucratic' form of government, the most important change in English government between the Conquest and the Victorians. It soon expanded to describe a more far-reaching change in the nature of the English state brought about by the Henrician Reformation: the emergence of a concept of a sovereign, national state and the embodiment of that sovereignty in King-in-Parliament. More recently there has crept in an emphasis on 'reform' more generally: schemes for economic and social reform, for an effective poor-law, for public works, for action against enclosure or to rescue decaying towns. And in all this the prime mover is held to be Thomas Cromwell. Of course, these formulations are always more subtle, more qualified, than they seem at first; the difficulty in discussing them has always been to decide when the qualifications amount to a negation of the original bold statement.

*Revolution Reassessed* is ostensibly the more ambitious of the two collections, Starkey concluding that the 'Tudor Revolution' must be driven 'Coriolanus-like, off the stage', to be replaced by a 'Tudor readjustment in government'. But the book consists of a series of random shots, rather than a systematic examination of Elton's theories. The focus is primarily the first, narrowly administrative, formulation of the 'Revolution', with some attention, by Starkey himself, to the 'reform' angle. The substantial middle-ground, the claims for the changing nature of the Henrician state, are largely ignored. Jennifer Loach, in the only essay to deal substantially with Parliament, prefers the indirect approach, arguing that the creation of new borough seats was due rather to the Crown's wish to find places for its servants (*pace* Pollard, Neale and Elton), not to pressure from below, and deducing from this that contemporaries were unaware of momentous changes in the nature of Parliament. John Guy propounds an evolutionary view of the development of the Council, with a useful flow-chart, but then cries 'snap' in pin-pointing the actual foundation