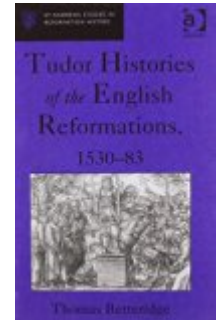


Thomas Betteridge. *Tudor Histories of the English Reformations, 1530-83.* Brookfield, Vermont and Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 1999. x + 246 pp. \$86.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-84014-281-5.



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If the early Protestant polemicist John Bale (famously known as "bilious" Bale) had a Catholic counterpart, he might be found in Miles Hogarde, the acid-tongued author of *The Displaying of the Protestants* and other books that upheld the restoration of Catholicism under Mary Tudor. Thomas Betteridge reminds us in the present work under review, *Tudor Histories of the English Reformations*, that Hogarde portrayed Archbishop Thomas Cranmer in the guise of a school-boy (in his *Assault of the Sacrament of the Altar*, 1554), caught in the act of tearing pieces out of the writings of the early Fathers of the Church in order to throw spitballs at the august figure of Lady Faith (p. 156). Betteridge's book takes its place among the fruits of the resurgence of interest in Bale and his great friend, John Foxe, whose massive ecclesiastical history, the famous *Acts and Monuments* (better known as the Book of Martyrs) is now being edited for the first time since its well-known eight-volume "modern" edition was produced early in the reign of Victoria. Patrick Collinson, Thomas Freeman, David Loades, and other scholars have been drawing important fresh attention to Foxe as a historian, and there-

fore Betteridge's book provides a welcome addition to the number of rapidly-accumulating tomes on the nature of historical perception in the context of the English reforms. It will appeal to specialists, to historians of the Reformation, and to those who study sixteenth-century literature.

Betteridge's subject concerns contemporaneous descriptions, neglected until now, of the various phases of the English Reformation (p. 3). Even-handedly, he explores historical writings on both sides of the doctrinal divide, in keeping with the current understanding (advanced by Christopher Haigh's *English Reformations*, and complemented by Eamon Duffy's *Stripping of the Altars*), that the Reformation in England unfolded in its own distinct moments, roughly synchronous with the reigns of the later Tudors: Henry VIII (who separated his realm from the Roman communion by 1535), and his children Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth. There are only four chapters: on the Henrician Reformation, as it appeared to Bale and Edward Halle; on the writings of Anne Askew (as edited by Bale); on the Marian histories of the Reformation; and on Foxe as a historian.

For Betteridge, the histories of the Reformation turn on martyrdom, both Protestant and Catholic, in the figures of King John, whom Bale elevated in his play *King Johan* as a proto-Protestant prince (pp. 77-8); Sir Thomas More (p. 132); Bishop John Fisher (p. 134), the subject of a 1999 biography, *Fisher of Men*, by Maria Dowling; Anne Askew, burnt in 1546 (pp. 80-119); and Bishop John Hooper (p. 199). The works he chooses to explore come from the upper reaches of sixteenth-century printing, in long expensive books like those of Halle or Foxe. He does not explore the many classical models, or the influence of humanism on the shaping of historical writing. Rather, Betteridge faces the daunting task of explaining works that cast events largely outside of the historical moment, and authors who wished to expose God's transcendent plan for England and its religious allegiance. Hogarde wanted to show that "the truth was before and outside history" (p. 157). In a world, Betteridge writes, "based entirely on Scripture" (especially in Protestant work, where reliance on the Bible was taken to the ultimate), "what place is there for history?" (p. 97). His book shows how much place there was, even in the most self-abnegating Protestant efforts.

Among the valuable contributions of Betteridge's book is an exploration of the familiar idea that disorder in the body of the monarch symbolized disorder in the body politic as it applied to England. He turns fresh attention to Mary Tudor's dismal empty cradle, to her mysterious unfruitful pregnancy, which Foxe used to symbolize the sterility of her reign, the Catholic revival, and the false doctrines of the Mass (pp. 178-81). Many sixteenth-century writers decried the Reformation as the mere product of unhallowed sexual urges, as an accident of sexuality. Historians represented Henry's lust for Anne Boleyn "as a metonym for the corrupting effect of heresy on the public sphere that was the Henrician Reformation" (p. 123). Henry became mired in his own carnal desires (in parallel with Martin Luther's marriage to a nun) and even in the writings of

William Tyndale, he had become, Betteridge tells us, a "feminine" king, fulfilling the common stereotype of a woman, as one too frail to resist sexual blandishments. Thus he was unable to enact or protect good laws (p. 128). Henry had been feminized by his concupiscence to the extent that the entire realm was tainted. The anonymous author of *The life of John Fisher* alleged that Henry's body was dropped before his funeral, and the filthy matter that issued from it was indicative of the corruptions he had inflicted during his reign. Even more along these lines could be examined.

George Cavendish's *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* repeated the old canard (which has been explored by Eric Ives's biography of Anne Boleyn, but not taken up by Betteridge) that Anne was actually Henry's daughter by a previous liaison (p. 127). Thus Henry was accused of incest as well as adultery, which could have provided Betteridge with even more ammunition to trace the ancient notion than sexual depravity in the body of the king equalled an ailing body politic.

Late in the sixteenth century, the Jesuit Robert Parsons dismissed the Lincolnshire gentlewoman Anne Askew (spelled here as Askewe, the simplified version of the original Ayscough), as no better than she should have been, a light wanton woman, which fits in well with Betteridge's argument. In recent years, Askew has become something of a cottage industry for scholars of English and history, following the re-publication of several almost-simultaneous editions her two *Examinations* (which were mildly disappointing, as they provided no fresh critiques of her words or Bale's role as editor). No fewer than five papers at the John Foxe and His World Interdisciplinary Colloquium at Ohio State University last year featured her. Betteridge's analysis of her work is particularly interesting. The extent to which Askew's "voyce" can be heard in her writings has become an important issue (p. 80), especially as she represents one of the few women of the sixteenth century whose works reached the printing press,

whose ideas still seem tantalizingly accessible for study and comment. Bale wanted Askew to seem representative of all women (and all Christians, as I have argued in my essay "The Woman with the Rock" in *Belief and Practice in Reformation England*, 1998), and it is tempting to see her still as the voice of all her sisters, admonished into silence. Betteridge argues convincingly that Askew's voice very largely was Scripture's voice, and her tracts provide supreme examples of the great Protestant tenet of *sola scriptura*, of testing every tenet by self-referencing appeals to the Bible. Betteridge draws parallels with other Protestant writers, including Robert Crowley. Though he refers to their intensely scriptural allusions as creating "a non-text, as a negative piece of writing" (p. 105), "negative" in the sense that the Biblical references erase the sense of the personality of the writers, this effacement is exactly the goal.

Most of Askew's utterances were drawn directly from her encyclopedic familiarity with scripture, and by claiming God's word to be her own voice, she circumvented her powerlessness as a woman, by annexing the authority of God. Bale's commentaries, interlarded between portions of her texts, served as glosses, analogous to Biblical glosses, but they were in the guise of "the language of debate" (p. 112), and drew the reader to conclude that she was a martyr, just as Luther had argued in *The Burning of Brother Henry* that his subject had his place too in the great procession of those members of the Christian Church who had surrendered their lives in the ultimate imitation of Christ.

The third chapter addresses the widely-held notion that Mary's reign has been a hostage to a "sorrowful past" (advanced by A. G. Dickens in *The English Reformation*, but dating back at least as far as the mid-nineteenth century), without producing any notable works of history. Betteridge asks if her reign marked a return to a "purged normality" that had existed before her fa-

ther's attack on the Church, or whether it represented "a radically discontinuous event whose true meaning transcended the norms of Tudor political discourse?" (p. 121). More work will need to be done to ascertain to what extent her reign was a revival of late-medieval religion, or whether it represented something innovative, but Betteridge provides useful explorations of the writings of Cavendish, Hogarde, and their allies. His use of the term "godly" (p. 158), which until now has been applied (following Collinson's lead) to Puritans and the hotter sorts of spiritual life under Elizabeth, could be developed to embrace the evangelical Catholics for whom the days of Queen Mary and Cardinal Reginald Pole represented a return to the best aspects of informed devotion.

As one monarch succeeded another and one type of reform overcame the next, the Reformation in England provided plenty of examples of lost opportunities, failed chances, gruesome executions, and good prospects gone awry. Even Protestant survivors under Elizabeth had reason for disappointment, as we appreciate most clearly in Betteridge's study of Foxe. A portion of the fourth chapter already appeared as "From Prophetic to Apocalyptic: John Foxe and the Writing of History", an essay in Loades's collection, *John Foxe and the English Reformation*, in the St Andrews Studies in Reformation History series (1997). Now Betteridge explains more fully the reasons behind Foxe's disillusionment in the late 1560s, and the important differences between the first English edition of the *Acts and Monuments* of 1563 and the second (cast as an ecclesiastical history) of 1570. Suffused with a sense of optimism and triumph, the first edition was written in the confidence that Elizabeth's Church would be further reformed along the lines of her brother Edward's Protestantism, and in light of continental developments, towards Calvinism. The first edition was constructed "within the public and as part of the public sphere" (p. 162). Respect for the

blood of so many martyrs would lead "inevitably" to the desired changes (p. 185).

But Foxe and his friends had their hopes dashed, nowhere so visibly as in the two differing interpretations he provided in the succeeding editions of the martyrdom of Bishop Hooper (burnt 1555), who had initially resisted efforts under Edward to wear the hated clerical vestments, vestiges of popish pomp, which under Elizabeth, every cleric was supposed to don. One wishes here that Betteridge had made more use of Collinson's depictions in *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* of redoubtable old Miles Coverdale preaching and ministering to a privy congregation in Elizabethan London at the height of the vestments crisis, much as secret Protestant churches had existed under Mary, in order to intensify our appreciation of the tension Foxe felt to maintain a loyal respect for Elizabeth's Church as he mourned the persecution it launched against those who worked for further doctrinal change. The very first Puritan documents, Collinson tells us, detailing arrests and examinations, were modelled on the Marian trials as they were set out in the 1563 *Acts and Monuments*. Hooper's story in the first edition began to seem like an indictment of present reality, and it had to be revised. Within a dozen years of Elizabeth's accession, Foxe and his friends had become outsiders. The 1570 edition of the *Acts and Monuments* was addressed now not to the greater public sphere, but to the narrow band of the godly. The potential martyrs of the Elizabethan Puritan movement were an invisible presence behind Foxe's text.

In terms of the organization of *Tudor Histories*, the reader sometimes longs that Betteridge had dealt with his themes by topics, rather than in a chronological scheme, where material is compartmentalized by "Reformations". To bring together all of the subject matter on the royal bodies, and their relations to the body politic, for example, may have made for a more cohesive discussion. But his insights into Foxe's goals, as well

as his understanding of the contemporaneous history of the various phases of the Reformation, are highly valuable, and will inspire much thought. Scholars will gain much from this book, and they should look forward to future work from Betteridge's pen.

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