

Marshall's conclusions about 'a splintered world of faith' (p. 575) at the time of the Reformation and shortly after presents a challenging message for the Anglican Communion today. It is the struggle that is important for Marshall, which played out in a vibrant national conversation where few voices were excluded and so the struggle of the sixteenth century becomes the struggle of the twenty-first century. Marshall reminds us of the paradox of Thomas More at his execution telling those who would shortly see him dead that Paul, the Pharisee, who approved the stoning of Stephen the saint, became a saint himself. It is the heretic and the believer that will all merrily meet in the heavenly kingdom. This is a message for all to consider in an Anglican Communion where some are too ready to exclude others because they do not fit a pre-determined mindset of belief or moral behaviour. In God's eyes all are equal and so taking strong stands on the strength of our own hermeneutic is sometimes a great problem since it limits the more universal knowledge of God. It seems to me that Marshall believes this and counsels tolerance, peace, forgiveness and love for the church. This is a message for those who want to separate themselves from others on the basis of their own righteousness and judgments. It is a message those who are presently fracturing the Anglican Communion need to hear as they prosecute an exclusive message.

Marshall has written a superb book which challenges me to hear the story of the Reformation again and to consider the impact of the continuities and discontinuities again. The book brings me to the consideration of the fundamental issues that bind Anglicans together, sometimes called *koinonia*, and indeed all Christians together and how those issues of God-given fellowship and communion are more universal than particular and very human judgments. The English Reformation tells this story and has importance for the church of today.

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Karl Gunther, *Reformation Unbound: Protestant Visions of Reform in England, 1525–1590* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. x + 284. ISBN 978-1-107-42640-5. doi:[10.1017/S174035532000011X](https://doi.org/10.1017/S174035532000011X)

Much scholarly ink has been spilled in the last quarter-century or so on the topic of 'hotter' Protestantism and its interactions with the process of the English Reformation. Indeed, one of the key areas of consensus that has emerged from this historiography has been precisely the idea that the 'break with Rome' was not an event but a process – that the Reformation took place over decades.

What necessitated and drove this piecemeal process were the disagreements within English Protestantism itself. Traditionally, historians have seen the initial Henrician phase of the English Reformation as resulting in an 'unfinished' church; Edward VI's reign as a more avowedly Protestant stage, and the reign of Elizabeth I, rolling back the brief return to Catholicism under Mary I, as a period of consolidating caution – in which the 'hottest' form of English Protestants, the Puritans, emerged in opposition to compromise.

At the heart of this vision of the period has been a characterization of the English settlement as a so-called '*via media*', a third way between austere Calvinism and revanchist Catholicism. As Karl Gunther writes in the introduction to his refreshingly bold *Reformation Unbound*, this surprisingly sticky idea found one of its most succinct expressions in A.G. Dickens' foundational text, *The English Reformation* (Batsford, 1964), which held that 'modest and mundane forms [of Protestantism] sprung naturally from our Tudor age'.

From the work on Puritanism of Patrick Collinson to the focus on popular piety of Alexandra Walsham, even where historians have demonstrated, as Gunther acknowledges, that English Protestantism was more of a spectrum than a set of distinct groupings, the ghost of the *via media* has remained resolutely at the feast. In the persistent vision of Puritanism as a sort of pressure group, for example – a set of beliefs more squarely focused on completing those aspects of reform that 'hotter' Protestants saw as insufficiently advanced – the historiography continues, perhaps, to treat such a programme as aberrant within, rather than central to, the English Church.

All this continues to cause controversy: most recently, Peter Lake and Isaac Stephens, in their *Scandal and Religious Identity in Early Stuart England* (Boydell, 2015), have complained that: 'A set of cognate assumptions about main-streams, *via medias*, consensual religion/s of the prayer book, of the English people or, still worse, of "English folk", just keeps coming back out of the water.' Historians of this stripe may in reaction, however, sometimes over-emphasize what historians refer to as 'confessionalisation' – that splitting off of believers into distinct and antagonist camps.

Gunther's volume enters into this rather foggy debate with a rare clarity and potential for progress. Its central thesis is that 'radical' Protestantism was in fact an aspect of the English Reformation from very early on in its history – indeed, was present before Rome was broken with at all. This contention Gunther demonstrates convincingly through detailed and sensitive readings of a wide-ranging – though largely canonical – set of sources, which unerringly situate the beliefs with which he contends within a very clear historical – as well as a historiographical – context.

Reformation Unbound opens on John Frith, an early English Protestant (and later martyr) who, while imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1535, wrote a pamphlet railing against the Roman Catholic insistence on Sunday's status as the Sabbath: there was no Scriptural basis for this choice, Frith argued, and thus Protestants should select another day of the week – perhaps Tuesday – to emphasize their freedom from the bonds of popish superstition. Of course, the Church of England under Cranmer would ignore this suggestion; but so, too, would far more fiery Protestants such as Scotland's John Knox. In other words, not only was radicalism an early presence in the crucible of English Protestant opinion; scripture, doctrine and belief were disputed in every way, in each direction and by all stripes of believer.

This more nuanced approach to the shape of English Protestant belief is echoed in Gunther's insistence on a more contextual understanding of the word 'radical' in relation to the religion of the period. He advocates decoupling it from the traditional association only with the Anabaptist rejection of infant baptism and church structures, and instead adopts what he refers to as 'a more contextual and relative use of the

term'. This approach does indeed unlock an awful lot of space in which it is possible more sensitively to explore and understand sixteenth-century English belief.

Gunther begins his discussion in the reign of Henry VIII, focusing first on the ways in which, contrary to 'traditional' historiographical opinion, many early reformers were intensely concerned with church governance and structure, and secondly on the way in which some were equally as convinced that the ends of reform should not be peaceable unity so much as – if necessary – fervent confrontation and conversion. Gunther draws attention to the radical reform of the relationship between clergy and state suggested by William Tyndale as early as 1528 (in *The obedience of a Christen man*), which would have done away with clerical lordship and episcopal hierarchies, but also cites lesser known figures such as Tristram Revel, who argued for similar ecclesiastical reform. Writers like these seemed to imply that 'the king ought to expect that supporting the reformation would produce strife and division' – not quite the peaceable *via media* of what Gunther calls 'the "myth" of moderate Anglicanism'.

In making these arguments Gunther consistently returns to the relatively small clutch of thinkers one might expect – specifically, Tundale, Frith and Robert Barnes. His purpose, however, is to demonstrate the presence and currency of thought like theirs, not advocate for its relative size or dominance. Indeed, his discussion of the tenor of English Protestantism during the Catholic resurgence of Mary I is in this regard instructive. His focus on anti-Nicodemite thought is not new – many historians have explored how Marian exiles condemned those of their fellow Protestants who remained in England and publicly misrepresented their faith for fear of persecution. What Gunther attempts to demonstrate, however, is that the distaste for dissimulation developed in exile contributed, when Protestant exiles returned to England upon the accession of Elizabeth I, to a renewed and sometimes ostentatious refusal to arrive at accommodations with insufficiently reformed doctrine.

Here, Gunther usefully and closely reads important currents of especially Calvinist thought – around salvation, predestination and election – to demonstrate precisely *why* Nicodemism was so condemned by some English Protestants, and how powerfully it therefore drove their non-conformism; in his subsequent chapter on the resistance theory that developed among Protestants during the reign of Mary, Gunther shows how the intellectual framework for opposition to monarchical government – though again he relies on canonical thinkers, in this instance primarily John Knox and Christopher Goodman – provided space for radicals to imagine different polities.

These broad-brush overviews are bolstered immeasurably by two chapters focusing on particular flash-points: first, the liturgical dispute in 1544–55 among Marian exiles known to posterity as the 'Troubles at Frankfurt', and secondly the famed Elizabethan vestments controversy of 1555–56. In both cases, Gunther argues that the traditional reading of each episode as emphasizing division between 'puritans' and 'conformists' is incomplete: that in each case a more 'multifaceted argument' was at play, of which Catholics too were a part and within which the character of English Protestantism was in flux.

The volume ends in the midst of Elizabeth's reign, and in this final chapter Gunther demonstrates successfully that the puritans of this period – often depicted as reacting to the particularities of the 'Anglican' settlement of these years – in fact took direct inspiration from the early 'radical' milieu on which his book is focused.

Critically, however, Gunther also stresses that puritans who sought to ‘own’ the nature of English Protestantism by seeing their progenitors in those earlier decades of reform were, like the advocates of the *via media*, guilty of teleology: despite the claims made across the increasingly divided clashes of Elizabeth’s later reign – and indeed the Stuart period which waits ominously just beyond the scope of Gunther’s study – ‘English Protestantism had no one true nature’.

What emerges from *Reformation Unbound*, then, is a far more contested and contingent religious landscape than has necessarily been previously acknowledged by historians of the opening phases of the English Reformation. The book ends in the midst of the reign of Elizabeth I, as the ‘puritan’ and ‘conformist’ camps begin to adopt historicized identities, each attempting to find in the past authority for their position. In truth, however, English Protestantism had not emerged fully formed and divided from the start, but had included all aspects of reforming opinion. ‘The entire question of whether an early English evangelical like William Tyndale would have been a puritan or a conformist’, Gunther points out, ‘was fundamentally anachronistic’. In this volume, Gunther offers an important new thesis with which historians of the period must contend if they, too, are not also to commit the crime of anachronism.

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Keith D. Stanglin, *The Letter and Spirit of Biblical Interpretation: From the Early Church to Modern Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), pp. 288. ISBN 9780801049682. RRP US\$15.64 or £13.99.

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Keith D. Stanglin has written an excellent intermediate introduction to the theological reading of Scripture. His style is engaging and warm, keeping away from the stale, rigid prose of some academic texts. He does not spend time developing the technical debates within the movement of theological interpretation in the way that someone like Darren Sarisky does with his recent book *Reading the Bible Theologically* (Cambridge University Press, 2019). In fact, Stanglin notes that his book is intended for those who have taken one course in church history and one in biblical interpretation (p. ix). It is important that readers have some background in theology, but this book may serve as the next step for many interested lay people, second-year seminarians, and clergy who are looking to enrich their approach to the Bible.

In his introduction, Stanglin begins with a provocative exploration of Psalm 137, focusing especially on its imprecatory nature that so many find problematic. It is by pointing to the problematic nature of the psalm that Stanglin opens the fruitful possibilities of *ressourcement*. He writes, ‘The chief motivating question behind this study may be summarized thus: “How, then, do we learn from modern historical interpretations of Scripture while also drawing on the church’s premodern