

William Perkins and the Making of a Protestant England. W. B. Patterson.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. xii + 266 pp. \$105.

In July 1625, Simonds D'Ewes, then a student of the common law at the Middle Temple in London and an avid reader of theological works, debated Calvinist soteriology at his father's manor house in Stowlangtoft, Suffolk, with Edward Cartwright, rector at nearby Norton. According to D'Ewes, Cartwright claimed that certain assurance of salvation was not obtainable in this life. D'Ewes answered that in *Reformed Catholicke* William Perkins had said that assurance could indeed be had if pursued in the correct way. In 1627, D'Ewes began compiling a lengthy list of what he called his "Indications of certainty" about his salvation, and its margins teem with citations to the writings of Perkins, his disciple William Ames, and other Calvinist divines. D'Ewes's library included a copy of the 1603 edition of Perkins's works. D'Ewes thus provides additional support for one of the claims advanced by W. B. Patterson in this fine monograph: that the astonishingly prolific Perkins wrote books that were read and remembered not only by clergymen, but also by laymen. Patterson takes careful note of the many scholars who have examined aspects of Perkins's output of forty-seven books — more than one for each year of his life. Yet he argues that although Perkins was "the most widely known English theologian of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries," the reasons for his "remarkable popularity" have not been fully explained or systematically surveyed (44). His "ideas helped to shape a Protestant religious culture that became firmly rooted during the early seventeenth century" (190). These are large claims, but this book makes a convincing case that Perkins did more to draw ordinary English people to Protestantism than any other individual.

William Perkins (1558–1602) was a theologian, scholar, preacher, casuist, teacher, and writer whose enormous contribution to the spread of Protestantism both in England and on the Continent is carefully described by Patterson. Perkins received BA and MA degrees at Christ's College, Cambridge, and became a fellow of his college in 1584. In 1590 his *Armilla Aurea* appeared in print, and an English translation (*A Golden Chaine*) followed quickly and had six editions. It dealt with how salvation is achieved and confidence about it sustained. These were questions to which Perkins frequently returned, and he made clear and powerful arguments for the validity of Calvinist/Reformed predestination and against the notion that human free will had any role to play in the process. Patterson's deft accounts of Perkins's pioneering and wide-ranging writings are revelatory on casuistry, preaching, and questions of social justice in an era of inflation, declining purchasing power, and abusive covetousness on the part of landlords, merchants, and others.

My only disagreement with Patterson is that he insists that rather than being "a Puritan or even a moderate Puritan," Perkins was instead "a mainstream English Protestant" (218). Yet in the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods, there was no mainstream, only disparate and strong currents heading in different directions. The term "moderate Puritan" does not appear until the penultimate page in the book, perhaps because Patterson defines a Puritan as a seeker of "significant changes in the liturgy, polity, and discipline of the Church of England on the model of Reformed churches elsewhere" (46). If we were to substitute "or" for "and," that definition might work with some qualifications. As it stands, it erroneously equates all Puritans with Presbyterians. Patterson reports a 1587 complaint against Perkins made to the Cambridge vice-chancellor that accused him of holding that kneeling to receive the sacrament was "superstitious and antichristian" — a characteristically Puritan statement (46). He declined to retract it before the vice-chancellor's court. His death occurred before the rise of the renewed English anti-Calvinism and Laudian ceremonialism that would outrage D'Ewes, Samuel Ward, Thomas Goodwin, Thomas Taylor, and other admirers of Perkins in the next generation. His liturgical concerns were typical among moderate Puritans and may explain why he did not take a benefice in 1595 after resigning his fellowship to marry. This caveat aside, Patterson's book is a valuable addition to our understanding of the Protestant evangelization of England in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

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