

wavering individuals to convert to one's respective Church (p. 202). Each of the chapters traces a feature of public religious disputation and substantiates the importance of disputation in this period. Chapter i demonstrates not only how disputation found its roots in Aristotle, the medieval period and humanism, but also how universities ingrained in students the importance of attaining certainty and evading error through debate. While chapter ii fruitfully explores the specific processes of disputation, chapter iii examines the ways in which Protestant authorities controlled prison disputations in order to preserve the established Church from the attacks of Catholic adversaries. This was done by not only adapting disputation procedures in an effort to aid Protestant disputants, but also by denying Catholic disputants the resources which they required to counter Protestant arguments. Chapter iv analyses the change in the purpose of disputation: a transition from its earlier goal – the pursuit of the confirmation of truth through disputation – to its later objective – the utilisation of 'truth' to persuade and convert wavering individuals. Chapter v reveals how James I's participation in a disputation disrupted the 'ideals' of a normal 'free' academic debate, since his arguments were unavoidably augmented by his monarchical authority (p. 140). The final chapter traces a growing opposition to disputation and links this to the rise of the Laudian regime. Building on previous scholarship, it shows how the 1620s witnessed a shift away from harsher polemical practices and affirms that this transition was fuelled by Laudian preoccupations with church unity. Though the bulk of the book focuses on debates in England, Rodda briefly discusses continental disputes. A slight weakness of the work is that although it briefly draws out the use of patristic sources by Protestant and Catholic polemicists, this consideration seems somewhat cursory, given its importance as a prominent feature of religious debates in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. The emphasis of the work is also a bit lopsided since most of the book focuses on debates between Protestants and Catholics and less attention is given to intra-Protestant disputes. The work also lacks any explicit attempt to draw conclusions about the similarities or differences between Protestant-Catholic and intra-Protestants disputations. Notwithstanding these minor points, this work is an invaluable resource for any student or scholar wanting to understand the shifting and complex dynamics and purposes of public religious disputation in England.

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*Doubtful and dangerous. The question of succession in late Elizabethan England.* Edited by Susan Doran and Paulina Kewes. (Politics, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain.) Pp. xv + 320 incl. frontispiece and 2 genealogical charts. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014. £75. 978 0 7190 8606 9  
*JEH* (67) 2016; doi:10.1017/S0022046916000142

In *Doubtful and dangerous*, Susan Doran and Paulina Kewes have curated a collection of essays concerning the succession question in the 'long' 1590s, when, as the editors demonstrate, it was far from obvious that James VI of Scotland should accede the English throne after Elizabeth I. The volume succeeds in covering

this rich topic, and the political and religious uncertainty that it engendered, from nearly every conceivable angle. Tackling the religio-political angle, Kewes overturns the scholarly assumption that English Puritans favoured James VI, while Peter Lake and Michael Questier look at the succession crisis in terms of the Archpriest controversy, with the late great Patrick Collinson investigating the opinion on the succession of Richard Bancroft as bishop of London. Looking at the court, no book about the Elizabethan *fin de siècle* would be complete without an examination of the brash rebellion of the earl of Essex, and Alexandra Gajda reveals that the pretext of a ‘popish plot’ was real enough to him. Essex’s rival Robert Cecil is the subject of Alexander Courtney’s study, which forensically analyses his secret correspondence with James VI in the crucial years 1601–3 in order to uncover its role in facilitating James’s accession. Shifting from the court to the wider public, the next section includes contributions from Arnold Hunt, who examines the way in which sermons fitted into the ‘news culture’ of late Elizabethan England; from Richard Dutton, who persuasively argues that versions of *Hamlet* were ‘deeply informed by succession anxieties’ (p. 175); and from Richard A. McCabe, whose careful reading of poems by Spenser, James VI himself, and others, reveals the ‘poetics of continuity’ (p. 207). The final four essays look at ‘Britain and beyond’: Susan Doran shows how James’s Scottish birth and untrustworthy reputation repeatedly stoked the succession question in the 1590s, while also convincingly portraying the succession as a force that ‘fostered senses of national identity’ (p. 230); R. Malcolm Smuts illustrates that the issue of ‘Britain’ was an important factor in the thought of the historian Sir John Hayward; Rory Rapple throws light on the often neglected Irish role in the succession issue, focusing on the parts played by Hugh O’Neill and the earl of Essex in Tyrone’s Rebellion; and Thomas McCoog offers the continental perspective, in a fascinating and broad political examination. By concentrating on one historical topic and a relatively short time period, Doran and Kewes have produced a remarkably cohesive yet considerably varied volume: this is what most such volumes claim to achieve but all too often with unwieldy results. Each essay here, though, addresses the topic from a particular perspective, but then also speaks in some way to (at least one of) the book’s themes: historical contingency, religious/national prejudice, the interplay of high politics and public opinion. Moreover, the book is good value, with each of its contributions offering insightful and original historical/literary analysis. It is an admirable achievement and an enjoyable read.

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*Imitatio Christi. The poetics of piety in early modern England.* By Nandra Perry. Pp. viii + 280 incl. 3 figs. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014. \$32 (paper). 978 0 268 03841 0

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Perry’s ambitious book traces the religious dimensions of the literary practice of imitation in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as the literary implications of the religious imitation of Christ. Arguably the most popular devotional text of the late Middle Ages, the *Imitatio Christi* (usually attributed to Thomas à Kempis) remained popular through the Reformation, though often revised to