

PATHS NOT TAKEN IN THE BRITISH REFORMATIONS*

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ABSTRACT. *Traditional historiographies of the Reformation, seeing it as a unified, directed transition from Catholicism to Protestantism, seem increasingly untenable. This article looks in detail at three individuals from the British Reformation whose careers did not fit this pattern: a Scotsman, John Eldar, and two Englishmen, John Proctor and John Redman. Enthusiasts for Henry VIII's Reformation, they found themselves alarmed, but disempowered and compromised, in the face of Edward VI's more radical religious changes. Redman died in 1551, but Proctor and Eldar both celebrated Mary I's Catholic restoration, while not entirely forgetting their Henrician sympathies. The article argues that these men represent a distinctive religious strand in Reformation Britain. Such 'latter-day Henricians' valued Henry VIII's distinctive Reformation: anti-papal, anti-heretical, sacramental, Erasmian, and Biblicist. The vicissitudes of religious politics in both England and Scotland in the 1540s and 1550s left no space for such beliefs, although the article suggests that traces of Henricianism can be seen in Elizabeth I herself. It also argues that the impotence of the latter-day Henricians under Edward VI is a symptom of the paralysing weakness of all English religious conservatives in the reign, a predicament from which they were rescued only by Mary's restoration.*

What was the Reformation? To those shrewd historians W. C. Sellar and R. J. Yeatman, it was when 'the Pope ... seceded with all his followers from the Church of England'. ('This', they added helpfully, 'was called the Restoration.')¹ We do not need to embrace that particular view to recognize that 'Reformation' is a problematic term. It is as susceptible as anything else to the terminological dry rot which has, for a generation now, been crumbling previously useful historical labels into contentiousness. Once, we happily talked of towns or territories accepting 'the Reformation', a set menu to be adopted wholesale. Yet this always worked better in some territories than in others, and a single Reformation moment (a Good Thing almost by definition) now seems a little quaint. Historians of England, at least, are instead more at ease with plural Reformations. Christopher Haigh has divided the English story into a switchback of successive Reformations,²

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* I am grateful to Diarmaid MacCulloch and to Nick Thompson for conversations which informed this article, and to audiences in Oxford, Cambridge, and Aberdeen who heard and commented on earlier versions.

¹ W. C. Sellar and R. J. Yeatman, *1066 and all that* (London, 1930), p. 54.

² Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: religion, politics and society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993).

whilst others see a kaleidoscope of parallel Reformations, as communities and individuals wrestled inconclusively with the process of religious change.³

Perhaps, then, we should abandon the term ‘Reformation’ altogether: a historiographical relic too laden with Protestant narcissism to be of any use, rather as John W. O’Malley has suggested jettisoning ‘Catholic Reformation’ and ‘Counter-Reformation’ in favour of ‘early modern Catholicism’.⁴ Perhaps ‘Reformation’ is too teleological, a word for a steady wind of change blowing from Catholic obscurantism to Protestant enlightenment. This article retains the term, but seeks to recover its contemporary sense from beneath the encrusted layers of encrusted Enlightenment values. Even when sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Christians began to describe the changes around them as ‘the Reformation’ rather than merely as ‘reformation’, they intended something regressive: restoring the church’s pristine virtues, as reformers had always done. ‘Reformation’ in this sense was of course a universal aspiration. The problems arose from disagreements on which direction such reformation might take. ‘The Reformation’ eventually produced three or four major sets of answers to that question, overlapping and mutually antagonistic. However, those sets of answers were not the only ones on offer. The paths not taken, the religious dead ends, are as revealing about the processes of reformation as the successes.

This article describes some of those roads not taken and their significance for the Reformation process as a whole – principally in England, but also in Scotland and with an eye to Continental European parallels. Its focus is not on doctrines, but on certain individuals whose careers do not fit established stereotypes. It examines in some detail the religious paths traced by three individuals – one Scotsman and two Englishmen – and compares them to several others on the way. These are people with walk-on parts in established histories. Their paths were usually unheroic, often conscientious, and, from later confessional perspectives, never tidy. Yet, as this article argues, together they show us a different vision of what Reformation might have meant: a Reformation which was both Catholic and evangelical, and which was linked in these individuals’ hopes and memories to what Henry VIII had tried to achieve in England. Their careers suggest that this vision remained viable (or, at least, conceivable) for longer than is usually allowed. And their careers also shed some light on the way in which that vision was finally killed, and help us to address the most surprising fact about the English and Scottish Reformations: their remarkably swift and complete success.

I

Our first character is a Scotsman named John Eldar. Our knowledge of his early career depends largely on his own, stylized account of it, which tells us that he was

³ Amongst many examples, the outstanding study of this kind is Norman Jones, *The English Reformation: religion and cultural adaptation* (Oxford, 2002).

⁴ John W. O’Malley, *Trent and all that: renaming Catholicism in the early modern era* (Cambridge, MA, 2000).

born in Caithness, in north-east Scotland, probably around 1520.⁵ He was educated in the Western Isles, in bardic fashion; he named Skye and Lewis, but apparently meant these as generic terms for the Inner and Outer Hebrides. He was a Gaelic-speaking Highlander and proud of it, proclaiming his status as a 'Redshank' at every opportunity. But, a little unusually for a Highlander, he successfully made the transition to Lowland education. He was comfortable in Scots, in Latin, eventually in English, and (we may presume) also in French. He matriculated at the University of St Andrews in 1533, and spent most of the next decade studying there and at Scotland's two other universities, Glasgow and Aberdeen. His studies were probably sponsored by an ecclesiastical patron, for he tells us that in 1539 or thereabouts he went to Rome as part of a Scottish delegation. At some point, naturally enough, he was ordained. He first becomes of interest to us, however, in early 1544, the likely date of an extraordinary set of documents which he addressed to Henry VIII of England.⁶ These consisted of a map, a gazetteer and a covering letter. The map is lost, but the other two items survive.⁷ Eldar wrote as the regency regime in Scotland, now under the effective control of Cardinal David Beaton, had set its face against a possible marriage between the infant queen of Scots, Mary Stewart, and Edward, the prince of Wales. Henry VIII was now proposing to pursue the marriage alliance by force. The map and the gazetteer were explicitly offered to Henry for military purposes, and were genuinely valuable. The gazetteer provides detailed and tolerably accurate descriptions of the distances between major Scottish towns, the quality of the roads, the prospects for a foraging army in various regions, and the ports through which a navy might resupply land forces. Eldar also drew attention to key strategic points such as Stirling bridge and the near-impregnable castle at Dumbarton.

In other words, Eldar was committing treason. He justified his action in the letter to Henry VIII, which is a queasy hybrid of a religious-political manifesto, a celebration of the Gaelic people and a bid for employment. In the last, at least, he was successful. He offered to serve the English king in whatever way he could, and

⁵ This account of Eldar's career taken from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB); British Library (BL), Royal MS 18.A.333viii, fos. 1–17; John Eldar, *The copie of a letter sent in to Scotlande* (RSTC 7552; London, 1555); Peter M. Barber, 'Mapping Britain from afar', *Mercator's World*, 3 (1998), pp. 20–7.

⁶ The manuscripts are undated, but internal and external evidence suggest that the likeliest date is early 1544. Eldar's description of Scotland as being 'reulid ... be the advyse of the Cardinall' and in 'neid of a wyse gouernor' (BL, Royal MS 18.A.333viii, fo. 1r–v) would make no sense before September 1543. Nor would his presumption that Henry VIII is planning an invasion, since it was only at the end of 1543 that England abandoned hopes for a negotiated settlement. If Eldar was already in the circle of the earl of Lennox at this point, that would also point to early 1544, as it was only in January 1544 that Lennox moved unambiguously to a pro-English stance. Eldar's annuity from Henry VIII was granted on 25 March 1544; James Gairdner and R. H. Brodie (eds.), *Letters and papers, foreign and domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII* (London, 1862–1932) (L&P), XIX (i) no. 278.71.

⁷ The letter is BL, Royal MS 18.A.333viii. The gazetteer, 'An abstracte for Englishshe men to know the realme of Scotland through out', survives in two copies: BL, Harleian MS 289, fos. 4–5, and BL, Cotton MS Vespasian D.xviii, fos. 135–9 (the former is used here).

on 25 March 1544 was awarded an annuity of £20, which was renewed later the same year. In 1545 he accompanied the English army in Scotland as a paid propagandist.⁸ Yet while he was clearly venal, his praise of the Highlands is unmistakably heartfelt, even if his claim that most Gaels joined him in favouring the English cause is dubious. Heartfelt too, it seems, was his vicious denunciation of Cardinal Beaton and his allies; or, as he described them, ‘the Dewils convocacion, and the father of mischeif, Daudid beton ther Cardinall, with beelzebubs flesmongers the Abbotes’ and the ‘proud papisticall buschops’. Eldar surely knew that such language would be welcome at the English court, but it appears genuine enough. ‘Ther is no people’, he lamented of the Scots, ‘in no Region in Europe so perturbed, so molestide, so vexide and so vtterly opprest withe bussheps, Monckes, Rome Rykers and preistis.’ His anticlericalism was bolstered by his Gaelic chauvinism. He complained that ‘the babilonicall bussheps and the great courtyours of Scotland repute the forsayd yrishe [Gaelic] Lords, as wilde, rude, and barbarous people’, whereas in fact the Highlanders surpassed their deceitful, sophisticated Lowland cousins ‘in faithe, and honestie, in policy and witt, in good order, and ciuilitie’. And his religious views seem to have extended beyond mere anticlericalism, too, for he hoped that an English victory would see ‘hypocrisy and supersticion abolissede’ and ‘the settinge fourthe of [God’s] worde’.⁹ In 1544, then, Eldar appears as an evangelical Scot eager to use England’s imperial ambitions to reform the Scottish church. It was not an uncommon stance.¹⁰

After 1545 Eldar all but disappears from the historical record for a decade. He resurfaces in 1555, when we find him still in England and in the employ of the earl of Lennox, Matthew Stewart. Lennox too had been in English exile since the 1540s, and was married to Margaret Douglas, Henry VIII’s niece. Eldar was now acting as tutor to their son, Henry, Lord Darnley. He had also kept up his map-making, and had become a respected cartographer, working for (amongst others) Cardinal Pole. At some point in the late 1550s, he left the Lennoxes’ employ and went to France, where he presented the young queen of Scots with a letter from his pupil, her future husband. He remained in Paris, secured a pension from the French regime, and came to be on good terms with the cardinal of Lorraine. From 1559, Elizabeth I’s new regime was understandably concerned about Eldar’s activities. The English ambassador in Paris, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, knew him from the 1540s and now described him as ‘as great a practiser and as daungerous for the maters of England as any hym I know’. Eldar might, Throckmorton worried, be acting as a channel of communication between English Catholic malcontents and France. In 1561, Eldar was discharged from his French pension and received fifteen crowns from the cardinal of Lorraine, apparently with the intention that he travel to Scotland to serve his own queen,

⁸ *LC&P*, XIX (i) nos. 278.71, 1035.10; XX (ii) no. 533.

⁹ BL Royal MS 18.A.333viii fos. 1v, 2r, 11r–v, 14r, 15r–v, 17r.

¹⁰ Alec Ryrie, *The origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 75–8.

newly returned home. However, Throckmorton's worries had now eased. He had not seen 'any ill affection towards the Quenes Maieste or her realme' from Eldar, and indeed was now trying to recruit him once again as an English agent. He sent Eldar to England bearing a letter of introduction to William Cecil; this pointed out Eldar's usefulness, emphasizing in particular that he was 'verie skillful in drawing of plattes [maps]'. He also, as another English agent commented, 'hatht wytt to playe the aspye wheare he listeth'. Indeed, he gave the English information about the correspondence he had carried for the Lennoxes. Yet it seems Cecil was wary of becoming entangled again with this man, whom he also knew of old. The information Eldar gave about the countess of Lennox was used against her – although it was hardly decisive – but by the summer of 1562 he was back in Paris, and still being watched suspiciously by the English.¹¹ It was probably during this uncomfortable period of unemployment that Eldar finally did something of lasting value: he sold his updated map of the British Isles to Gerard Mercator. That, as Peter Barber has argued, seems the likeliest source for the unprecedentedly detailed map of Britain which Mercator published in 1564.¹² Finally, with nothing more to sell in the way of cartography or espionage, Eldar returned to Scotland. He was appointed to a trio of ecclesiastical livings there in 1565, none of which would have required him actually to serve a cure. At that point, he vanishes from the record for good.

So a man for hire, then; or 'an early specimen of ... the Scot on the make in England'.¹³ That in itself is not necessarily a mark of bottomless insincerity. Clearly Eldar changed his loyalties, but loyalties change for principled as well as for cynical reasons. If his evangelicalism in the 1540s seems heartfelt, so does his Catholicism a decade later. In 1559, Eldar passed details of Mary Tudor's anti-heresy policy, including Bishop Bonner's injunctions, to the cardinal of Lorraine, and was, Throckmorton believed, trying to 'incense' the cardinal to an aggressive policy towards heresy.¹⁴ More tellingly, perhaps, in 1555, a letter written by Eldar was published in London. It was a genuine letter, written to the earl of Lennox's brother, Robert Stewart, the bishop of Caithness, and containing various personal details. However, it also gave a detailed description of the arrival of Philip of Spain in England and of his marriage to Queen Mary, which made it a valuable news pamphlet. Unsurprisingly, in this letter Eldar professed a robust

¹¹ The National Archives (TNA), SP 70/7 fos. 65r, 68r, 75r; SP 70/33 fo. 8r (Joseph Stevenson, ed., *Calendar of state papers, foreign series, of the reign of Elizabeth (CSP Foreign), 1558–1559* (London, 1863), no. 1355, p. 562; *CSP Foreign, 1561–1562* (London, 1867), no. 743; *CSP Foreign, 1562* (London, 1867), no. 26); BL, Additional MS 35831, fo. 56r; BL, Harleian MS 289, fo. 75r (Joseph Bain, ed., *Calendar of state papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547–1563* (Edinburgh, 1898), no. 1076).

¹² Barber, 'Mapping Britain'.

¹³ William Ferguson, *Scotland's relations with England: a survey to 1707* (Edinburgh, 1994, cf. first edn, 1977), p. 59.

¹⁴ TNA, SP 70/7 fo. 65r (ciphered sections deciphered on fos. 68r, 75r) (*CSP Foreign, 1558–1559*, no. 1355, p. 562).

Catholicism. He denounced Henry VIII's cruelty to Cardinal Pole's family, praised Pole himself, and rejoiced that

the moste holy Catholike fayth and true relygion of Christ whyche in Englande hath been thys long tyme behynde the post and in Captiuitie, is now, being delyuered and cummyng home agayne ... and all erronious doctrine & heretical bokes with the teachers & setters fourth of the same, are conuicted, abolished, yea, explosed and dryuen out of Englande for euer.

This much, perhaps, is to be expected. But Eldar proceeded to add a more personal note. The 'herers and fauorers' of heresy, he claimed, 'nowe layinge theyr handes to theyr heartes, and perceauinge theym selues seduced and deceaued by suche meanes, are sory, and do hartlye repent'. And he admitted that he must count himself as one such. Not, he hastened to add, that he was ever 'associated with any which wer erronious or suspected to be fautours and defendours of hereticall, and sinistrate opinions'; yet he sorrowfully recalled 'how lasciuiously I liued in England these .xx. yeres, & y^c most part thereof haue followed thesame trade of liberty & voluptuous liuing as a great numbre haue done'.¹⁵ His claim, then, is that he was attracted by the heretics' way of life, not their core doctrines. This was a common enough pattern in Reformation England,¹⁶ and it was also not incompatible with what he had said ten years earlier. In 1544 Eldar had also shown some signs of loyalty to older patterns of piety. For example, in the midst of his denunciations of Beaton, he had praised the 'Reddshank' St Columba, not only for his true preaching, but for his 'followinge of the holy Apostlis in godlie imitation, doctryne, and pouertie'.¹⁷

One other strand of evidence should be brought in before we leave John Eldar, and that is the religious trajectory followed by his patrons, the Lennox Stewarts. Matthew Stewart, the earl of Lennox, was a man of no great religious principles, but the earl's brother, Robert Stewart, the bishop of Caithness (who himself briefly held the earldom at the end of his life) followed an altogether more interesting path.¹⁸ In the 1540s, Robert was integral in negotiating Matthew's alliance with Henry VIII. In the agreement which was eventually reached, Robert promised on behalf of his brother and their lieges to 'cause the woorde of god to be truely taught and preched among them and in their countreyes'.¹⁹ He was even appointed a prebendary of Canterbury Cathedral in 1546. Yet later the same year he returned to Scotland and submitted himself to the crown, perhaps as part of his family's efforts to keep an eye on their interests in Scotland. He was no evangelical as a bishop, and took part in the trial of Scotland's last Protestant martyr, Walter Milne, in 1558. He no doubt agreed with the religious sentiments in the letter which John Eldar wrote to him in 1555. He was, however, also an ally

¹⁵ Eldar, *Copie of a letter*, sigs C7v–C8r, F1v–F2v.

¹⁶ Alec Ryrie, 'Counting sheep, counting shepherds: the problem of allegiance in the English Reformation', in Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie, eds., *The beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 98–105.

¹⁷ BL, Royal MS 18.A.333viii fo. 7r.

¹⁸ For most of what follows, see *ODNB*. ¹⁹ TNA, SP 49/7 fo. 49v (*L&P*, XIX (i) no. 522).

of the archbishop of St Andrews, John Hamilton, who was pursuing a programme of Catholic reform with a distinctively evangelical flavour during these years. Robert Stewart was one of only two bishops who supported Hamilton in the biggest set-piece confrontation which that reform programme provoked, over the right use of the Paternoster.²⁰ And when Scotland changed in 1560, Stewart changed very happily with it. He became assiduous in attending sermons and was an activist bishop in the 1560s, spending effort and a good deal of his own money on building a Protestant church in his remote diocese. Sometimes he even preached himself. The point is that the Lennox Stewarts' world was a religiously amphibious one. By the 1560s, Robert Stewart was clearly a Protestant with no public regrets. John Eldar was most likely still a Catholic of some kind, although as his sources of income dried up, he was eventually willing to return to a Protestant country and accept benefices from the patronage of the earl Marischal, William Keith, a staunch Protestant. Eldar and Stewart both traced comparable paths of uncertainty and ambiguity through the 1540s and 1550s, triangulating between their interests and their consciences, even as the room available for religious manoeuvre was steadily decreasing.

II

Our second character is the English scholar John Proctor, known to historians chiefly as the author of the best contemporary account of Wyatt's rebellion of 1554. Proctor was a Somerset lad, born in 1521 – the same generation as Eldar. He matriculated at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in 1537. Oxford was the more religiously conservative of England's universities in the last decade of Henry VIII's reign, and Proctor spent almost ten years there, latterly as a fellow of All Souls College. He left the University in 1546; in 1553 he was appointed as a schoolmaster in Tunbridge, and was thus on the spot when Wyatt's rebellion broke out. His account of the rising is punchily loyalist in its religion, denouncing the rebels for heresy as well as treachery. Also in 1554, Proctor published an English edition of Vincent of Lérins's *Commonitorium*, to which he added as a preface a heartfelt appeal to the English to return from their heretical dalliances to the bosom of the true church. Both his books ran to second editions during the following two years. He died in 1558, a few weeks before Queen Mary.²¹

Yet Proctor was not a simple Catholic loyalist. The clearest evidence of this comes from his book *The fal of the late Arrian*, published in December 1549. It is Proctor's only other publication, and the only substantial evidence we have for his activities during Edward VI's reign. It is a line-by-line refutation of the views of a religious radical whom Proctor coyly refuses to name, describing him merely as

²⁰ Alec Ryrie, 'Reform without frontiers in the last years of Catholic Scotland', *English Historical Review*, 119 (2004), pp. 27–56. On the Paternoster controversy, see John Foxe, *Actes and monuments of matters most speciall in the church* (RSTC 11225: London, 1583), pp. 1274–5.

²¹ ODNB.

an ‘Arian’; however, the target is plainly the Cambridge-educated cleric John Ashton, who had denied the Trinity and been tried for heresy before Archbishop Cranmer in late 1548.²² Proctor claims that the emergence of Arianism and similar heresies discredits the whole Edwardian reform project – a dangerously plausible argument, which, as Catharine Davies has argued, helps explain the peculiar outpouring of anti-Anabaptist writing in Edwardian England.²³ What makes Proctor’s book interesting, however, is that he does not write from a straightforwardly Catholic point of view.

The book is dedicated to Princess Mary, and it praises her outrageously by comparing her virtues to those of the Virgin Mary, whose own attributes are praised fulsomely. That might seem a clear enough signal of religious sympathies, although Mary was not yet in open breach with her brother’s government. Yet the introduction proceeds to defend ‘the Euangelicall doctrine’ professed by ‘the faythfull Congregacion’, and to denounce ‘that Romysh man, the peuysh Pope ... his trickes: his false forged powre’. Under popery, Proctor declares, the English ‘were nouseled in Idolatrye, and trayned in worshippyng stockes and stones’: that last phrase had a Lollard pedigree. By contrast, Proctor enthused, the English had now been given Scripture, ‘that comfortable treasure of Gods sweete worde ... that comfortable lyght, that pleasaunt foode of soules’. He also explicitly praised the German Protestants, Conrad Pellican and Erasmus Sarcerius, whom Ashton had attacked.

None of this meant that Proctor was pleased by the Edwardian Reformation. The appearance of Anabaptism was, for Proctor, a symbol that the good Reformation which Henry VIII had begun was running out of control. The consequences, he warned, were ‘the miserable deuastacion of Christ his vneyarde, prophanacion of the pure & vnspotted religion, antiquacion of al honest, godlye and decent Ordres’. The root of the problem was that ‘euerye man, euery woman pretendeth to be a gospeller, euery boy, eche gyrl trayned & exercised in readyng the holy Scripture’. He was careful to say that to be a gospeller is noble, and to read Scripture, godly. Yet when the common people were let loose on Scripture, they ‘wonderously abused’ it. ‘Some of you seeke matter of talke: some, straunge oppinions: and some proufes and arguments to maintayne your conceptes & mad imaginacions be they good or badde: some, the knowledge onlye: some, the waye to liue well: and fewe seeke after that waye.’ The result was chaos. It was a powerful warning, especially delivered in the wake of the rebellions and political turmoil of 1549. Proctor clearly connected the social unrest to religious upheaval, and he praised ‘the kynges most prudent counsellours’ who had removed the duke of Somerset from office. So while he agreed that egregious abuses had been committed under popery, he argued that matters were

²² Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: a life* (New Haven and London, 1996), p. 407; idem, *Tudor church militant* (London, 1999), pp. 116–17.

²³ Catharine Davies, *A religion of the Word: the defence of the reformation in the reign of Edward VI* (Manchester, 2002), ch. 2.

now worse than ever. ‘Then ye were halfe blynde, and nowe ye see nothyng. Then stockes and stones were in your eye, and nowe God is oute of youre hertes.’²⁴

Proctor’s proposed remedy was as simple as it was unrealistic: to return to the reign of Henry VIII, ‘that Noble Henrye, Kyng of Kynges’, who had liberated the English from their old mumpsimus, but who had also warned against becoming too forward in the new sumpsimus.²⁵ Proctor’s lament (and the old king’s, too) was that the people had received these gifts ungratefully and foolishly, using Scripture to foster contention when it ought to foster unity. It was, he stressed, vital to be ‘lowe, humble and meeke of spyrite’ if Scripture was to be read profitably. Again referring back to Henry VIII, he urged his readers: ‘Deceave not the louyng expectacion of so hygh and fatherly a Prince conceyued of you, do not frustrate his traueil and labours.’ But Proctor was enough of a realist to know that his exhortation would have no effect. England was caught up in a ‘hurlye burlye of Christis religion’, and he admitted that ‘in so vnquiet a time as this is’ his quietist’s voice was unlikely to be heard.²⁶

Five years later, Proctor’s tone had changed from elegy to zeal. In his two tracts of 1554, there were no more sideswipes at the pope. Rather, he insisted that the Catholic Church was ‘the pillar and foundation of trueth’, and that there was no salvation apart from it, and he mocked those Protestant theologians who had dared to claim the mantle of Catholicity for themselves.²⁷ Yet the John Proctors of 1549 and 1554 are not so different as they appear, nor do we have to explain the differences between them as political trimming. His choice to translate the *Commonitorium* – which famously defined the Catholic faith as that which was believed everywhere, at all times and by all people – neatly sidestepped the question of papal authority (which had not formally been restored in England when the book was first published). And his critique of heresy was essentially the same in 1554 as in 1549. The Edwardian Proctor had hated heresy above all for its effects on society: ‘headynesse, flattery, ambicion, and rashnesse ... practised euen in the pulpettes’, and ‘disorder, disobedience, and daungerous lybertie ... amongst the Commons’.²⁸ The Marian Proctor had the same pre-occupation, lamenting the discord, greed, and instability which Protestantism had brought to England. He blamed heresy for disorder at every level, from Wyatt’s rebellion to the impossibility of finding good and obedient servants. Likewise, one of his most heartfelt criticisms of heretics – both in 1549 and in 1554 – was of their blasphemous defection ‘from faythfull beleuyng, to carnall reasonyng’.

²⁴ John Proctor, *The fal of the late Arrian* (RSTC 20406: London, 1549), sigs. A2r–A3v, A5v, A7r, A8r–v, B2v–B4r, B6r, C3r–Cv, E5r.

²⁵ Peter Marshall, ‘*Mumpsimus* and *sumpsimus*: the intellectual origins of a Henrician *bon mot*’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 52 (2001), pp. 512–20.

²⁶ Proctor, *The fal of the late Arrian*, sigs. B3r–Bv, C4v–B5r, D3r, D7r.

²⁷ St Vincent of Lérins, trans. John Proctor, *The waie home to Christ and truth leadinge from Antichrist and error* (RSTC 24754: London, 1554), sigs. A4v–A5r, B3r.

²⁸ Proctor, *The fal of the late Arrian*, sigs. B5v–B6r.

Heretics' egotistical pride would not let them accept that 'fayth is aboue, and reason is under'.²⁹ It was a classic theme of conformist Henrician conservatives.³⁰

By 1554, Proctor was contrasting this doctrinal chaos to the Catholic Church, 'the most surest haven for all stormebeaten to ariue vnto ... Come home, I say, to thys calme and quiet post, where you shall finde reste.'³¹ But he still showed signs of having been 'stormebeaten' himself. A few evangelical phrases still hung about him, seeming out of place in their new surroundings. There was of course nothing unorthodox about a good Catholic praying that 'the bright sterre of Euangelike lighte maye shine' in England, or bequeathing his soul in his will to God, 'through the passyon of whose deare sonne Jesus Chryst I do assuredly beleve that I shall enioye the merittes of heaven' – and yet these were coded phrases which were associated with heresy.³² Moreover, Proctor's denunciations of heresy repeatedly showed a recognition of the allure of the evangelicals' preaching, an allure to which he himself had partially succumbed. He warned that the false church (another evangelical concept, although it was the evangelicals he meant) used 'flattering meanes and deceatefull allurementes' to win converts, and that 'though she teacheth nothing but heresy to ouerthrow the ghospel, yet her tongue runneth stil of the ghospell, as though she hated here-sye'. Her 'hereticall poison' was 'geuen in fourme of medicine'. Or again, he lamented: 'What a restlesse euil heresie is ... by what plausible allurementes at her entrie she catcheth fauourable intertainment, with what waies of craft and subteltie she dilateth her dominion, & finally howe of course she toyleth to be supported by faction, sedition, & rebellion.' Proctor, perhaps, felt that he too had offered heresy too much 'faouourable intertainment' before he realized its true nature. And yet, even now, he still believed that some good had come of England's schism, 'as of euill commeth good many times': for Catholics had now been wakened from their 'carelesse securitie' and would henceforth take more earnest care for the good of their church.³³ He still understood the diabolical plausibility of the heretics' appeal; and while he had seen them for who they were, he could not defend the lax and worldly church which they had first attacked.

Proctor's religious journey, from latter-day Henrician in 1549 to born-again Marian in 1554, is an important one. He regarded it, apparently, as a joyful homecoming after a dangerous voyage on to which he had been lured under false pretences. His lament was addressed to himself as much as his countrymen: 'with

²⁹ Vincent, *The waie home to Christ*, sigs. A7r, B5r–B7r; John Proctor, *The historie of wyates rebellion with the order and maner of resisting the same* (RSTC 20407: London, 1554), fos. 88v–89r, 93v–94r; Proctor, *The fal of the late Arrian*, sig. D8v.

³⁰ Alec Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII: evangelicals in the early English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 187–91.

³¹ Vincent, *The waie home to Christ*, sigs. A6v, A8r.

³² *Ibid.*, sig. A3r; *ODNB*.

³³ Vincent, *The waie home to Christ*, sigs. A6v–A8r, C2v; Proctor, *Historie*, fo. 1r.

how great tempestuous stormes you haue ben beaten, synce you first did loose from this faithfull hauen', that is, the Catholic Church.³⁴ Yet this is not a simple tale of error laid bare, nor should we neglect the continuities underlying Proctor's reconversion. He had, it seems, been persuaded to join in Henry VIII's religious voyaging readily enough. The storms only began in earnest under Edward VI, as the ship strayed beyond sight of land, and as the alternatives became unavoidably stark: to return to harbour or to journey to an entirely new home. At that stage, Proctor's choice was clear, and his reasons for making it were (mostly) honourable. Yet he still understood why he had joined the voyage in the first place, and perhaps still felt the hopes for a Reformation that would not embrace heresy – even as he denounced those hopes as illusions.

This was an idiosyncratic position, but not a unique one. As Lucy Wooding has pointed out, several English writers of Mary's reign showed similarly ambiguous attitudes towards Henry VIII and his Reformation (although such tolerance towards the great schismatic was hardly her regime's orthodoxy). Thomas Paynell, a veteran translator who had been a client of Mary's long before her accession, leavened his proclaimed loyalty to the old faith with rhetorical appeals to the word of God.³⁵ Dedicating a translation of Augustine to his new queen in 1553, Paynell emphasized that she was the daughter of the 'moost victorious and mooste noble' Henry VIII. And his criticism of the Edwardian Reformation did not quite follow the regime's script. He admitted that 'there was neuer more sincere and true preachynge, than is nowe of late', but, like Proctor, argued that such preaching was mere hypocrisy, with preachers' fine words undercut by their hearers' miserly charity and contempt for authority.³⁶ Or again, Thomas Angell was a royal chaplain and, as vicar of Deptford in Kent, a near-neighbour of Proctor's. Angell published two treatises in the mid-1550s which, although they defended traditional religion stoutly, did so in uncomfortably Henrician terms. Like the dead king, Angell was most angered by those who denied Christ's physical presence in the Eucharist, whom he saw as 'worse then Sathan hymselfe'. The authorities whom he cited approvingly against this heresy included Luther, Melancthon, Cranmer, and the 1549 Prayer Book, which he called 'that Godly boke'. Like Henry VIII, Angell was oddly shy of the word 'transubstantiation', although he robustly asserted the doctrine. Like Henry VIII (and Proctor), he was keen to assert his Biblicism, lamenting that in Edward's reign 'the true knowledge of the Scripture [was] kept from the people'. And even as he praised Mary as a 'new Iudith' sent to England by divine mercy, he added that 'the trewe light and knowledge of Goddes worde is nowe by her broughte

³⁴ Vincent, *The waie home to Christ*, sig. A6v.

³⁵ Lucy Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 117–20.

³⁶ Augustine, *Twelve sermons of Saynt Augustine, now lately translated into English by Tho. Paynel*, trans. Thomas Paynell (RSTC 923: London, 1553), sigs A2r, A3v–A4r.

agayne, whiche frome the death of that noble prince her father Henry y^e viii. was here in this realme extincte, and vtterly abolished.³⁷ It seems that, for these men as for Proctor, the old king's claimed fidelity to God's word could still move loyal hearts.

III

Our third character is a more prominent figure: Dr John Redman, the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge and the first head of Trinity College. Redman's religious identity is not so much unclear as violently contested. The conservative John Redman's life story runs like this. A humanist scholar and protégé of his uncle Cuthbert Tunstall, bishop of London and then of Durham, he was made Lady Margaret Professor at Cambridge in the late 1530s. He was a stout defender of that degree of Catholic orthodoxy which Henry VIII permitted to remain. In 1540, sitting on a theological committee which was posed a series of questions on the sacraments by the king, he gave resolutely conservative answers (insisting, for example, on the absolute necessity of auricular confession and on the traditional number of seven sacraments). In 1543, he presented Henry with a treatise which defended a Catholic understanding of justification, following closely in John Fisher's theological footsteps. Similar views were authorized the same year in the *King's book*, Henry VIII's final doctrinal statement. Redman served on the committee which drew up the section on justification in that book, and which did so in the face of vigorous opposition from Archbishop Cranmer. His conservatism was made even plainer in the summer of 1546, when he helped interrogate the defiant evangelical preacher Edward Crome, and played a part in persuading Nicholas Shaxton, the radical former bishop of Salisbury, to make a full and apparently heartfelt recantation. Edward VI's Reformation was, predictably, unwelcome for this John Redman. He was dismissed as a royal chaplain by the duke of Somerset. When permitted to preach before the king in Lent 1548, he reportedly chose to use the opportunity to defend the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. At Stephen Gardiner's trial, Redman lent what support he could to the beleaguered bishop. Probably in 1551, he wrote a treatise entitled *The complaint of grace* denouncing much of the Edwardian Reformation. He died later the same year.³⁸

³⁷ John Angell, *The agreement of the holye fathers, and Doctors of the churche, vpon the cheifest articles of Christian religion* (RSTC 634: London, 1555?), sigs. A2v–A4r, fos. 74r–75r, 81r–83r; Angell, *A collection or gatherynge together ... concerning the most holy and blessed body and blode of Christ to be royally present in the Sacrament of the Aulter* (RSTC 634.5: London, 1556?), sigs. A8v–B1r, C4r, E4r; cf. Ryrie, *Gospel and Henry VIII*, p. 36.

³⁸ *ODNB*; see also BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra E.v, fos. 43v–44r; TNA, SP 1/218 fo. 44r (*L&P*, XXI (i) no. 790.1); John Foxe, *Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes* (RSTC 11222: London, 1563), pp. 794, 799, 801, 854; James A. Muller, ed., *The letters of Stephen Gardiner* (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 325, 365; Guildhall Library, London, MS 9531/12 fo. 108v; BL, Royal MS 7.c.xvi, fo. 92r. The most valuable recent treatment of Redman's career, to which I am indebted, is Ashley Null, 'John Redman, the Gentle Ambler', in C. S. Knighton and Richard Mortimer, eds., *Westminster Abbey reformed, 1540–1640* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 38–74.

And yet there was another, a reform-minded, even an evangelical John Redman. This Redman was part of the reformist intellectual world of 1540s Cambridge. He defended the evangelical scholars John Cheke and Thomas Smith against the university's vice-chancellor, Stephen Gardiner, in their dispute over Greek pronunciation, a dispute which was a proxy for more explicitly religious divisions. He also worked alongside two evangelicals, Matthew Parker and William May, in their successful attempt to save the universities' possessions from Henry VIII's cupidity in 1546. In Edward VI's reign, this Redman went a long way to make peace with the reformers. He defended clerical marriage, albeit with the twist that widowed clerics might not remarry. His Cambridge conviviality even extended to a warm welcome to Martin Bucer, at whose funeral in 1551 he preached a complimentary sermon, and for whom he wrote an epitaph.³⁹

Like John Proctor in 1549, Redman offered an explanation of sorts for the path he chose through the religious swamp: his 1551 book *The complaint of grace*, which was unpublished at his death. However, Redman was prominent enough for his posthumous reputation to be worth fighting over, and when the book was first published in 1556, some sections were suppressed as unworthy of his memory. It took the Puritan controversialist William Crashaw to publish the unedited text in 1609, as part of his campaign to discredit post-Tridentine Catholicism as a novelty.⁴⁰ This full text of the *Complaint* only survives in a single copy and is the basis for Ashley Null's recent assessment of Redman as a 'gentle ambler' in matters of religion, who wished neither to spur the process of reformation too sharply on, nor relentlessly to bridle it.⁴¹ In substance, this meant a view much like Proctor's, albeit calmer, more nuanced, and more eloquently expressed. Like Proctor, Redman was blunt in his assessment of the papacy and its defenders. 'How it grieueth mee to thinke on them, how by their fault the Church is defaced ... Cause, O Lord God, that filthy stinking hole to bee purged.' He looked to see their 'pride and vanity vtterly be destroyed or cast downe' – unless, and it was a qualification he insisted on, they amended. Yet his anger at Rome was partly because its abuses gave 'to the Heretiques matter of glory and dirision'. And in terms that echo Proctor's, he declared that the attempt to amend these faults had produced new and worse errors, in a generation more interested in their ancestors' sins than their own. 'Ye can raile vpon their abuses, their superstitions and Idolatry, and ye your selues be worse than Pagans and Infidels, and cleane fallen from God.' He agreed with the reformers that eloquent prayers were unnecessary, that prayers said in church were no more powerful than

³⁹ Ryrie, *Gospel and Henry VIII*, pp. 166, 168; Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 164; Foxe, *Actes and monuments* (1563), p. 1558 recte 1570.

⁴⁰ John Redman, *A compendious treatise called the complaint of grace compiled by ... Ihon Redman ... nowe newly and first set furth by Thomas Smyth* (RSTC 20826: London, 1556); John Redman, ed. William Crashaw, *The complaint of grace, continued through all ages of the world. Written many yeares ago, by Doctor Redman, then president of Trinity Colledge in Cambridge. Printed in Popish times, fasly and corruptly* (RSTC 20826.5: London, 1609).

⁴¹ Null, 'John Redman, the Gentle Ambler'; Redman, *The complaint of grace*, pp. 68–9.

prayers said elsewhere, and that ‘popish superstitions’ about fasting should be suppressed. Yet he lamented that these insights had led to prayer and fasting being abandoned altogether. He called for a preaching clergy, as the reformers wished, but lamented that much of the preaching in his own day was ‘prating, railing, telling tales, iesting, scoffing, making the people laugh where they should rather weep, or kindling of their cold courage to contention’. Again like Proctor, one of his main complaints was the spiritual arrogance of the reformers. ‘Euery man thinketh himself a doctor, euery man disdaineth to learne, except it bee of himselfe.’⁴² For all the posthumous controversies, this was not a message which any of the religious parties in post-Reformation England wished to hear in its totality: a plague on all houses.

The elegaic mood of Redman’s *Complaint* is sharpened by a more controversial set of documents. These are accounts of a set of conversations said to have taken place when Redman was on his deathbed, on and around 2 November 1551. The texts were collected and published by the Protestant martyrologist John Foxe.⁴³ Although Foxe’s partisan purposes were obvious, the numerous witnesses whom he cited (many of whom were prominent conservatives) never attempted to refute his claims in whole or in part. That, and the congruence between the statements attributed to Redman and his known style and beliefs, gives the reported conversations real credibility.

Foxe’s deathbed accounts present a subtly different religious picture from those we have hitherto seen. Various questioners extracted comments sharply critical of the old faith from the dying Redman. It was one thing to call the see of Rome ‘a sinke of all euill’ which ‘shortly wil com to vtter ruine by the scourge of god’. It was, perhaps, also Henrician orthodoxy to deny purgatory ‘as the scholemen taught it, and vsed it’, and to claim ‘that consensus Ecclesiae the consent of the church was but a weake staffe to cleaue to’ against the authority of Scripture. Yet the bulk of the discussions apparently centred on the two most explosive theological questions of the time: the Eucharist and justification. In both cases, Redman moved some way from the pre-Reformation and Henrician orthodoxies which he had defended for so long. He did so for subtle and individual reasons; he appears here as a fellow-traveller rather than as a doctrinaire Protestant. But some of his friends were nevertheless dismayed by quite how far he had travelled.

On justification, Redman had been a doughty advocate of traditional doctrines in 1543. Now, however, ‘he sayd that he did repent him that he had so much striued against iustification by onely fayth’. Instead, he affirmed the doctrine, carefully insisting that only ‘a true, liuely, and a faythe restinge in Christe’ might justify. His fear had always been, he said, that the people might take ‘occasion of carnall lybertie’ from the doctrine. And indeed, one of Redman’s servants claimed that his master had declared precisely this view in private to Henry VIII, but had agreed to teach the opposite doctrine for the sake of public morals. We do

⁴² Redman, *The complaint of grace*, pp. 58–9, 61, 67, 71, 76–9.

⁴³ Foxe, *Actes and monuments* (1563), pp. 867–74.

not need to believe this piece of gossip to accept that Redman's doubts on this subject were long-standing.

On the sacrament, Redman agreed that Christ was 'there present Vere', indeed 'corporally, naturally, and really', but he balked at the traditional claim that he was present flesh, blood, and bone, claiming this was 'to grosse' an understanding and that 'we receave him in our minds & soules by fayth'. Indeed, he insisted that the wicked who receive the sacrament do not receive Christ's body, and that the sacrament ought not to be carried in procession or even elevated ('Christ is neither lifted vp nor downe'). On transubstantiation, he claimed that long researches on the subject had meant that 'my opinion of transubstanciation waxed feble', until rereading the Fathers finally convinced him the doctrine was a scholastic invention. When pressed on whether believers receive Christ 'with our mouthes, and into our bodies', he found himself on the cusp of his doubts. The witness recalled that Redman paused and then said, 'I wil not say so, I cannot tel, it is a harde question, but surely saythe he: we receiue christ in our soule by faythe. when you speake of it other wayes, it soundeth grosly.' As Redman was dying, he was apparently unable to defend his robust former faith against encroaching doubts – and, it seems, against a nagging sense that the traditional emphasis on bodily presence was simply in poor taste.⁴⁴

This deathbed not-quite-conversion shows how difficult it could be for open-minded, reformist Catholics of Redman's type to maintain a firm doctrinal line in the rapidly shifting intellectual climate of Edwardian England. However, the significance of this episode extends beyond one man's conscience. The respect in which Redman had always been held, combined with the authority long attached to deathbed statements, meant that his last words had a dramatic effect on those who heard them. One of the most surprising and convincing of the witnesses at Redman's deathbed was John Young, a fellow of Trinity College, who had been a staunch public opponent of the Edwardian Reformation, and who was to spend the last twenty years of his life in an Elizabethan prison for rejecting the royal supremacy. Under Mary, he served as vice-chancellor of Cambridge, disputed with Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley, and produced the bowdlerized 1556 edition of Redman's *Complaint of grace*. Yet in 1551, according to witnesses and to a long letter of his own, he both attended carefully to his mentor's dying words and was severely shaken by them. In the letter, Young denied that Redman had changed his beliefs due to 'softnes, feare, or fayntnes of stomack', arguing that his deathbed statements reflected his mature and conscientious judgement; and he concluded by affirming that he himself agreed with those views. Another witness recorded that on the day, Young had been more visibly shaken. After having spoken with Redman, this witness claimed, Young had said, 'Maister doctor hath so moued me, that wher as I was of that opinion before in certayne things, that I would haue burned and lost my life for them. now saythe maister Yonge, I doubte of them.' And so he had vowed to renew his researches into the matters

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 867–70, 873.

which Redman had discussed. Whether he did so is unclear, but it appears that his public opposition to religious change ceased for the remainder of Edward's reign.⁴⁵

Young was not the only religious conservative in Edwardian Cambridge to take his bearings from John Redman's conscience. This was amply demonstrated during the royal visitation of Cambridge in May 1549, whose purpose was to ensure conformity with the unfolding new order in general, and assent to the official Homilies and the first Book of Common Prayer in particular. A series of letters from William Rogers, on behalf of the visitors, to Sir Thomas Smith, Redman's former pupil, describes the resistance stirred up by the visitation. After opening formalities, the visitors' work began at Trinity College, where they commandeered Redman's own chamber as their headquarters and proceeded to examine the Fellows of the College. Rogers was very unimpressed by what he found. Within Trinity itself, he wrote, 'there is suche a nest of them as the like can not be espied within the Realme'. Although he and his colleagues had spent two or more days attempting to browbeat them into conformity, 'yet in fine went away I dare say the same men that thei cam'. He did not, he admit, know where to begin in reforming them. The picture was the same in the University more generally, where 'the newe ordinaunces' were denounced as 'to extreme, and vtollerable', even by those who did not know what they contained. At this early stage, Rogers was inclined to blame this resistance on 'certain stubborn idle persones' who set the tone for the rest of the University. Two weeks later, he could be more specific. By now Redman himself had come before the commissioners: not to submit or to resist, but to negotiate. He brought with him

an interpretacion of iij sentences picked owt of the homelies, and declaring and making protestacion that he trusted the saide sentences meant none other thing but according to that his interpretacion, though the verie wordes straitly taken might seme, as hie thought, to import an other sence, he was contented to subscribe, and so did.

This, it was clear, was the pivotal moment of the entire visitation. Despite Rogers's impatience with Redman's hairsplitting, he gave the professor's scruples the space they needed. For as he commented, 'In other colledges som do stick, and haue refused to subscribe, hanging as it is thought only vpon doctor Redmans iudgement. Now he hathe done I think the rest will willingly followe.' And indeed, ten days later he could happily report that 'the bill towching the ratification of common prayer and homelies is subscribed of all handes after doctor Redman had doon no man sticked'.⁴⁶

Redman was, it seems, not merely one of the most respected scholars in Cambridge. For many who were alarmed and bewildered by the accelerating change around them, he was the University's conscience. Yet he, and many other

⁴⁵ ODNB (Young); Foxe, *Actes and monuments* (1563), pp. 870, 872, 874.

⁴⁶ TNA, SP 10/7 fos. 39v–40r, 64r, 81v (C. S. Knighton, ed., *Calendar of state papers of the reign of Edward VI, 1547–1553* (London, 1992), nos. 222, 251, 271).

reformist, conformist Catholics in the Universities, found themselves being swept along by that change, negotiating somewhat ineffectually with it rather than making any real attempt to resist. At that same visitation, Andrew Perne, who would be a bastion of conservatism (and perhaps of church-papistry) in Elizabethan Cambridge, preached stoutly against transubstantiation, winning a royal chaplaincy for his pains.⁴⁷ Political pressure, the temptations of preferment, ingrained habits of obedience, and a real loyalty to much of what the Henrician Reformation had tried to achieve: in Edward VI's reign all these combined to form a potent solvent which ate away at old religious certainties with alarming speed.

IV

What do these stories tell us about the British Reformations? On the most straightforward level, they are an addition to what Judith Maltby calls our 'group portrait' of Tudor religion.⁴⁸ Alongside her Prayer Book Protestants are the latter-day Henricians. The species appeared principally in England, but also in Scotland. These were not timeservers, whose consciences could be recut to suit any fashion; but nor were they heroes, prophetic or pig-headed enough to cling to a single truth through all the storms of religious change. They were well aware that they had to live in this world as well as to prepare for the next. They lived under, and aspired to serve, various monarchs and religious regimes, and they were sufficiently prudent and obedient to nuance their views accordingly. And yet, a genuine religious pattern emerges from their struggles. These were people who – like so many – wished to see themselves as Catholics.⁴⁹ They valued their continuity with the old church. They distrusted radical doctrinal change as the work of innovators, heretics, and those consumed by their own spiritual pride. But they also supported religious reforms like those carried out under Henry VIII, agreed with much of what was done and said in his name, and did their best to maintain that support after his death.

Thereafter, however, their obedient, conservative reformism was placed under increasing stress. In Scotland, those inclined to such views had their moment in the sun in the 1550s, but the sudden collapse of reforming Scottish Catholicism in 1559–60 propelled the majority of its advocates into the new Protestant establishment.⁵⁰ In England, the crunch came earlier. Edward VI's regimes violently assaulted the Catholicism of the English Church. It is unclear how much of this bombardment the consciences of the latter-day Henricians could absorb. John Redman seems to have crumbled under it. For others, perhaps it was only Mary's

⁴⁷ Patrick Collinson, 'Andrew Perne and his times', in Patrick Collinson, David McKitterick, and Elisabeth Leedham-Green, *Andrew Perne: quatercentenary studies* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 4.

⁴⁸ Judith Maltby, *Prayer book and people in Elizabethan and early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 2.

⁴⁹ Peter Marshall, 'Is the Pope Catholic? Henry VIII and the semantics of schism', in Ethan Shagan, ed., *Catholics and the Protestant nation* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 22–48.

⁵⁰ Ryrie, *Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, pp. 107–13, 187–9.

accession and the Catholic restoration which resolved the dilemma, by making it clear that the choice they had originally tried to make no longer existed. Antipapal Catholicism was now a suicidally quixotic standpoint. In both countries, these reformers had hoped that their rulers might at the same time reform the church and act as a bulwark against heresy. In both countries, events – the failure of Catholic reform and the subsequent rebellion and Reformation in Scotland, the switchback of Edward VI's and Mary's regimes in England – proved that this was a fantasy, and a dangerous one at that. For most Scots, this meant that the default choice was to embrace the new Protestant establishment. It was all that was left. For England's reformist Catholics, who had seen the Henrician dream sour quickly into a nightmare under Edward, Mary's accession served as a brisk awakening. They now had little choice but – in obedience to their anointed queen – to return to papal obedience. In retrospect, Thomas More and John Fisher were proved correct. There was only one defensible line which could be held against the heretics' depredations, and that line was the authority of the Universal Church expressed through the vicar of Christ. In neither country could reformist Catholicism survive.

This is, importantly, not a uniquely British story, but part of a continent-wide phenomenon. In the midst of the religious chaos of the mid-sixteenth century, numerous princes and prelates tried to find some synthesis of the ideas swirling around them. The Scottish Catholic reform effort was, as James Cameron has demonstrated, largely inspired by an earlier centre of Catholic reform, the Cologne of Archbishop Herman von Wied.⁵¹ From the evangelicalism of the Meaux circle in France, to the Renaissance Catholicism of Archbishop Pal Varday of Esztergom in Hungary, to the schismatic yet conservative Reformation pursued by Laurentius Petri in Sweden, senior clerics hoped to pursue seams of reform which cut across the emerging confessional landscape. And Reginald Pole, whose doctrine of justification was that of Regensburg rather than of Trent, famously missed election to the papacy by two votes.

Pole was, of course, hardly a latter-day Henrician. While both he and Henry VIII can sensibly be called reformist Catholics, they also serve to illustrate how capacious a category that is. Pole's exploration of radical Augustinian soteriologies never weakened his loyalty to the papacy; Henry VIII's commitment to the royal supremacy never weakened his stoutly traditional view of salvation. Indeed, the diversity of these various Catholic reformers is one of the reasons for their failure. Despite their overlapping interests, there was never a European Catholic reformist 'party', and even at local or national levels, reformist Catholic factions were ill-defined and shaky. Henry VIII's vision of Catholic reform was unlike that of any of his Continental contemporaries (if only because of its theological incoherence). Yet atomizing reformist Catholicism is unhelpful even in an

⁵¹ James K. Cameron, "Catholic Reform" in Germany and the pre-1560 Church in Scotland', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 20 (1979), pp. 105–117; idem, 'The Cologne Reformation and the Church of Scotland', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 30 (1979), pp. 39–64.

English context, because Henry VIII's religious vision was not exclusively his, and it did not die with him.⁵²

John Eldar, John Proctor, John Redman, and the other reformist Catholics we have met were not 'Henricians' in a confessional sense – a meaningless proposition – but they did continue to profess loyalty to what Henry VIII had done long after the old king's death. Nor were they alone in this. Loyalty to Henry VIII's legacy was one of the dominant features of his son's reign, and to a lesser extent of all his children's reigns. When, under Edward VI, Stephen Gardiner appealed to Henry and to the 1543 *King's book* as a bulwark against further change, there is no reason to doubt his sincerity. His claim that the Edwardian Reformation implicitly condemned the old king was dangerously powerful; and when Cranmer claimed that Henry had been 'seduced' by false teaching, Gardiner's outrage at the slander of his old master was as real as it was politic.⁵³ The south-western rebels of 1549 appealed to the dead king's authority, and they named him simply as 'our Souerayne Lord Kyng Henry the .viii.', without acknowledging that they now had a new sovereign lord. Their demands also demonstrate how that peculiar product of Henry VIII's tortuous religious diplomacy, the 1539 Act of Six Articles, had metamorphosed into a touchstone of orthodoxy. The rebels wanted the old king's 'Lawes ... concernynge the syxe articles, to be in vse again, as in hys tyme they were'.⁵⁴ Three years later, Bishop Hooper was still worried about rooting out loyalty to the Articles.⁵⁵ All of this reflects the size of the political vacuum left when so monumental a king as Henry VIII is succeeded by a child. It took more than death to break the power which Henry had over his subjects' minds. This was the unspoken force behind the oft-voiced argument that a minority regime could not act with the full authority of the crown: Henry VIII continued to dominate his successors' reigns from beyond the grave. Gardiner described Henry as 'a father most unfortunately reft from us, yet breathing in his son'; a vivid image of the old king's continuing, brooding presence.⁵⁶ That the old tyrant was still breathing down his subjects' necks is evident from the various succession crises of the 1550s, in which both Edward VI and Mary had their preferences for the succession overruled by their dead father's will. Henry VIII's religious settlement did not die with him. It was killed by Edward's Reformation and Mary's Restoration, and it did not die quickly or easily.

Henry VIII's religious policy was certainly idiosyncratic, and most of his subjects yielded to it mainly because his overbearing tyranny awed them into submission. Yet, as with reformist Catholic projects across Europe, many of its elements had some real appeal. Henry's distinctive cocktail of religious policy had

⁵² In contrast to my earlier view in Alec Ryrie, 'Divine kingship and royal theology in Henry VIII's Reformation', *Reformation*, 7 (2002), pp. 76–7.

⁵³ Gardiner, *Letters*, pp. 299–302, 322–5, 365.

⁵⁴ *A copye of a letter contayning certayne newes, & the articles or requestes of the Deuonshyre & Cornyshe rebelles* (RSTC 15109.3: London, 1549), sig. B6r.

⁵⁵ John Hooper, *The later writings of Bishop Hooper*, ed. Charles Nevinson (Cambridge, 1852), p. 129.

⁵⁶ Gardiner, *Letters*, p. 322.

something for everyone: antipapal rhetoric; Erasmian Biblicism; robust loyalty to many traditional pieties, especially those centred on the sacraments; contempt for clerical wealth and corruption; loathing for heresy. And the whole concoction was alluringly (and mendaciously) sugared with the language of moderation. When Henry pleaded with his subjects not to fall into dissent by labelling one another as papists and heretics, and to follow a middle way of unity, he could reduce the parliament house to tears.⁵⁷ It was a sentiment which Redman, Proctor, and Eldar would certainly have endorsed – especially, but not only, if they thought the king was looking. Henry VIII was not the only Henrician; nor was he the last one.

Who was? Possibly, his youngest daughter. Not in doctrinal substance, of course: Elizabeth I surrounded herself with men whom her father would have burned, and gave her assent to laws which he would have thought grossly heretical. Elizabeth presided over an unambiguously Reformed Protestant Church, not some eirenic theological mishmash. And yet, neither Elizabeth nor her realm could shake off the Henrician Reformation. She was herself, as Susan Doran has argued, ‘less an “odd sort of Protestant” than an old sort of Protestant’, indeed a Henrician sort of Protestant. She was conscious of her mother’s religious heritage (hence, in part, her choice of the desperately ill-suited Matthew Parker, her mother’s former chaplain, as her first primate), and shaped by the Erasmian evangelicalism of her last stepmother, Katherine Parr.⁵⁸ This was more a matter of mood and of ceremonial taste than of doctrine, but that distinction itself preserved her father’s legacy. One of the persistent oddities of the post-Reformation English Church was the mismatch between its doctrines and its practices, a mismatch which, in the seventeenth century, tore that church to pieces. It was also a very Henrician mismatch. Elizabeth’s Calvinism-without-the-consistory was a mirror image of Henry VIII’s Catholicism-without-the-pope. Such mismatches arose because the order and polity of the Church of England, in its various post-1534 incarnations, was more directly and intricately controlled by lay people with no formal theological education (the Tudors) than was any other early modern European church. So taste and mood trumped theological consistency, with momentous consequences. In this, at least, Elizabeth I was her father’s daughter.

V

Yet in its own terms, Henry VIII’s Reformation, like all the other attempts at ‘moderate’ or syncretic religious settlements in the sixteenth century, failed to endure. In England, as elsewhere, this was not for want of popular or political support. Rather, such attempted settlements collapsed for two linked reasons: a

⁵⁷ TNA, SP 1/212, fos. 111r–112r (*L&P*, xx (ii) no. 1030).

⁵⁸ Susan Doran, ‘Elizabeth I’s religion: the evidence of her letters’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 51 (2000), p. 720.

lack of clarity about where the boundaries of acceptable change lay, and a lack of the passion needed to defend those boundaries even when asserted.

On a European scale, this is obvious enough. The Council of Trent's unswerving doctrinal conservatism may have disappointed some of the more theologically adventurous Catholics, but it provided Catholicism with a sharply defined and defensible frontier and so saved it from doubting and debating itself out of existence. However, the implications of this view for England and Scotland are less well realized. I have argued elsewhere that the Scottish Reformation owed much of its success to the bout of self-questioning and reinvention that Scottish Catholicism set loose, but was unable to control, in the 1550s.⁵⁹ In England, this directs our attention to one of the most mysterious dogs that failed to bark in the English Reformation: religious conservatism in Edwardian England.

The Edwardian Reformation was the work of a small clique which had seized power in a palace coup. Large numbers of people, both in the elites and beyond, were hostile to what was being done to their church. And yet, there was little effective resistance from religious conservatives: one rebellion (assuredly the most counter-productive form of political resistance) and some rather ineffectual political manoeuvring. Parliaments did as they were told. Henry VIII's regime, homicidal as it was and headed by an active king as it was, met with more genuine resistance. So too did Mary's, for all the initial popularity of her religious policy. Religious conservatives scarcely published in Edward's reign, the deeply compromised figure of Stephen Gardiner aside. The contrast with Marian Protestants and with Elizabethan Catholics is dramatic. It is well known that there were no Catholic martyrs in Edwardian England, a fact which illustrates the regime's political shrewdness and nervousness. But it is also because martyrdom is a game for two players. Edwardian conservatives, unlike their Marian and Elizabethan successors in opposition, showed no enthusiasm for claiming martyrs' crowns. Ethan Shagan has recently pointed out how divided amongst themselves English religious conservatives were during the reign, and has picked out the figure of 'little John Nobody, that durst not speak' as typical of Edwardian Catholics: frightened, bewildered, divided, grumbling in corners but too afraid to do anything of substance.⁶⁰ This sense of outmanoeuvred impotence was shared by John Proctor, who justified his inaction under Edward thus: 'amongst them that haue muche good wyll, and litle power, I haue always claimed to be one'.⁶¹ Paralysed by their own divisions, by their mixed feelings about a Reformation which they were not prepared to condemn utterly, and above all by their concession of the principle of the Royal Supremacy and of all that went with it, reformist Catholics after Henry VIII's death were wholly unable to assert or to defend their views. The only register left to them, as Proctor and Redman showed, was lament.

⁵⁹ Ryrie, 'Reform without frontiers'.

⁶⁰ Ethan Shagan, 'Confronting compromise: the schism and its legacy in mid-Tudor England', in his *Catholics and the Protestant nation* (Manchester, 2005), esp. pp. 59–61.

⁶¹ Vincent, *The waie home to Christ*, sig. A3r.

The contrast with the beginning of Elizabeth's reign is stark. By restoring papal authority, Mary had restored English Catholicism's sense of itself. Elizabeth's regime was as surprised by the near-universal non-compliance of the bishops she inherited as Mary's had been by the unprecedented stubbornness of the Protestants arrested for heresy. Mary's restoration obviously failed in practice, and the debates over whether it succeeded or failed in principle will continue. Yet this much is clear: in so far as English Catholicism survived, she was its saviour. If her restoration had not intervened, it seems likely that English religious conservatives – numerous as they were – would have continued on their Edwardian road to oblivion.