

REVIEWS

International Calvinism 1541–1715.

Edited by Menna Prestwich
(Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985. 403 pp.)

International Calvinism is a collection of essays put together by fourteen scholars from various countries on the subject of Calvinism. According to the Oxford-based editor Menna Prestwich its main purpose is "to consider how it affected, and was affected by, the very different societies in which it took root". This is a theme of great complexity, for in England alone Calvinism played a widely varying role within and outside the Church of England from the time of Edward VI to the Hanoverian succession. The collection of these essays is particularly useful as a scholarly store of information on the local varieties and variants of the "Helvetian creed", i.e. Calvinism.

Essays dealing with Jean Calvin's work and 16th century Geneva are by the late Professor Richard Stauffer of the Sorbonne and the Oxford historian Gillian Lewis. Professor Stauffer makes two points of particular interest: first, that Calvin did not want to abolish episcopal government of the Church in other countries (p. 26) and second, that "predestination does not, contrary to the claims of numerous theologians, constitute the central doctrine of Calvinist thought" (p. 34). Gillian Lewis's essay spans a period of over sixty years in Geneva; she concludes that "the heyday of Calvinist Geneva had been brief. . . from around 1557 to around 1587" (p. 41). Discussing Beza's tenure as "Moderator" after Calvin's death she points out that Beza, while strict and inflexible on matters of church-government was in fact generous, almost "ireneic" in his attitude to the other reformed religions. After Beza's death Geneva became, by and large, a provincial place.

Altogether four essays deal with various aspects of French Calvinism and the Huguenots and some of them, for example those by Menna Prestwich and Myriam Yardeni, overlap on several issues. A considerable amount of argument is devoted to the consequences of the Edict of Nantes – Ms. Prestwich believes that it "introduced a dualism into France" which was untenable on a long-term basis. As to the revocation of the Edict in 1685, Elisabeth Labrousse's explanation about its causes is not quite sufficient. Did Louis XIV really feel that "religious pluralism spelt anarchy and sedition" even though the great majority of French Huguenots were outdoing their fellow-citizens in submissiveness to the King's political will? Several authors call the Revocation "an appalling political mistake" and when we look at the substantial cultural and economic contribution of the Huguenot refugees (according to Philippe Joutard they numbered more than 200 000 people) to other countries it is easy to recognize the extent of the self-inflicted damage. Not only Dutch universities and Prussian industry, but also the English military and the colony of South Carolina benefited from the influx of French refugees.

The two most interesting essays in *International Calvinism* are none the less, Alastair Duke's piece "The Ambivalent Face of Calvinism in the Netherlands" and R. J. W. Evans's essay on Calvinism in East Central Europe. In view of the fact that in the 17th century the Low Countries were looked upon as bastions of Calvinism, it is amazing to learn what difficulties the reformed faith had to encounter in the Netherlands. One reason for this was Dutch church-order, that is the emphasis on the consistory. Indeed, "the Reformed Church never became the church of all, or even a majority of Dutchmen" concludes Duke (p. 132). Robert Evans is an Oxford historian with extensive knowledge of Austro-Hungarian history, and his essay covers developments in Poland, Bohemia and Hungary. His treatment of Polish Calvinism is somewhat sketchy; for instance without mentioning the Swedish war

of 1657–1660 and its consequences one cannot have a full picture as regards to the decline of the fortunes of Protestantism in Poland and Lithuania. Evans is much better on Bohemia and Hungary; as to the latter he rightly points out that the first Hungarian “Calvinists” were as much influenced by Melancthon and Bullinger as by Calvin himself; he also stresses the role of the Hungarian nobility and the Princes of Transylvania in the survival of the two reformed churches. In the case of Transylvania I missed the name of John Sigismund the tolerant “Arian” Prince under whose rule the four main religions (Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran, Unitarian) were “accepted” by the Diet. Although Evans’s discussion of the Hungarian Puritans is well-informed and even-handed, they could have hardly objected against the populace’s fondness for the *csárdás* (p. 187) which was invented only in the 19th century. His study is completed by a detailed bibliography on the subject covering publications in English as well as other languages.

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Society in Change

Edited by S. B. Vardy and A. H. Vardy

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1983, 680+xii pp.)

This collection of essays constitutes a very worthy tribute to a historian who has done much for Hungarian studies in the West. Béla Király is perhaps best known to anglophone readers as the author of two invaluable books on Hungarian history (*Hungary in the Late Eighteenth Century: The Decline of Enlightened Despotism*, New York 1969, and *Ferenc Deák*, Boston 1975) and as the editor of two major series of monographs: “Brooklyn College Studies in Society and Change” and “War and Society in East Central Europe”. The present collection of essays testifies not only to Professor Király’s considerable influence upon Hungarian historiography in the United States, but also to the esteem in which he is held by his fellow scholars.

The grounds for this esteem are made quite clear by the opening section of *Society in Change* which consists of a laudatory, but balanced and informative, biographical essay by S. B. Vardy, followed by an impressive and very useful bibliography listing seventy four items. The second section of the volume, “Sieges, Wars, Military Theories and Military Alliances” contains nine papers on one of Béla Király’s key areas of specialization, military history. Of particular interest here are Joseph Held’s discussion of “controversial issues” surrounding the defense of Nándorfehérvár/Belgrade in 1456 (pp. 25–37), Zoltán Kramár’s paper on “Command Problems” in the *Honvéd* Army during the 1848–49 War of Independence (pp. 75–88) and Gábor Vermes’s “Hungary and the Common Army in the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy” (pp. 89–101). Kramár sets out to challenge the notion that Kossuth’s failure “to get a proper grip on the *Honvéd* Army” was “due to the lack of revolutionary consciousness” of the officer corps, or “to the inflated pride and near pathological ambitions of certain high commanders” (p. 76). Inevitably he has to face the rather thorny problem of evaluating the role of Görgey, whom he treats with considerable sympathy, while describing Kossuth’s command style as “incompatible” with the unique characteristics of the army he sought to command. Vermes’s well-structured and engaging presentation of conflicting attitudes to the Monarchy’s common army makes excellent use of quotation (from Deák to Jászi) to illustrate several very different approaches to Hungary’s wider role and position in Central Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century.