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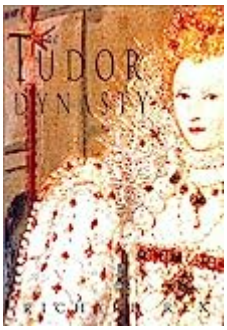
Rory McEntegart. *Henry VIII, the League of Schmalkalden, and the English Reformation.* Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002. x + 244 pp. $75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-86193-255-9.



Richard Rex. *The Tudors.* Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2002. 254 pp. $24.99 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7524-1971-8.

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Published on H-Albion (January, 2004)

Defining the Character of the Tudors

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The Tudors are perennially popular among readers and also among scholars doing research. Disagreements over the nature and importance of the Tudors began during their lifetimes and have continued to the present. Historians continually discover new materials or formulate new interpretations of old sources so there is always room for a new book on the Tudors with a ready market of readers to buy it. Richard Rex has written a new survey of the Tudor dynasty with a view to providing a general audience of readers with a scholarly but readable tome that incorporates the latest scholarship. He has succeeded in his goal. *The Tudors* is an enjoyable read. Each Tudor monarch is covered in a chapter: Henry VII, Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I. The narrative is accompanied by a large number of contemporary illustrations. There are no footnotes or endnotes but the text frequently indicates which scholar's writings supplied a particular insight. A bibliographical essay provides guidance for those wanting to do further reading on aspects of the Tudors.

Rex's chapter on Henry VII heavily emphasizes his position as a usurper who was constantly vigilant and suspicious about being supplanted himself. He also joins recent criticisms of Henry VII as a rather poor king who did little to promote good government or law and order, largely because of his own insecurity on the throne. Rex treats Henry VIII as the larger-than-life egotist that is both authentic and expected by students of the era. The details of Henry VIII's monarchy are handled deftly in a relatively short space and produce a sensitive portrait of this enigmatic man who wrought such huge changes in English society.

The chapter on Edward VI takes into consideration that the young king never reached adulthood. Although he developed a readily discernible personality, his adult guardians ruled England for him. Rex shows that under Edward VI and his guardians, the dukes of Somerset and Northumberland, a Protestant church was imposed on England. Although the Edwardian Reformation experienced serious resistance, it survived and overcame it. The young king's government was in full control of England at the beginning of 1553 and was awaiting the adulthood of Edward VI who supported the changes that had been made in his name. In a refreshing change from the usual reanimations of Mary Tudor that sometimes appear in accounts of the English Reformation, Rex goes on to speculate counter-factually that if Edward VI had lived into his fifties like his father and grandfather, England would have become a staunchly Protestant nation of the Scottish variety. This Protestant England might even have brought about the complete triumph of Protestantism north of the Alps and the Pyrenees.

In the next chapter Rex points out that Mary's succession of her brother was really quite surprising. A bit less luck or a secret kept rather than revealed and Lady Jane might have become Queen Jane I for more than nine days. Rex's Mary Tudor single-mindedly pursued one policy: restore the pre-Reformation English Church. Her attitudes were uniformly conservative and uncompromising. As Rex points out, Mary faced serious problems as a female ruler and marriage would and did create more problems for her. But in spite of these problems, he credits Mary with great success in restoring Catholicism to England and dismisses criticisms of her policies as unfair or ill considered. As he puts it, while Mary failed to save England for the Roman Catholic Church, she helped to save Roman Catholicism in England.

Rex treats Elizabeth I as an enigma like her father and he is right to do so. Elizabeth kept her religion as cloudy and uncertain as her plans for marriage. For Rex, Elizabeth was a lukewarm, moderate Protestant and he basically agrees that never marrying was probably the wisest course for her to take. At the same time, it is also recognized that in many cases, Elizabeth was carried by political and religious events out of her control so that she reacted rather than decided. Rex also portrays Elizabeth as someone who carefully cultivated her public image. She dressed ostentatiously but with taste. Her domestic flirtations were kept within careful and proper limits of behavior on her part and were with the handsomest and most athletic of her courtiers. But in the end, Elizabeth could not escape death no matter how much she might deny its approach. Her denial left her successor unnamed, but James of Scotland smoothly ascended to the English throne anyway. The Tudors left England greatly altered. It was now a Protestant state with a strong monarchy, ironically as Rex points out, the product of the succession problems and weaknesses of the Tudors.

Rex has written an excellent survey of the Tudor monarchs. It is readable, interesting, and authoritative. He brings out some interesting points. Philip II of Spain is portrayed as a sort of Jacob who married his Leah in Mary I but from the start was more interested in the younger sister, the Rachelesque Elizabeth. It is an intriguing scenario but whether biographers of Philip II would agree is another story. Rex is generally fair in his judgements, but his revisionist antecedents occasionally poke out. Henry VIII's refusal to place Bishop Stephen Gardiner on Edward VI's privy council is largely portrayed as mere bad luck and ill timing. Conservatives were in a downward phase of the seesaw of Henry VIII's religious policies at the time of his death. Hence they lost. But this interpretation tends to under-estimate Henry VIII's dislike and mistrust of Gardiner. Later Rex harshly criticizes the agreement allowing John Ponet to become bishop of Winchester as simony, but a little more sympathy with the problems of reformed clergy dealing with rapacious Edwardian courtiers might temper that judgment. But these are minor matters of emphasis and interpretation. The fact is that Rex has produced a book that both scholars and general readers can enjoy and read with profit.

For a more specialized study of a single aspect of the reign of Henry VIII, Rory McEntegart has produced an important new monograph, *Henry VIII, the League of Schmalkalden, and the English Reformation.* The English Reformation is frequently treated as an exceptional event that had little or no connection to the Reformation occurring on the Continent. An example of this exceptionalist treatment is the handling of a possible English alliance

with the Schmalkaldic League of the German Lutheran princes. According to the orthodox, standard interpretation of this episode, Henry VIII, a firm Catholic without the pope, cynically seeks an alliance with the German Lutherans during the late 1530s when he feels threatened by a possible alliance between Emperor Charles V and Francis I of France. When the emperor and the French fall out, the wily Henry VIII drops the naive and ponderous Germans along with his fourth wife, the unattractive (at least to Henry VIII) Anne of Cleves, and the hapless Thomas Cromwell. After that the conservative reaction of the last years of Henry VIII's reign continues to gain momentum. Rory McEntegart's book presents a dramatically different version of these events.

McEntegart views Henry VIII's attempts to form an alliance with the Germans as a long-term and sincere policy that was engaged in off and on without success for over fifteen years. As depicted by McEntegart, Henry VIII was a religious seeker whose theological opinions were fluid to a degree. By 1531 Henry VIII was a man with a problem. He had a marriage he needed out of and he faced a pope who could not realistically help him, no matter how much coercion the English applied. A desperate Henry VIII sought support from continental reformers, even his despised and erstwhile polemical foe, Martin Luther. Undeterred Henry VIII went on with the help of Thomas Cromwell to create his royal supremacy and secured his own divorce. But in spite of the achievement of that all important goal, interest in an alliance with the continental reformed powers continued, although somewhat dormant.

According to McEntegart's reconstruction of events, the possibility of an Anglo-Lutheran alliance rekindled in 1536 when the deaths of Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn eliminated the stumbling block of Henry VIII's dubiously legal divorce. That year Edward Foxe went on an embassy to Germany to discuss doctrinal issues with the Schmalkaldic League. Both sides had an interest in presenting a common theological front at a future general council of the Church. But Henry VIII's interest went beyond such political considerations. He had severed the English Church from Rome and by doing so had set it adrift in the turbulent waters of religious uncertainty unleashed by the Reformation. He needed to establish a state church with a definitive statement of faith. The German Lutherans had already done those things for themselves and Henry VIII wanted to take advantage of their experience. But as anyone familiar with Henry VIII's approach to matters of church and state knows, the end product would be uniquely his own.

Negotiations followed for several years but various circumstances prevented a final agreement. An intractable problem was that the German Lutherans insisted that Henry VIII accept their Augsburg Confession as a statement of doctrine; otherwise they could not make an alliance. Henry VIII could not bring himself to do that since he had misgivings about Lutheran theology concerning auricular confession, communion in both kinds, private masses, monastic vows, and clerical marriage. But as McEntegart shows, he was still anxious to form a political alliance and take religious advice from the Germans. Another problem was the rise of religious factionalism at the English court as the hitherto moribund conservatives aroused themselves to oppose evangelical efforts to push Henry VIII into the Lutheran camp. Events like the Pilgrimage of Grace and the ups and downs of German politics also disrupted or delayed negotiations.

McEntegart also presents a significant reinterpretation of the Act of Six Articles. That statute has always been viewed as a harbinger of conservative reaction that stalled the English Reformation in the last years of Henry VIII. Instead, McEntegart sees it as a combination of evangelical efforts to get a law against the sacramentarians and the conservatives seeking to get Henry VIII to legislate against the Lutheran concept of "abuses" which were the very doctrines separating Henry VIII and the Germans. During this same period, negotiations for the ill-fated marriage between Anne of Cleves and Henry VIII proceeded apace. The rapid failure of the marriage helped the conservatives to bring down Cromwell as did the German princes' failure to compromise with Henry VIII on religious issues. Cromwell's fall halted the most serious efforts to form an Anglo-Schmalkaldic alliance but did not end contacts completely. Sporadic efforts to form an alliance resumed during the mid-1540s but ended with the defeat and dissolution of the Schmalkaldic League at the battle of Muhlberg in 1547. McEntegart sees the efforts to formulate an Anglo-Schmalkaldic alliance as largely driven by religious concerns on both sides rather than political ones. He maintains that Henry VIII was drifting into an increasingly evangelical stance during his last years. Furthermore, McEntegart asserts that the factional politics of the 1530s mark the first time that religious ideology formed the basis for courtly factionalism in English history.

McEntegart has presented a well-researched and well-written account of a previously paradoxical episode from the reign of Henry VIII. His interpretation is based on extensive archival research, particularly materials from the relevant German archives. His interpretation is

lucid and convincing and will form part of a much needed reevaluation of Henry VIII as simply a "Catholic without the pope."

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Citation: Ronald Fritze. Review of McEntegart, Rory, *Henry VIII, the League of Schmalkalden, and the English Reformation* and Rex, Richard, *The Tudors*. H-Albion, H-Net Reviews. January, 2004.

URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=8794

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