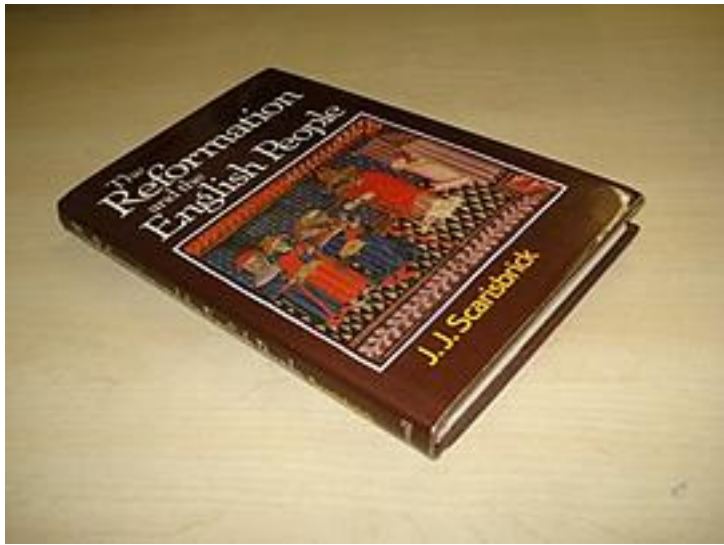


Reformation and the English People



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This is one of the earliest of the revisionist accounts of the English Reformation. It helpfully states its central thesis in its second sentence: "On the whole, English men and women did not want the Reformation and most of them were slow to accept it when it came," a contention confirmed and built upon by others since, most notably Christopher Haigh, Eamon Duffy and Diarmaid MacCulloch. Instead of the traditional account of a disgruntled layfolk, sick and tired of "priestcraft" and superstition calling for reform, we have instead a picture of a thriving late-medieval Catholic piety among a laity, having enforced upon it an unwelcome reform from Protestant-minded bishops and statesmen. Scarisbrick's work is thoroughly researched and his findings now entering the mainstream of opinion. Contrary to the view that Luther's doctrine of the "priesthood of all believers" gave rise to a literate, liberated laity, Scarisbrick argues that the loss of the medieval lay fraternities left lay people with less self-determination and less of a role to play in their religion. The English Reformation led to "a marked shift in the balance of power in favour of the clergy...The new Protestant minister, if he

was a zealous servant of the Gospel, was a disciplining, preaching authority-figure. He may not have had the sacramental powers of the old priest, but he expected rank-and-file lay people to be more passive..." (p. 39) Balancing this is the massive transfer of ecclesiastical lands into the hands of the laity through the loss of religious houses with the dissolution of the monasteries. An incident recounted on p. 108 serves as something of a metaphor for the reluctance of some English Christians of the sixteenth century to embrace the iconoclasm of Protestant worship. In 1569 at Durham as a high altar stone was being hidden in a rubbish heap to be recovered when things swung back to conditions more favourable to Catholic worship, one of the ringleaders was heard to address the stone "Domnius vobiscum (The Lord be with you)." In such ways did English Catholic laity of the period come to terms with the new order.

作者介绍:

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评论

The Author is Earliest Revisionist on Reformation

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书评

The complex web of events that we call the Reformation had a profound and lasting effect on English life. This book is a new attempt to understand how it 'happened' and how English men and women responded to it. Using the evidence of wills and account-books...

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