

REVIEWS

small book in English on archery. It was published in his lifetime and remains worth reading, even by those with no enthusiasm for bows and arrows. His other, better known treatise, *The Scholemaster*, was only issued posthumously. It is something of an exaggeration to talk, as some have done, of Ascham's literary career. In so far as there was such a career it was a matter of unfulfilled ambition, of works unfinished, unprinted, or not even begun. He could write well. He was more than a competent classical scholar, one of the best in Britain at the time, and appreciated abroad. He managed to ride all political and religious storms, serving as Latin Secretary both Mary and Elizabeth. He seems to have been a pleasant, gentle man. Yet there is a heavy sense of failure and disappointment about his life; there was great promise in it, but little achievement.

Even Professor Ryan's thorough study leaves this impression unchanged; it is, if anything, strengthened by his sympathetic effort to present Ascham in a full-length portrait. The man who emerges is something of an ineffectual don, born a little too soon to be comfortable. He would have been happier in the eighteenth century than in Tudor England. His biographer has sifted great quantities of material, and carefully describes Ascham's writings, giving useful summaries and excellently chosen quotations, but he strains the evidence to give him heightened significance. Others have tended to do this when speaking of Ascham in histories of literature. For example, the fact that Ascham's *Toxophilus* is in dialogue form is hardly as remarkable as his biographer suggests. Not only were there the classical models which Ascham imitated, but also More's *Utopia* and Castiglione's influential work *Il Cortegiano*, both known in educated circles. An English work in dialogue form, more extensive and more profound than anything written by Ascham, had been presented to Henry VIII in the thirties: Thomas Starkey's *Dialogue between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset*. There is a tendency for modern scholarship to think too much in terms of printed editions when looking for links in earlier periods and to overlook the influence of an educated social environment often more cosmopolitan and polyglot than our own. It is perhaps the main defect of Professor Ryan's useful book that it sees Ascham too narrowly, too much in terms of his own *corpus*. How little really is the contribution of Ascham's prose when placed beside the Prayer Book and Coverdale's Bible. How small and tame his style after the pages of John Knox!

ANTHONY ROSS, O.P.

THE CATHOLIC LAITY IN ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND 1558-1603, by William R. Trimble; Harvard University Press and O.U.P.; 45s.

Mr Trimble is an Associate Professor of History at Loyola University, Chicago. His study of the Catholic laity in Elizabethan England is based primarily on material in the State Papers, the Cecil Papers and the Acts of the Privy Council, with the main emphasis on the various enquiries and investigations made by the central government into the strength of Catholicism at different points

during the reign. The lengthy section on the social and economic status of the Elizabethan Catholics examines in detail the records relating to the various assessments made by the government in connection with a number of special financial levies imposed on Catholics in the 1580's and 1590's.

Out of this mass of official material there emerges a great deal of new information about the Catholic community, and Mr Trimble's very thorough and very careful analysis of it makes an important contribution to our knowledge of Elizabethan Catholics. It must be admitted that an examination, county by county, of the details contained in numerous official returns is not always easy to digest, and the reader feels at times a little overwhelmed by hundreds of facts and figures. Nevertheless the presentation of this great body of evidence is essential for Mr Trimble's purpose. It is dictated by the nature of the sources he is using and by the purpose which he has in mind—namely the study of the Catholic laity as a group in Elizabethan England. The reader will be grateful for the details, even if he does not always find himself in agreement with the conclusions drawn from them.

There is no doubt that this is a very valuable piece of work, but it has considerable limitations. It is not in fact a study of the Catholic laity in Elizabethan England, as the title states, but rather an examination of certain aspects of the Catholic gentry as they appear in the records of various governmental enquiries and investigations. It is concerned with the formation and development of the government's policy towards Catholics and not to any great extent with Catholic life in Elizabethan England. There is only very limited use of biographical material. Thus, Thomas Pownde is mentioned in connection with the assessments for payments relating to recusancy but there is nothing about his other activities. There is some discussion of the legal position of recusants' wives, but no mention of Margaret Clithero, Anne Line, Margaret Ward or Mrs Wiseman. The impact of the considerable and varied Catholic literature is underestimated, and Dr A. W. Southern's admirable study of Elizabethan Recusant Prose does not appear in the bibliography. It is true that Mr Trimble's book was written before the appearance of Mr Beales' *Education under Penalty* but nevertheless one might have expected more examination of the problems of Catholic education. There is little or no information about such matters as hiding holes or pursuivants or conditions in prison. The admittedly small body of laymen who died for their faith might surely have received more attention.

It is surprising that Mr Trimble has apparently quite deliberately chosen to limit his evidence almost entirely to the records of the central government. He states that 'Although there seems to be an abundance of manuscript material in other archives we found that the State Papers and the Cecil Papers provided sufficient data to determine the cultural, economic, political and social pattern of Elizabethan Catholicism; further evidence would simply have added details'. In so far as this is an examination of the policy of the government and of the information upon which it acted, this may be true, although one feels it is rather like writing the history of, say, Stalin's Russia in terms of official records.

In so far as the book claims to be a study of the Catholic laity, Mr Trimble's concentration on the records of the central government seems to be a serious limitation. One would have thought that the author would want to make much more extensive use not only of other kinds of records but of such detailed studies as Dr Paul's work on Hampshire or Fr O'Dwyer's work on Essex. Even the autobiographies of John Gerard and of William Weston are omitted from the biography.

The book is concerned primarily with the Catholic gentry. This is not altogether surprising, since the gentry were the natural leaders in Tudor England. The government was very interested in them and spent a great deal of energy trying to persuade them or to coerce them into conformity. They loom large in the kind of records which Mr Trimble is examining. Nevertheless, there were other classes represented in the ranks of Elizabethan Catholicism, and quite a lot can be found out about them, as Mr Beales, for example, has shown in relation to schoolmasters and tutors.

The general picture which Mr Trimble paints is one of a leaderless Catholic body lacking in drive and without the spiritual formation which it might have got if it had received the full impact of the Counter-Reformation. The Catholic gentry formed no party and were desperately anxious to establish their loyalty to the government. And so, as Mr Trimble puts it, 'the legally established church of November 1558 . . . shrank to a small minority of Englishmen by March 1603. No great and sudden catastrophe had occurred in the interim; the Church of Rome simply diminished in adherents silently and rapidly, with little outward regret on the part of persons who had been born into it and had now willingly seceded from it'. He argues on the basis of the records of taxation and of censuses of recusants in the 1570's and 1580's that the Catholics even by then were only minor gentry as far as wealth, status and influence were concerned and formed sizeable aggregations only in certain counties. He finds it perplexing that the Catholics should have been so rapidly reduced to this minority status. He thinks that the explanation is not to be found in the comparatively mild policy of the government but in 'the deeply ingrained, indeed almost sacrosanct, reverence which all classes felt for the Crown'. There is no doubt that reverence for the Queen had a very powerful influence on the Elizabethan Catholic gentry but one doubts whether they would have agreed with Mr Trimble's assessment of the effects of the government's policy. They realised only too well the disadvantages of non-conformity.

On a number of occasions the reader may be tempted to ask whether Mr Trimble's conclusions really follow from the evidence. Thus, he argues (p. 23) that 'Impressive as details of Catholic existence might seem between 1559 and 1569 when spread over the pages of a book, they were relatively few, confined to certain areas or even a few individuals'. The details which follow, based on reports to the central government from the bishops and the local authorities, might lead the reader to a different conclusion. The figures in 1564 for the J.Ps. who were unfavourable to the Establishment or neutral in their attitude seem

much more impressive than Mr Trimble suggests, all the more so when one considers that in the 1560's, and indeed long after, there were many Catholics who thought that they could in good conscience conform outwardly. Again, on p. 122, he argues, with reference to the missionary efforts of the secular priests and the Jesuits, 'By 1584 the attempted revivification of Catholicism was evidently beginning to fail'. Here, too, it might be argued that the evidence does not support the generalisation. The information from the taxation returns of the later Elizabethan period is used to show that the Catholic gentry were relatively insignificant and poor. One wonders whether Mr Trimble is not pressing this evidence too far. As he himself points out, there are many problems involved in deciding how far it is a reliable guide to the real wealth of those concerned. If one took the lay subsidy figures of the Elizabethan or early Jacobean period as indicating the wealth of the gentry, one would be seriously misled, since, as Raleigh pointed out, the gentry were notoriously under-assessed in the taxation returns.

One particularly interesting point that emerges from this study is that the government's pressure on the gentry to conform was steady and persistent from the early years of the reign. The Catholic gentleman was not normally in danger of death or imprisonment but the heat was turned on him in other ways. He was in many respects regarded as a second-class citizen, he was leaderless, suspected of disloyalty and often without access to the sacraments. The surprising fact is not that so many conformed but that so many held out when all their instincts as loyal subjects of the Queen urged them to submit.

PATRICK MCGRATH

TUDOR BOOKS OF SAINTS AND MARTYRS, by Helen C. White; University of Wisconsin Press; \$6.75.

FOXÉ'S BOOK OF MARTYRS AND THE ELECT NATION, by William Haller; Jonathan Cape; 30s.

Inherent in any study of the past is the wish, so seldom fulfilled, to penetrate behind the data to the living human reality. Dr White's earlier study of Tudor Books of Private Devotion and her new work on Tudor Books of Saints and Martyrs do much to bring to life the age of faith in conflict. Although her sympathies appear to be closer to the old, rather than to the reformed religion, Dr White has gone far towards capturing the elusive insights of private religious expression and one of the sources of its nourishment. Professor Haller's study of Foxe's Book of Martyrs presents a telling picture of a very different type of religious experience, exteriorised in a highly individual view of the working of God through history. He brings into the foreground the importance of the open Bible in the creation of a new emphasis on individual response to the apocalyptic vision of the New Israel, gathered from among the nations and established most perfectly in England. Professor Haller reflects on Foxe's image of Elizabeth, the