

court as different from that elsewhere'. But this is simply a misquotation, silently omitting key words from my text. What I in fact said, as a qualification to the main thrust of my chapter, was that magic at court was not different *in principle* from magic elsewhere, allowing for the differences in tendency and context for which Stanmore herself argues. In other words, she has manufactured a difference of opinion by quoting me inaccurately.

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*A murderous midsummer. The Western Rising of 1549.* By Mark Stoye. Pp. xxiv + 363 incl. 16 colour ills and 7 maps. New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2022. £25. 978 0 300 26632 0

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This gripping account of a central event in the history of the English Reformation begins, characteristically, not with grand narratives of politics or theology, but outside the village church in Sampford Courtenay, Devon, where in June of 1549, a vicar argued with two of his parishioners over the newly imposed Book of Common Prayer. This argument struck a flame in the tinderbox of a community already primed for resistance. Within a week it had escalated into a widespread protest, and within a month into a violent conflict between rebels and the crown, a conflict in which the state would ultimately triumph, but only just, and which left Devon and Cornwall strewn with the corpses of up to 4,000 men. The author describes himself as ‘a proud West Country man’ who has ‘a particular affinity with the local men and women who were unfortunate enough to find themselves caught up in “the commotion”’ (p. 6), and this comes through on every page of an account profoundly grounded in the human tragedy of the Rising. Though he demonstrates its significance to a broader national story, persuasively showing just how close the rebels came to military success, Stoye keeps our attention focused at all times on the local communities affected by the conflict. Rejecting class as the primary driver of the rising, he instead centres the committed piety of those affronted by the high-handed and poorly explained imposition of the Book of Common Prayer, rebuking historians who, in his view, have been misled by the propaganda of the time into seeing the rebels as ‘blood-crazed class warriors’ (p. 294). Instead, he presents them as ordinary people deeply attached to their local communities and customs, who sought merely to protect their long held religious traditions, and who very nearly succeeded.

The book is divided into three sections. The first, ‘The Background’, chronicles with admirable precision the contours, divisions, and tensions of West Country society in the reign of Henry VIII, and the ways competing gentry families rose and fell through the shifting religious situation of the period. It treats with particular care and insightfulness the emerging tensions between a comparatively traditionalist cathedral chapter in Exeter and its evangelical bishops. This section moreover sets up the Cornish ‘commotion’ (p. 71) of April 1548 as the key predecessor for the Western Rising of the following year. Stoye frames this uprising in squarely religious terms, arguing that the killing of William Body, Thomas Cromwell’s agent in stripping local churches of religious imagery, was not ‘fueled by popular antagonism towards this one man’ but was rather ‘the

product of popular outrage at Somerset's religious policies' and at 'the entire evangelical establishment' (p. 71). Stoye also persuasively argues that the English language focus of the religious reforms of that year, which particularly emphasised that Christians must learn the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments in English, was especially offensive to Cornish speakers, and that this played a decisive part both in the violent protests of 1548, and in the Cornish participation in the broader rebellion of 1549.

The second section, 'The Rising', deals with the outbreak of 1549 itself, which Stoye sees as fundamentally a popular reaction against the new prayerbook. Tracing the escalating conflict from the dispute between parishioners and priest in Sampford Courtenay on 10 June, in which the people demanded to 'keep the old and ancient religion', and 'that no alteration of religion should be made untill King Edward ... were come unto his full age' (p. 86), Stoye shows how the heady mix of profound loyalty to traditional religion, local resistance to external interference, and popular enthusiasm in a season characterised by topsy-turvy festivities combined to create a far more serious threat to the government than has previously been recognised. Stoye's treatment of two crucial turning points particularly stands out.

In the final week of June 1549, the rebels demanded the surrender of Exeter. The town governors rejected that demand, but it was a near-run thing; there were many within the city walls fond of traditional religion, and sympathetic with the rebels' cause. 'If the governors' decision had gone the other way – and the protestors had received the enormous accretion of strength ... that possession of the fifth-largest city in the realm would at once have conferred upon them – the rising would almost certainly have spread even further and faster' (p. 114). This strength might also have been gained with the help of the Cathedral Chapter: 'the Close had long been regarded by evangelicals as a key centre of local resistance to the new learning ... The canons' possession of what was, in effect, an independent enclave within the city walls meant that, if they had decided to hold out a hand to the rebels, it would have been extremely difficult for the town governors to mount an effective defence' (p. 116–18). Had either of these 'small groups of men in the Guildhall and the Chapter House' (p. 118) acted differently, as Stoye shows they may well have done, it would have changed the whole course of the rising.

Even more significant is Stoye's demonstration that, contrary to the traditional dating of 6 June, the rebellion in Cornwall in fact broke out on 6 July, dramatically accelerating the timeline of the Cornish revolt. Rather than seizing Plymouth in mid-June and then dawdling there for nearly a month, as existing 'histories of the Western Rising have assumed' (p. 142), Stoye shows Humphrey Arundell, leader of the Cornish forces, to have arrived in Devon 'with a powerful Cornish rebel host' (p. 144) within just a few weeks of its having been raised. There was therefore a far more dramatic and rapid swelling of military power in the rising than has usually been thought. No wonder, then, that Lord Russell, commander of the crown's forces, was 'thrown into a state of near-panic' (p. 149) and requested urgent reinforcements. At Fenny Bridges, a badly under-manned Russell held off the vanguard of a rebel force 'estimated at anything between 7,000 and 10,000' (p. 179) men just long enough for substantial crown

reinforcements to arrive. This crucial encounter at Fenny Bridges was ‘a very close-run thing’ (p. 179), and had it gone in the rebels’ favour, or had crown reinforcements taken even slightly longer to arrive, the rebels would have been able to overwhelm Russell’s forces ‘through sheer force of numbers’ (p. 179), and from there, perhaps, march triumphantly to London.

It was not to be. As Stoye shows in the third section, ‘The Aftermath’, the forces of the rising were not only defeated; their allies and supporters were brutally repressed in the fierce backlash which followed in August and September of 1549. The failed rising had widespread consequences for the region; perhaps upwards of 4,000 men were killed in the conflict and after, including, Stoye argues, many more priests than has usually been thought – ‘between 3 and 5 percent of the total number of parochial clergy in the diocese’ (p. 237). Many who survived were subjected to crippling financial penalties. Despite their decision not to actively support the rising, ‘the rebellion ... resulted in a further downward lurch in the power and authority of the dean and Chapter’ of Exeter Cathedral (p. 240). Unsurprisingly, it also led to the relative decline in power of the conservative Arundell family. Even after their military defeat, however, Stoye shows that another route to success remained to what was left of the rebel leadership, in his compelling re-narration of their trials in London. These, he shows, were closely bound together with the simultaneous fall of the duke of Somerset from power and the ensuing struggle for control of government, in which the traditionalist faction very nearly managed to secure by political means what the rebels had unsuccessfully sought by force. Reading the trial through the lens of this highly politicised context, Stoye argues that the accusation that the West Country rebels had cried ‘kill all the gentlemen’ ‘was almost certainly crafted with political ends in mind’ (p. 294). If Stoye is right, ‘then the chief evidential prop of the notion that the Western Rising ... was primarily “a social conflict” ... promptly collapses in a cloud of dust’ (p. 294), and it becomes clear that the motivations of the rebels were religious. As so often in Stoye’s narrative, revision of the national story and revision of the local one go hand in hand.

Compellingly written and jammed with new insights, this is a superb overview of the Western Rising which is sure to become a standard work on the subject. Through his close attention to the particularity and detail of the rising, Stoye not only reframes our understanding of the human motivations and military might of the West Country rebels, but also demonstrates their profound significance to the broader history of both state authority and religious reform in sixteenth-century England.

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*Aesthetics of Protestantism in Northern Europe. Exploring the field.* Edited by Joachim Grage, Thomas Mohnike and Lena Rohrback. (Aesthetics of Protestantism in Northern Europe.) Pp. 260 incl. 36 colour and black-and-white ills and 2 tables. Turnhout: Brepols, 2022. £80. 978 2 503 60160 1

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How should we retell the cultural history of the Nordic countries when taking into consideration the cultural dominance that Protestant Churches, beliefs and