

C. J. Cook, ed. *The Palfrey Notebook: Records of Study in Seventeenth-Century Cambridge*. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2012. 770 pp.  
Review by BOYD M. BERRY, VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY.

*The Palfrey Notebook* was created by George Palfrey while a candidate for the M.A. at Sidney Sussex College Cambridge (1623). According to Prof. C. J. Cook, the editor of the volume, Sidney Sussex was established initially as an anti-Roman training ground and “conforming Calvinist” institution. By “conforming Calvinist” I think of a compromiser, what Cook most frequently terms “moderate,” someone retaining most features of Calvin’s theology but not his views on predestination (11), thus, avoiding becoming dissenters. Calvinists are commonly thought to have opposed monarchy in the struggles of the seventeenth century in England; yet some alums and staff, active when Palfrey was at Sidney Sussex in 1623, were conforming Royalists in the 1640s, i.e. during the Civil Wars (22).

If that is mildly surprising, Professor Cook’s rich editorial remarks propose that Palfrey’s notebook is a remarkably surprising document. It suggests that educationally these conforming Calvinists trained soon-to-be Calvinist preachers from Jesuit materials, despite the terms of the founding of their college. And, finally, Prof. Cook draws together important similarities between Palfrey’s studies and William Harvey’s writing to form a concrete example of the ways that Puritans interested themselves in what was then known as natural philosophy, which we today know as physics and mechanics (38). In three introductory chapters, Prof. Cook makes his case.

In chapter one, Cook initially devotes three short sections to 1) the physical notebook, 2) George Palfrey, and 3) the social and intellectual context of reformation England (8); the latter being the most interesting. First, he points out that the notebook is unique in three ways. First it is focused exclusively on curricular matters rather than personal responses; second, it is comprehensive; and third it presents what is basically a Jesuit curriculum. In short Palfrey, trained as a “conforming Calvinist” and an anti-Roman agent produced a seeming contradiction. In sketching a preliminary biography for Palfrey, Prof. Cook notes that he was not ejected by Parliamentarians as, for juicy example, Robert Herrick was after the Civil Wars; again, suggesting

some of the “moderate” complexity Cook finds in the notebook.

The curriculum which Cook brings out had two parts: the first is restricted to basics (trivium. . . quadrivium, etc., which perhaps Palfrey taught undergraduates [each one teach one]) (8). The second is much more profound and advanced and also that part of the curriculum most heavily owing to Jesuit sources and approaches. Palfrey took an M. A. when he completed that second “scholastic.”

Turning to the historical context, Cook notes that despite the reformist platform of its founding, by definition the curriculum at Sidney Sussex was somewhat old-fashioned, because scholastic. In Palfrey’s case, the focus was on Aristotle and observation of nature. The College operated on the pre-print, oral manner of disputations, orations, and lectures. Although the universities nationally reflected and responded to the growing optimism and flexibility in the English nation in their instruction, Sidney Sussex remained “moderate” because inflexibly scholastic, a Puritan establishment. Two prominent Masters of the College, friends of William Perkins, were noted for hostility to Catholics (15). Cook notes, again, the ways the Calvinists of Sidney Sussex were “pragmatic conservatives” upset by failures of “personal piety”(i.e. pranks) in students and elsewhere. “They wished to avoid discord and indiscipline and their Puritanism is a reflection of that wish. But they were also prepared to compromise convictions to maintain peace and unity. . .” (18). “It would be a mistake to view either the Calvinists of the English universities or the Jesuits of being blindly conservative” (37). Cook’s omni-directional exposition attempts to make that case.

In chapter two, Cook explains why a scholastic curriculum based on Aristotle would have attracted the academic Calvinists. Their rivals, the Jesuits, had won recognition educationally, and their adopted system, “Scholastic Aristotelianism,” provided, as they thought, the framework that established clear criteria of academic excellence, of theological truth, of political certainty. And Aristotelian natural philosophy was an essential element of that framework” (64).

In chapter three, Cook weaves the writings of William Harvey in with the mix of the second scholastic writers, with particular emphasis on Jacobus Zabarella’s work. On the continent, Aristotle was reinterpreted in ways appealing to conforming Calvinistic writers who were

“led by their anxiety to identify predestined salvation” (74). Partly as a result of interest in natural magic and in election, there emerged a “revised Aristotelianism,” the product of an urge to “reform . . . the system” rather than to replace it (81). Cook’s presentation clarifies both the resemblance and the differences; concerning but one point he urges, “Zabarella uses deduction, and Harvey anatomical demonstration” (87) to arrive at much the same result. In general, the aim was to unify; “both sense and reason, employed separately, had their limitations, and to overcome them a rational scheme was required to determine the significance and use of particular observations” (90). In other words, Harvey and the scholastic writers found ways to integrate physical observation with the results of scholastic analysis.

In sum, Cook’s short and snappy thesis appears to be that “conforming Calvinists” adopted Jesuit manuals, a thesis which Cook would probably complicate; but most of the presentation appears to derive from Zabarella, who does not appear in this argument as a member of the Jesuits. Still, Prof. Cook has raised a number of issues concerning the history of science, of what he terms “scholastic writers,” as well as adding to the History of the University of Cambridge and Elizabethan education. Boydell Press is to be commended for undertaking the substantial work of publishing this volume.

Chris R. Kyle. *Theater of State: Parliament and Political Culture in Early Stuart England*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012. X + 276 pp. \$60.00. Review by MARC SCHWARZ, UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE.

For most Stuart historians parliament is an institution where laws are passed and where debates of great importance take place. These attributes are of tremendous importance, but Chris Kyle illuminates for us a much broader portrait of parliament, especially by bringing to life the character of the sessions and the nature of the environment in which the houses met. In fact, the author views parliament as a kind of political theatre, inhabited by actors, and viewed by the public much like a show on a stage.

The parliament that Professor Kyle describes for us is one teeming with hundreds of members and so noisy that MPs could often not