context of the translation of the King James Bible, which, in the popular mind at least, is the triumph of English biblical scholarship in the early modern period, will be disappointed. But, for this reviewer, the biggest shortcoming of this volume is the absence of a substantial introduction, an omission for which John Morrill’s characteristically incisive and provocative Afterword, is inadequate compensation. A number of the contributors talk about the changing nature and priorities of biblical scholarship during this period, none perhaps better than Mandelbrote in his account of the abandonment of the search for “a single, pure text of Scripture” (92), but the reader is left to piece together the various insights into this process. It is stated on the dust-jacket that “The Bible is the single most influential text in Western culture, yet the history of biblical scholarship in early modern England has yet to be written.” There is no doubting either of these claims, yet most early modern historians and literary scholars would probably not regard the task as a priority. An opportunity has, perhaps, been missed to develop the argument, not only that biblical scholarship was a highly important activity for early modern Englishmen, but also that its history is key to our understanding of the period. That omission, however, should not detract from the fact that Scripture and Scholarship is an impressive and rewarding volume of essays, which, individually and collectively, will be essential building blocks in the writing of the history of biblical scholarship in early modern England.


In a set of thoughtful and thought-provoking essays published nearly a generation ago, Patrick Collinson offered an interpretation of Elizabethan politics that embraced both its republican and monarchical elements. His argument took account of practices at the center of national politics, where some at court and in parliament viewed the monarchy as a public—rather than a private or personal—office and held that leading subjects had a responsibility to offer honest
counsel, even if it did not please the monarch at the time. Collinson also considered the activities of local office-holders throughout England, who, like many of the their contemporaries at the top of the national political hierarchy, acted on the principle that they were citizens rather than merely subjects. Collinson’s research set him in the midst of an unfolding discussion of Elizabethan—and by extension early modern—politics that has continued to be a model for fruitful, scholarly conversation. The volume under review here is a perfect example of this process. The editor brought together fourteen essays from several of the leading figures in the debate over the nature of English political culture, and Collinson, quite rightly, was allowed the last, though certainly not the final, word.

Most of the chapters address aspects of Tudor political thought and practice. Ethan Shagan’s essay cautions that the republicanism of those active in national politics was quite different from, and perhaps antithetical to, the republicanism of those in local communities. Focusing his research on the Henrician period, he calls for a new look at several of the assumptions underlying Collinson’s argument about Elizabethan government. Dale Hoak examines two of the central figures in the development of Elizabethan monarchical republicanism, Sir William Cecil and Sir Thomas Smith. Although their influence would reveal itself fully in the defense of godly reformation during critical moments in Elizabeth’s reign, Hoak demonstrates that they had developed their ideology a generation earlier, in the context of Edward I’s reign. John F. McDiarmid then continues Hoak’s discussion of mid-Tudor humanism. His essay emphasizes the influence of Cicero among the Cambridge humanist circle that emerged in the 1530s, a group that included Cecil and Smith, and which won the admiration of John Milton a century later for its advancement of religious reformation. Stephen Alford then looks closely at the political philosophy of Cecil, who is in many ways the central figure of the volume. He argues that the hallmark of Cecil’s approach was an emphasis on the royal counselor’s responsibility to maintain a humble attitude but at the same time never to fail to offer honest, godly advice, even if it was not likely to prompt royal pleasure. Scott Lucas offers a compelling examination of the ways in which A Mirror for Magistrates exemplified, in its support for the principle of resistance,
the intellectual depth of Elizabethan monarchical republicanism. The discussion of the social depth of monarchical republicanism is advanced by Markku Peltonen in an essay that casts a bright light on the emphasis in the standard Elizabethan grammar school program on the classically-inspired rhetorical arts and the explosive potential that some contemporaries saw for the spread of eloquence too far down the social scale. After offering a sweeping historiographical survey, Peter Lake takes another look at the downfall of Archbishop Grindal to demonstrate the limitation of the monarchical republican ideology among Elizabeth’s courtiers. He argues that her anti-Puritan circle of advisors held a distinctly different view of the nature of the English polity than did Cecil (subsequently Lord Burghley), Smith, and the others associated with the monarchical republican position. In an essay that has an indirect connection to Collinson’s work, Andrew Hadfield discusses Shakespeare’s *Richard III* and his three *Henry VI* plays as warnings to contemporaries about the dire consequences that follow from the combination of a weak monarchy and an irresponsible ruling class.

The discussion then moves beyond its Tudor origins. Anne McLaren’s analysis of the published works of Scottish lawyer Sir Thomas Craig shows the contested nature of monarchical republicanism in the reign of James I although, and despite the best efforts of the first Stuart king of England to extinguish it, the idea would display its continued influence at political flashpoints throughout the seventeenth century. Richard Cust offers a case study of provincial magistracy that focuses on Sir John Newdigate, a late Elizabethan and early Jacobean figure on the Warwickshire county bench. Newdigate’s reading habits allow Cust to explore the process through which the common humanist education of the time was absorbed and put into practice by active citizens. In an intensively historiographical essay, Johann P. Sommerville takes issue with scholars, including some of the contributors to this volume, who have emphasized the Roman roots of the monarchical republican ideology. In effect, Sommerville seeks to rescue Collinson’s nuanced approach to the potential influence of classical humanist ideas on Elizabethan politics from those who would stress the significance of republican thinking in the decades preceding the English Civil War. Andrew Fitzmaurice’s chapter dem-
onstrates the influence of humanist-inspired monarchical republican thought in critiques of factionalism in the early American colonies. Quentin Skinner’s essay traces the course of monarchical republican-ism through the seventeenth-century revolutions. Although Charles I vehemently rejected suggestions by contemporaries such as Henry Parker that England embrace a monarchy that could not be arbitrary, and although some radicals would subsequently insist that monarchy was inherently incompatible with a republic, by the 1690s monarchical republicanism had become fully realized in England.

In the volume’s final essay, Collinson displays, once again, his absolute command of the field. He reviews the state of knowledge at the time that he developed his hypothesis and then traces several of the most important historiographical developments between the appearance of his articles and the completion of the volume under review here. He then graciously discusses each of the volume’s chapters, engaging most fruitfully with the critiques of his approach offered by Shagan and Lake.

Collections of essays aspire to be multi-authored books, but this is the rare example that fulfills its promise. Imaginatively and successfully executed (complete with a full bibliography of sources and works!), The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England can serve as a model for a genre of scholarly publication that, for good reason, is often maligned.


Jon Parkin argues that Hobbes’s method of reasoning—formu-lating a series of paradoxes that result in unconventional conclu-sions—was so powerful that his contemporaries (a) could not allow him to turn men’s heads, and (b) could not refute him. Perhaps that last is stronger than what Parkin actually claims. Rather, he says that Hobbes’s contemporary critics chose to adopt many of his ideas even while denouncing the author. The ideas were just too good to