throughout the course of the narrative in the context of the social structure of the Gaelic-speaking world, is spelled wrongly (as “dependents”) as often as correctly. Nevertheless, this is a valuable and accessible study which sheds useful further light on the dimensions of the British problem in early modern Scotland, England, and Ireland.

LISA HOPKINS, *Sheffield Hallam University*

Stephen Alford. *Kingship and Politics in the Reign of Edward VI*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. xiii, 233.

This very useful book succeeds in making some interesting reinterpretations of a recently well-examined reign (Alford’s is the fourth or fifth new study of the reign since 1999), mostly by applying a more firm logic to it; a few unanswered questions are raised along the way.

Alford first challenges the view that the reign was one of political instability, initially with an examination of the historiography (c. 1550–2000) that highlights the political and religious agendas of the individual writers and their influence on subsequent commentators. For instance, it would have been the height of political naïveté to write despairingly of the politics of John Dudley while Robert was a court favourite, but less personally and professionally damaging when Robert was out of the picture. Thus, we see various editions of John Foxe reflecting the political environment but confusing the actual circumstances and events. John Hayward, writing in the turbulent, faction-ridden 1630s, projected his own political environment backward. David Hume, writing in the more “enlightened” eighteenth century, sees Edward’s reign as the “dawning” of religious liberty. Most significantly, Alford challenges Professor Elton himself, who, having uncovered the Tudor revolution in government, dismissed Edward as a problem to be shoe-horned into an existing polity, unable or unwilling to accept that the focus of kingship had changed from the “institutional/structural view” of a Thomas Cromwell to the “politics” focus of the leading intellectuals of the day.

Alford thus changes our perceptions of the reign and the king. No longer the “problem to be solved” (*pace* Elton), Edward emerges as the central figure of a complex web of politics, religion, and social engineering, finally emerging to take the reins only to be tragically lost. In this way, Alford emphasises the role of political counsel (and council) around the young king and shows the reader where and how new concepts of polity developed in answer to the needs of the country at a time when the “supreme head” was essentially absent. He thereby sheds some light on the significance of the brief interlude of Jane Grey, a Protestant who would slot nicely into the political system of council/counsel,

while Mary — an adult, a Catholic, and a woman with her own agenda to set — would not.

Secondly, Alford pays close attention to the political, familial, and patronage connections of the chief councillors, going some way towards addressing the contentious issue of faction. For example, we are shown that the fall of the Duke of Somerset, often thought to be a result of faction, was rather the result of the duke's unwillingness to face the new political realities. That is, instead of working closely with the Privy Council, parliament, and the political counsel, he chose to work alone. This is not to say that faction did not exist; of course it did. As governor of the king's body, as well as protector of the realm, Seymour occupied a prominent political position that inspired jealousy (the problem of Thomas Seymour's self-aggrandizing activities is well explored).

Thirdly, religious change (often dismissed as too radical or too obviously self-serving to be taken too seriously) is here shown to have been the logical extension of conditions stemming from the previous reign and current conditions. Edward is lauded by the men around him not merely as king or supreme head, but as the man who will, finally, lead England out from under the jackboot of Antichrist (Rome and all for which it stands). With an interesting focus on the writings of some of the leading theologians of the day, we are presented with a kingship based on Old Testament principles. What emerges is the view of what "monarchy" should be (in an ideal Protestant world), what government should be and what the mechanisms for the relationship between the two and the rest of the nation should be.

These ideas were familiar enough, having been developed during the reign of Henry VIII (at a time when many of Edward's future advisors were familiarizing themselves with, and expanding upon, the new ideas at university). Interestingly, new light is thrown on the "problem" of Stephen Gardiner. Gardiner, one of the architects of the royal supremacy, occupies a position in "loyal opposition," inconveniently pointing out the flaws in the new religious-political constructs (based as they are outside of an adult supreme head and outside of the king-in-parliament political equation). Finally, Alford applies the lessons learned in the reign and projects these into the future. We see that the same men who devised a working polity under Edward (based on Privy council and parliament) were the same men trying to convince Elizabeth of the same need (much against her own opinions). This is a valuable, well-written and easy-to-read book, and one I highly recommend.

ANDREW A. CHIBI, *University of Leicester*