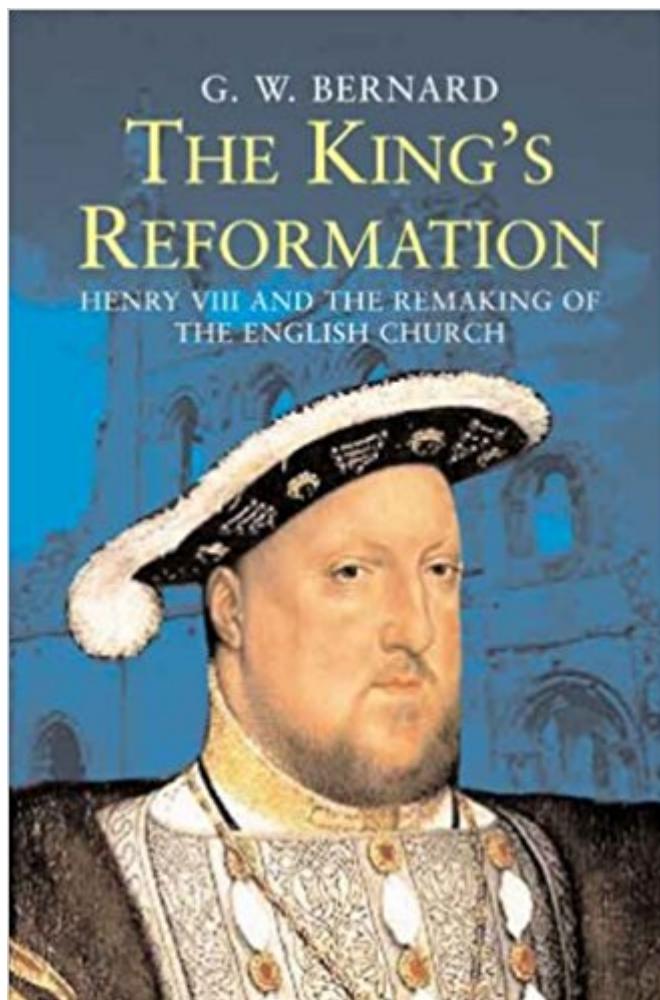


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The King's Reformation: Henry VIII And The Remaking Of The English Church



Synopsis

Henry VIII's reformation remains among the most crucial yet misunderstood events in English history. In this substantial new account G. W. Bernard presents the king as neither confused nor a pawn in the hands of manipulative factions. Henry, a monarch who ruled as well as reigned, is revealed instead as the determining mover of religious policy throughout this momentous period. In Henry's campaign to secure a divorce from Catherine of Aragon, which led him to break with Rome, his strategy, as Bernard shows, was more consistent and more radical than historians have allowed. Henry refused to introduce Lutheranism, but rather harnessed the rhetoric of the continental reformation in support of his royal supremacy. Convinced that the church needed urgent reform, in particular the purging of superstition and idolatry, Henry's dissolution of the monasteries and the dismantling of the shrines were much more than a venal attempt to raise money. The king sought a middle way between Rome and Zurich, between Catholicism and its associated superstitions on one hand and the subversive radicalism of the reformers on the other. With a ruthlessness that verged on tyranny, Henry VIII determined the pace of change in the most important twenty years of England's religious development.

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Customer Reviews

"Big, erudite, trenchant and readable, this is a masterpiece drawing on decades of research and reflection, and a work of international scholarly importance."-Ralph Houlbrooke, University of Reading

G.W. Bernard is professor of early modern history at the University of Southampton. His books include Power and Politics in Tudor England.

Heavy in content but gives a clear picture of Henry VIII's reign. The author's bias towards Henry VIII, overall his love for Tudor England, does not cloud the narrative prose as does some historical biographies. A great, intense and long read of everyone's favorite monarch.

This is not a light or easy read and there is an assumption that the reader comes with a fairly extensive prior knowledge of the subject (I am afraid I let the author down in this respect). However, it is wonderful to see that perhaps Henry was not an air head ruled from his pantaloons, falling in love like a puppy dog for every bit of skirt. Instead he is shown to be a manipulative and sinister character with very cerebral imperatives - personally I found this both more credible and far more interesting. I surprise myself in writing this, but actually I would have liked more about his wives, their politics and their religion. Catherine is discussed in some detail, but I found myself left curious about what were Anne Boleyn's views on the reformation. I'd also have liked to know a little bit about where her father actually stood in this matter. It is worth the effort to read through and at the end you will have a warm glow of achievement and you will know a lot more about this well known but often over romanticized period of English history.

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