

of personal sinfulness, salvation might result. Samuel Rutherford spoke of 'my desires of saving souls' (p. 87). Personal assurance was deemed to be essential and those who denied it were accused of Arminianism, yet preachers strove to undermine it, for fear of laxity creeping in. Robert Baillie prescribed 'a diligent effort "to make our personall Election sure" ' (p. 99). On the one hand, divine grace is irresistible, but on the other the preacher demands *effort* from the believer – salvation by works? Most believed that the invisible church was tiny, but 'only rarely did divines take seriously the possibility that one's own offspring might not be of the elect' (p. 67), and the inherent contradiction of mass-subscription of the National Covenant was lost on them.

The first eight chapters almost serve as a preparation for the last, on the Covenant itself, embodying the centrality of paradox to Scottish puritanism and to this book. How could a religious view emphasising personal liberty in relation to God and against an oppressive Kirk and State seek to impose unity through subscription to the Covenant? At the heart of the Covenant were notions of conformity and obedience, yet at the heart of puritan piety was the individual covenant of grace. For the nobility, puritan individualism was politically dangerous. The constitutional revolution began with religious change at the gerrymandered General Assembly at Glasgow in 1638. To maintain that victory, the leadership of the Kirk had to make a 'Mephistophelean bargain' (p. 301) with the nobility in the creation of new political structures.

The gathering pace of the last few chapters takes the reader into a powerful 'Epilogue'. Some may find unpalatable the view that the ministers betrayed their puritan beliefs in return for political power. Yet this careful and sympathetic book does make one inclined to agree that Scottish puritanism was dealt a severe blow by the Covenant. Oppressed dissident Christians with a faith focused on a personal relationship with God and defiance of the establishment at the heart of their self-image became an essential component of an oppressive regime. Whereas their English counterparts developed theories of personal liberty, these 'religious cranks' (p. 312) were 'lusting after power to the extent of perverting their own theology and prostituting their religion' to 'an untrustworthy nobility pursuing its own goals' (p. 319). Samuel Rutherford, for one, lived to regret it. Mullan has produced an absorbing account of early modern religious belief which also adds a fascinating twist to how the National Covenant, its background and aftermath are to be understood.

*University of Dundee*

ALAN R. MACDONALD

*The Cambridge Urban History of Britain. Volume II, 1540–1840.*

Edited by Peter Clark. Pp. xxvii, 906.

ISBN 0 521 43141 7.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2000. £95.00.

This expensive but weighty and handsomely produced volume is a fine example of collaborative scholarship. Together with its companion volumes, which examine the periods 600–1540 and 1840–1950 (edited, respectively, by D. M. Palliser and Martin Daunton), it is likely to become a standard work of reference on the urban history of England, Wales and Scotland for some time to come. Reflecting the growth and flourishing of British urban history as a sub-discipline over the past three decades, the trilogy aims to guide readers into the current state of research and to suggest further avenues of investigation. British urban historians originally concentrated their efforts on the Victorian era; this volume and its predecessor demonstrate that sufficient work has now

been done on the medieval and early modern ages for substantial surveys of the research on these periods also to be produced.

Volume II is divided into three parts. Part One constitutes a regional survey, with chapters on East Anglia, the South-East, the South-West, the Midlands, the North of England, Wales and Scotland. It is recognised by the contributors that divisions of this nature are somewhat arbitrary and, in some cases, a little anachronistic. Scotland, most obviously, was a separate nation for more than half of the period covered by the volume, and it is not difficult to substantiate the identity and economic particularity of a region such as East Anglia, but it is harder to do so for, say, the Midlands during the time under consideration. One of the purposes of these chapters is to identify regional networks of towns of different sizes, and it is difficult for Philip Jenkins's chapter on Wales to do this since, as he shows, Welsh towns were so closely linked with English border towns for economic purposes. Nonetheless, by placing successive geographic areas under the magnifying glass for the course of the whole three centuries, these chapters form a helpful and thorough introduction to the towns of mainland Britain before a more thematic treatment is provided in Parts Two and Three.

These consider British towns by type and topic over the periods 1540–1700 and 1700–1840 respectively. London, large towns, small towns and ports are examined in both parts, while the second part adds chapters on the new categories of health and leisure resorts, and industrialising towns. In a collection of this nature, it is neither surprising nor particularly problematic that a certain amount of overlapping material results. On the other hand, it is to the authors' credit that it is difficult to identify major gaps in their thematic treatment. A deliberate and justifiable decision was taken not to offer separate chapters on gender, youth or poverty, in favour of integrating women, the young and the poor into various chapters throughout the book, where relevant. The consideration of gender, for instance, is particularly well tackled in the chapters by Pamela Sharpe (on population and society 1700–1840) and Joyce Ellis (on regional and county centres 1700–1840). Religion in the later period is swallowed up in a chapter on culture and leisure (by Peter Clark and R. A. Houston), having been headlined in the equivalent chapter in Part Two (by Vanessa Harding); this may seem a rather premature relegation of religion as a priority of urban dwellers, although Clark and Houston do consider it in the course of their chapter. It is perhaps surprising that there is no chapter specifically dealing with representations of towns in art and literature, although several contributors discuss these within their essays; and less use is made by the text of the thirty-one fine plates incorporated in the volume than might have been expected. The essays are further supplemented by a wealth of scholarship in the footnotes, an excellent index, and a generous number of maps and tables.

Naturally in such a large collection, the essays represent a variety of styles and approaches. While they have all been produced to a high standard, some content themselves with a summative approach; others have tried to address the current state of play by offering fresh research or challenging previous interpretations as well. John Langton, in his chapter on 'Urban growth and economic change: From the late seventeenth century to 1841', has produced a new data analysis of urban populations and suggests that Britain was more highly urbanised in the eighteenth century than has often been thought, and that most urban population growth took place in established urban centres, not in new towns. Leonard Schwarz presents a beautifully written essay on London 1700–1840 which questions the notion of urban 'improvement' in the latter part of the period by pointing to the disastrous effects that such measures often had on the poor, such as the building of smart new streets, which forced them into smaller and more crowded slum areas. Paul Griffiths and Pamela Sharpe, in

chapters on population, follow the experiences of rural incomers in towns to investigate support networks and their further migration within towns and cities. Ian Archer argues that town dwellers were less easily politically controlled by local landowners and gentry in the 1540–1700 period than is often supposed.

Editorial policy was not to impose a consensual interpretative line, but to propose the richness of a plurality of approaches and conclusions. Given the divergence among contributors on the very definition of ‘urban’, as measured by population, the implication of the different quantitative definitions employed is that the term is a relative one rather than definitive. This is supported by a greater consensus on qualitative criteria. Peter Borsay’s persuasive contention that numerous health and leisure resorts, especially earlier in the eighteenth century, though almost certainly too small to qualify for urban status as defined by a minimum population, are difficult to exclude on qualitative grounds; and, conversely, Barrie Trinder’s disqualification of some mining settlements on their lack of various characteristics despite their substantial populations is equally convincing. As a whole, the collection emphasises change and transformation, although some contributors stress continuity more than others.

Regional distinctiveness is a recurring theme (see particularly Peter Clark’s chapter on ‘Small towns, 1700–1840’), and Scottish towns have not been at all badly served by this collection. T. M. Devine has contributed a chapter on Scotland to the regional survey in Part One, and most of the thematic chapters in Parts Two and Three try to give Scottish towns fair coverage. Since Scottish towns were fewer and generally smaller than English towns, and given that there is much less historiographical literature to draw on for Scottish towns, it is not surprising that some authors succeed better in this respect than others. Chapters which achieve particularly even coverage include those by Paul Glennie and Ian D. Whyte on ‘Towns in an agrarian economy, 1540–1700’, Vanessa Harding on ‘Reformation and culture, 1540–1700’, Paul Slack on ‘Great and good towns, 1540–1700’, Michael Lynch on the Scottish ‘Ports, 1540–1700’, Joanna Innes and Nicholas Rogers on ‘Politics and government, 1700–1840’, and Peter Clark and R. A. Houston on ‘Culture and leisure, 1700–1840’. Most, however, if not all, have comment of interest to Scottish historians, and the comparisons and contrasts of the Scottish experience with the English and Welsh are often instructive. Pamela Sharpe, for instance, writing about the 1700–1840 period, compares young Scottish women with their continental counterparts in their tendency to migrate temporarily to Edinburgh before returning home to marry, in contrast to young English women, who were more likely to marry and settle in London.

One of the strengths of the book lies in its frequent emphasis on the interdependence and links between the countryside, rural and small towns, larger towns and cities, and London (John Walton’s chapter on the north of England does this particularly well). One might have hoped for a more systematic treatment of the connections and bonds (or lack of them?) between Scottish and English towns somewhere in the volume, perhaps in the regional survey at the start. The structure of the book, in dividing Parts Two and Three at 1700, might also be criticised by Scottish historians, as representing a less relevant turning point for Scottish towns, whose growth accelerated later, if faster, than English towns. 1700 should not be taken too literally as a watershed, however, even in the English case, and Peter Clark’s editorial contention that the quickening pace of change from the eighteenth century requires a separate analysis is convincing for Scottish towns also. Indeed, it may well be argued that this framework allows some of the divergences of the Scottish urban experience to be pointed up especially clearly. In any case, by 1840 Scottish cities easily rivalled their English fellows in the social, economic and environmental problems which had resulted

from the dramatic transformation they had recently undergone. As Clark concludes the volume, the reforms of the 1830s had only begun to tackle urban difficulties in a very limited way, and the urban legacy bequeathed to the Victorians was full of challenge.

*University of Stirling*

EMMA VINCENT MACLEOD

*The Old Poor Law in Scotland: The Experience of Poverty, 1574–1845.*

By Rosalind Mitchison. Pp. 246.

ISBN 0 7486 1344 7.

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2000. Pb. £18.95.

This study has been a long time in the making and is greatly to be welcomed. Professor Mitchison's first work on the Old Poor Law in Scotland was published over quarter of a century ago. *The Old Poor Law in Scotland* is an important book, the culmination of many years of archival investigation, speculative conference papers, published articles and chapters, and reflection. It is not the vehicle for many new ideas; most have been aired at some time in the past. More than compensating for this lack of intellectual surprise, however, is the sheer scope of the volume, which leads readers from the uncertain (indeed temporary) beginnings of State-backed poor relief in Scotland in 1574 until the Old Poor Law – desperately inadequate by the early nineteenth century – was wound up in 1845. The significance of national studies of poor relief like this one which can later form the basis of comparative analyses is made clear at the start: for example, how the treatment of poverty might impact on class relations, and on economic and demographic growth (and mortality).

Early in the book Mitchison raises the issue of the impact of the English Poor Law on the Industrial Revolution in England. What this book reveals, although the point is not made explicitly, is that almost without doubt, the linen-led growth of the Scottish economy after *c.*1740 and its transformation post *c.*1780 was greatly facilitated by the limitations of the Poor Law in Scotland and the subsistence pressures there were in large parts of the country which in the first instance persuaded females and children to welcome with open arms the arrival of opportunities to spin flax.

In some ten chapters Mitchison explores the development and working out in practice of the Poor Law in Scotland, as well as changing attitudes to and definitions of the poor, although simply being poor was not enough to guarantee poor relief. The reasons why a man, woman or child might fall into poverty – and how vulnerable great swathes of the Scottish population were – are fully explored. Most striking, despite the fact that the Scottish legislation was largely copied from England, are the differences in the application of poor relief north of the Border. The main one was the key role in Scotland played by the national Church, but at parish level, notwithstanding the concern about law and order and the suppression of vagrants which exercised the Privy Council in the seventeenth century. Reluctantly, landowners were drawn into the support system as it developed in the Lowlands after the important Poor Law Act of 1649. It was never as effective in the Highlands, and in the Lowlands became less effective in those localities which turned in greater numbers to the dissenting churches from the last quarter of the eighteenth century, whose first financial priority was to pay for a minister. The main outlines of the spread of assessment from around 1740 are well known but the greater space available allows Professor Mitchison to describe and analyse in greater depth the variations in practice. Like most historians she underestimates the degree of suffering endured by the mass of the