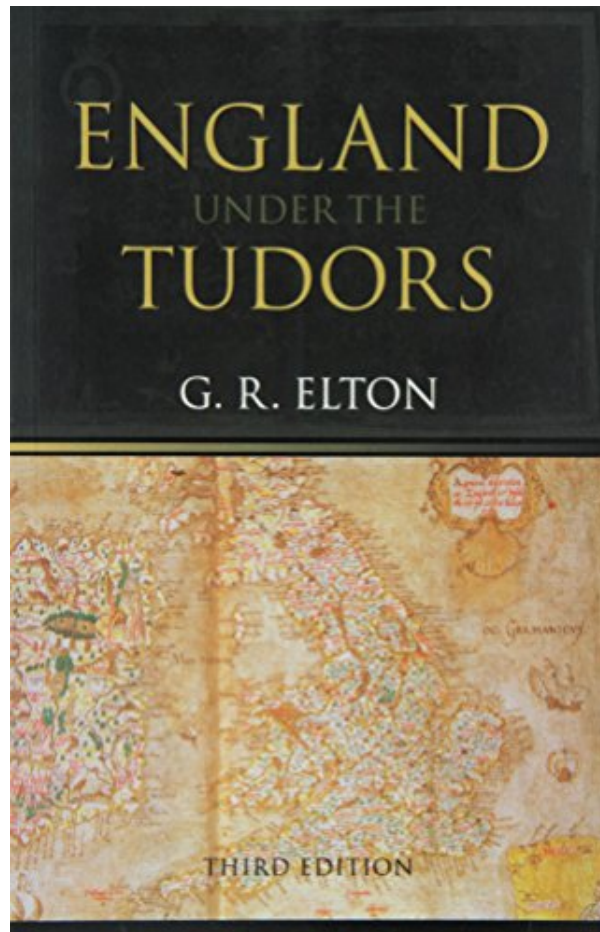
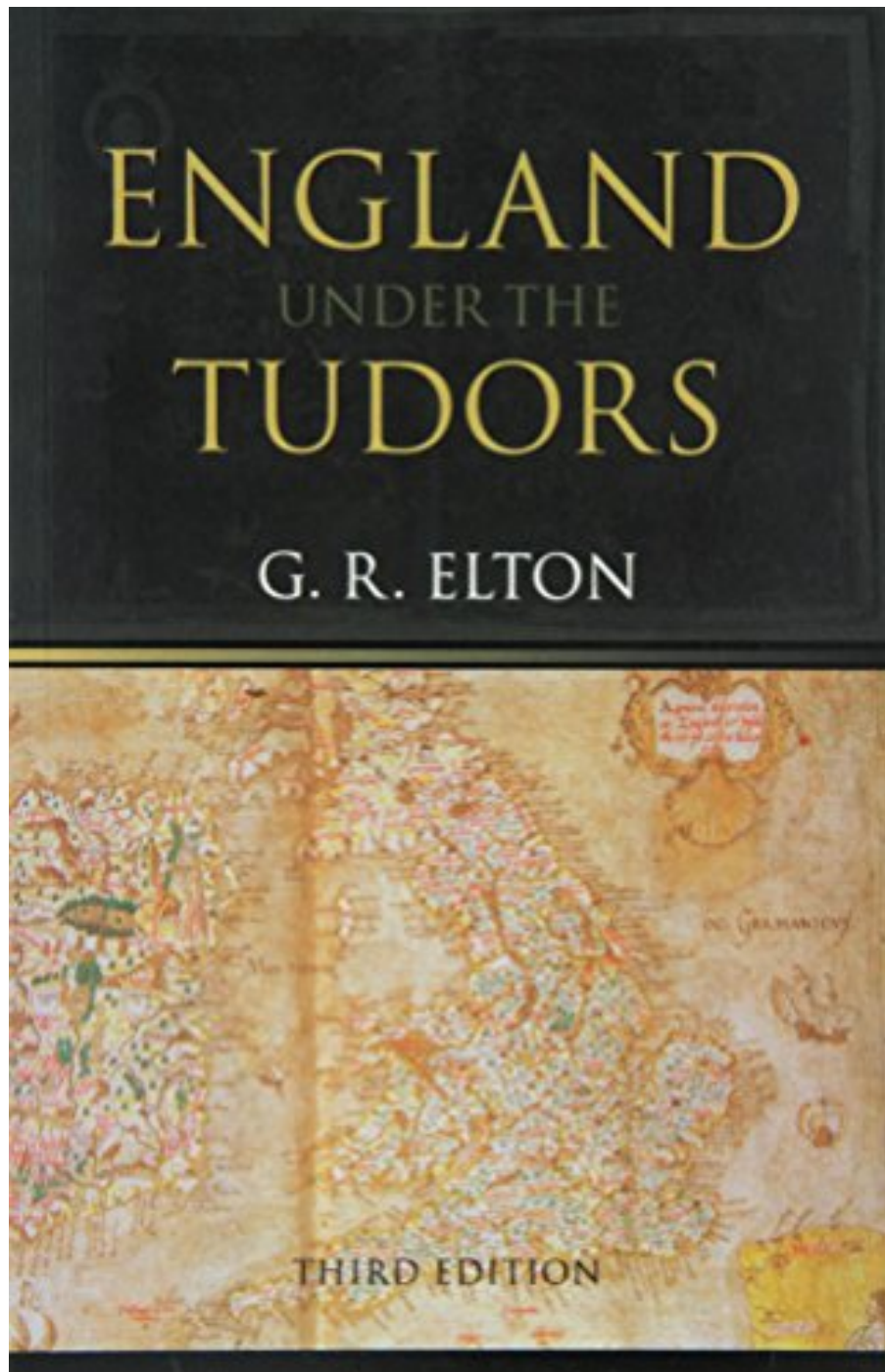


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35 of 35 people found the following review helpful.

Historian - 5 Stars; Publisher - 0

By Webster Lithgow

Sir Geoffrey's is a great work, worth every minute spent reading it. One gains an understanding of the times, the society, the national and international politics, the economy, the religious issues -- and the fascinating Tudors and their administrators. A wonderful piece of work. Too bad the publisher Routledge packaged this masterpiece in a miserly volume meanly produced by The Guernsey Press. The type, which looks as though plates were made by photocopying some earlier printing, is like the fine print in a sales document -- so miniscule one must squint even in very good light. On many pages the text flows into the narrow gutters so that one must forcibly press the book open to make out what lies next to the binding. Because of the cheapness of the edition, reading it will be slow going for you, unless you do as I did: Force each two-page spread onto the flat bed of a photocopier, set the enlargement at 120%, and copy the text. Once I did that, the reading went smoothly. Shame on you, Routledge and Guernsey Press, for giving us such a fine work in such a shoddy presentation.

20 of 21 people found the following review helpful.

Entertaining and Comprehensive Survey

By A Cabbit -

Direct, opinionated, sometimes even combative, Elton delivers a tour de force in historical survey. This book is a highly readable, meticulously researched, and thoroughly engaging review of the period from the beginning of the reign of Henry VII to the death of Elizabeth. As survey of English history during the time of the Tudors, you can't do much better than this book.

The character and accomplishments of each of the rulers stands out as a uniquely individual: Henry VII, the fiscally responsible monarch who established the Tudor claim to the throne and restored the monarchy to solvency; Henry VIII the religiously orthodox ruler who nonetheless broke with Rome and established the Church of England; Edward, the protestant fanatic who (fortunately?) did not live long enough to have much impact; Mary, sincere but of limited ability as a queen; and of course Elizabeth.

Elizabeth's portrait is perhaps the most interesting, since she reigned longest and cast such a huge shadow over the time. The view is a balanced one. Elton is not over-awed by his subject, as so many biographers of Elizabeth seem to be. He acknowledges her political deftness and sure-fire judge of men's ability, without losing sight of her failings and personal weaknesses. Her fiery temper and vainty are not forgotten and not every decision she makes is hailed as correct - nor is she dismissed as being merely "lucky" for her entire 45 year reign, as the occasional critic of Elizabeth seems to imply.

The true hero of the work, however, is none of the monarchs, not even Henry VII whom Elton seems to think quite highly of. It is Thomas Cromwell, who essentially ran the government during the crucial years of Henry VIII's break with Rome. Elton credits him with "revolutionizing" the bureaucracy of the country as well as guiding policy for the entire span of his service. He argues that the revolution in Henry VII's time was guided primarily by Cromwell and merely "consolidated" under Elizabeth.

Along the way, other men of ability and position who influenced the course of history are given time as well. There is the brilliant but ultimately unsuccessful Woolsey, who Elton believes set the stage for the collapse of support for Catholicism in England, William Cecil (later Lord Burghley), who was Elizabeth's chief minister and right hand man throughout most of her reign, and the tragically unstable Essex who was his own worst enemy, to name only a few.

A great introduction or refresher for those interested in learning more about a period that was crucial to the formation of the England that became the world's dominant power.

21 of 24 people found the following review helpful.

Logically argued; beautifully expressed.

By A Customer

Elton is the most dangerous of historians -- clear, logical and able to charm with his (sometimes) dry wit.

Although fair due is given to all the monarchs:

Henry VII is capable and prudent;

Henry VIII is less capable, less prudent and in above his head;

Edward VI is selfish and malleable (but he was young);

Mary is sincere and narrow (Here Elton makes one of the few unfair statements in the book. He says, truly enough I expect, that during "Bloody Mary's" reign fewer people were killed for the cause of religion or rebellion than under any other Tudor. This ignores the brevity of her reign and makes no allowance for what might have been if Catholicism had been forcibly reintroduced.);

Elizabeth is truly a great ruler;

...the real hero is Thomas Cromwell who, in engineering Henry's divorce, established England as a state ruled by law.

A wonderful book.

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