The Reign of Elizabeth I

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Introduction</i>	1
CHRISTOPHER HAIGH	
1 Elizabeth's First Year: The Conception and Birth of the Elizabethan Political World	27
NORMAN L. JONES	
2 Eliza Enthroned? The Court and its Politics	55
SIMON ADAMS	
3 Parliament	79
G. R. ELTON	
4 Government, Finance and the Community of the Exchequer	101
J. D. ALSOP	
5 The Crown and the Counties	125
PENRY WILLIAMS	
6 The Foreign Policy of Elizabeth I	147
G. D. RAMSAY	
7 The Elizabethan Church and the New Religion	169
PATRICK COLLINSON	
8 The Church of England, the Catholics and the People	195
CHRISTOPHER HAIGH	
9 Poverty and Social Regulation in Elizabethan England	221
PAUL SLACK	

<i>Conclusion</i>	243
CHRISTOPHER HAIGH	
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	247
<i>Bibliography</i>	249
<i>Notes and References</i>	263
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	289
<i>Index</i>	291

Preface

ONE of the traditional functions of a preface is to explain what is and excuse what is not in a book, in the hope of defusing some of the ire of critics. This collection of essays was planned as a coherent whole: whether it became one is for the reader to judge. The volume aims to survey the composition and workings of the Elizabethan political system, and to examine how its institutions responded to the issues which most worried politicians and churchmen. Given these intentions, the most obvious gaps are the regulation of economic activity and the promotion of naval and colonial enterprise. The real reasons for the omissions are the necessary constraints of the 'Problems in Focus' series; the public justifications are the appearance of a splendid study of the Elizabethan economy (David Palliser's *The Age of Elizabeth*), and my conviction that, as Drake and Raleigh have long had more attention than they deserved, a little neglect would be salutary.

A second, and essential, role of a preface to a collective volume is to thank all those who made the editor's task easier (while remaining silent about any who made it more difficult!). The contributors to this book do not form a party (still less a faction): they share no common ideology, and are deliberately representative of a wide range of approaches and generations. I was lucky to recruit a team of authors willing to play in the positions I earmarked for them, and luckier still that my team-mates turned up for the match. I am grateful to them, and especially to Jim Alsop, who joined as a late substitute and still managed to score before the final whistle. The team management (Sarah Mahaffy, Vanessa Peerless and Valery Rose) proved encouraging and helpful, and their patience was exceeded only by that of the editor's wife and daughters.

C.A.H.