who were born or aged under five during the late 1840s.

But this book is not satisfied with just examining food and famine, for it goes on to study the issue of nutrition, rightly observing that the nutritional value of diets is a major determinant of health. Here again much attention is devoted to the potato. This time Clarkson and Crawford explore the controversial issue of the relationship between diet, marriage and population growth. Rejecting Connell's argument that the Irish pre-famine population explosion was to a large extent caused by early marriage, they instead highlight the role of the nutritionally-rich potato in guaranteeing health and fertility, as well as laying the economic basis for near universal marriage.

Finally, there is an interesting chapter surveying government efforts to regulate and control food supply. Irish historians have studied famine relief in some detail, but Clarkson and Crawford range far more widely than this, examining conflicting priorities: the government's desire to maximize tax revenue, on the one hand, as against its need, on the other, to avoid civil unrest by guaranteeing cheap, adequate and unadulterated food.

Titled *Feast and famine*, there is no doubt into which category this book falls: it offers a veritable feast for those interested in food, famine and disease in Ireland and elsewhere. Clearly we have here the definitive book on the subject of Irish food and nutrition.

Elizabeth Malcolm,
University of Melbourne

Andrew Cunningham and **Ole Peter Grell,** *The four horsemen of the Apocalypse: religion, war, famine and death in Reformation Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. xiii, 360, illus., £42.50, US$64.95 (hardback 0-521-46135-9), £15.95, US$22.95 (paperback 0-521-46701-2).

This fascinating book attempts to do what is too rarely done: to integrate the physical histories of life and death with the mental and spiritual worlds that gave meaning to such terminal events. Cunningham and Grell have set themselves the task of describing the frightening ways in which Europeans sickened and died in what they call Reformation Europe. During the decades between 1490 and 1650, roughly speaking, most of Europe coped with several new threats to daily life: new or fairly new diseases (syphilis, siege disease, the English Sweat, continuing outbursts of plague); newly destructive warfare on a new and larger scale; and new outbreaks of famine and starvation after the relatively abundant decades of the fifteenth century. Even the weather failed to cooperate, and Europe slid into what some have called a "Little Ice Age". Most Europeans believed that they were being attacked or chastised more severely and more lethally than ever before. And so they were understandably attracted to the notion that the reason for their current distress was the anger of God and the impending Second Coming of Christ, the Apocalypse, so mysteriously described by St John's Revelation.

Cunningham and Grell have organized their book so that we first learn about the various apocalyptic expectations of late medieval and early modern people and the ways in which they understood the awesome image of four distinct horsemen: the riders of the white, red, black, and pale horses of final destruction. This is a useful organizing device and allows the authors to summarize the latest findings of military historians, demographers, and historians of medicine. In certain respects they do more than merely summarize, for the level and interest of specialized information from Danish and Dutch sources goes well beyond what one could easily learn in the latest research literature. Basically, they point repeatedly to the extreme conditions of the period 1490–1650, and reinforce the idea that life was indeed harsher and less forgiving

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during those decades. On so general a level, of course, this point has been well articulated before, for example by Henry Kamen's *The iron century* (originally published in 1971). The authors depart from standard narratives, however, in emphasizing the ways in which certain early modern societies managed to escape the Malthusian dilemma of ever-increasing population and limited food supplies. They are persuaded by David Arnold, Ester Boserup, and especially Ronald Seavoy, that there were means by which peasants could break out of subsistence agriculture, and that the main mechanism lay in "becoming a *commercial* society, producing food primarily for sale to the market" (p. 204). In early modern Europe, the two first societies to find this solution were England and the Netherlands, and it was no accident, therefore, that they were the first agrarian societies to conquer the threat of famine.

What makes this book stand out from others, however, is the attention the authors lavish on religious interpretations of this period of new disasters and epidemics. But it is also here that the attentive reader senses an important difficulty. Cunningham and Grell tell us that all Europeans fitted their experience of mortality and threat into a renewed sense of apocalypticism, but almost all their examples come from Protestant Europe. At times they admit that apocalyptic expectations were stronger or clearer in northern Europe, and perhaps this explains why the book's subtitle refers to "Reformation Europe". Can it really be said that Southern and Catholic Europe shivered under the same expectations as their Protestant brethren? The evidence collected would seem to suggest otherwise. The authors are not, however, very well equipped to disentangle the various competing strands of apocalyptic thought. There was in fact no real consensus on what the white horse meant, for example, nor did Protestants agree on what the Apocalypse itself would be like. This was a point emphasized some time ago by William Lamont in his *Godly rule: politics and religion, 1603–1660* (1969), and more recently by Robin Barnes, 'Images of hope and despair: western Apocalypticism *ca.* 1500–1800', in Bernard McGinn *et al.* (eds), *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 2 (1998). If Grell and Cunningham had paid adequate attention to the varieties of apocalyptic expectation, they might have managed to present a more plausible thesis about the ways in which all Europeans used the Revelation of St John as the lens through which they understood their turbulent age. Even so, they have written an important book that stimulates even as it summarizes. The abundance of excellent illustrations also makes the book a joy to look at.

H C Erik Midelfort,
University of Virginia

Elizabeth Lane Furdell, *The royal doctors, 1485–1714: medical personnel at the Tudor and Stuart courts*, University of Rochester Press, 2001, pp. x, 305, £40.00, US$65.00 (1-158046-0518).

One can only welcome the idea of a book that seeks to bring together all the information on medical personnel (defined as physicians, surgeons, apothecaries, and others paid for medical services) at the Tudor and Stuart courts. Many of them are important figures in the history of medicine, Thomas Linacre, William Harvey and William Clowes among them. Others led lives of considerable variety: some were forced to flee abroad in times of religious or civil crisis, while others, like George Bate, survived in high office throughout every political turmoil. Some were highly learned, others mere placemen; others were more renowned for their activities away from court, as members of parliament, entrepreneurs, and even as a suspected pirate. Rodrigo López ended his royal

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