The political Bible in early modern England. By Kevin Killeen. (Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History.) Pp. xii + 310. Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017. £75. 978 1 107 10797 7

JEH (70) 2019; doi:10.1017/S0022046918001641

Much of London's leadership fled the city during the plague of 1625–6, abandoning its poor residents to the ravages of disease and starvation. Those clergy who remained took to preaching on Hezekiah, a king who had faced illness with exemplary patience and took seriously his obligations to provide for Judah, filling his storehouses with 'corn, and wine, and oil' and making 'a pool, and a conduit, [that] brought water into the city' (2 Chronicles xxxii.28 and 2 Kings xx.20). 'Art thou rich?', asks the Hanwell pastor Robert Harris. 'Let Hezekiah be thy patterne: he was a good Common-wealths-man, he built much, he conveyed water to the city, hee fortified the land, and did good in warre and peace' (quoted at p. 81). Hezekiah is thus a useful stick with which to beat city grandees for their greed and neglect. '[T]hou then doest kill them wilfully', Benjamin Spenser declares, 'whom thou leavest behind … except thou thinkest that servants and poore keepers may bee killed up by authoritie' (quotetd at p. 89).

In Kevin Killeen's argument, such statements are not mere exhortations to charity. Rather they reveal that the Bible provided 'a major political language of the seventeenth century' (p. 2), even more than did British or classical history: 'King Hezekiah, it is safe to say, received more political analysis than Henry v, and Jereboam was more frequently part of political exemplarity than Richard iii or, for that matter, Livy's Romans' (p. 9). The case for Hezekiah's significance is certainly apparent in this book, receiving treatment in a chapter on the plague (ch. iv) and a chapter on the city siege during the civil wars (ch. viii). A chapter on Jezebel shows how malleable and multi-faceted the political lessons of biblical monarchs could be: she is used to support Herbert Palmer's claim for the supremacy of law, and as an emblem of the false Church for Margaret Fox (pp. 218, 236). It is somewhat strange that Killeen's argument needs to be made: one would be hard pressed to find a discussion of kingship in the period that does not refer to 1 Samuel viii, or to a discussion of political authority that does not refer to Romans xiii. (Killeen helpfully fleshes out the archive on these familiar references.) But the argument is necessary, Killeen suggests, because a good deal of scholarship on seventeenth-century politics often seeks to bracket biblical hermeneutics and other forms of religious thought. This book places itself amongst recent titles brushing against that grain, such as Achsah Guibbory's *Christian identity, Jews, and Israel in seventeenth-century England* (Oxford 2010) and Eric Nelson's *Hebrew republic* (Cambridge, Ma 2010).

Political controversy often took the form of competing interpretations of biblical texts. A chapter on biblical hermeneutics (ch. ii) lays the foundation for such inquiry, pointing to the widespread view that events of the Old Testament corresponded with those of the New, and that both testaments were deemed to bear directly on the present (p. 24). That relevance to seventeenth-century events might not always be obvious to us but to immediate audiences the resonances must have been clear. Sermons preached during the Thirty Years' War commonly deployed tropes on the 'failure to act decisively' and 'the failure to punish

miscreants', voicing disapproval of 'the reluctance of James to enter the war on the side of international Protestantism in Bohemia and the Palatinate' (p. 54).

This book is clearly at its most energetic when showing how the Bible was a tool of political resistance. The chapter on regicide is a *tour de force* (ch. vii). Here Killeen goes well beyond the familiar sources – Buchanan and Milton – to show several thinkers reading the possibility of regicide through biblical examples, especially the story of Jehu and the slaying of Eglon by Ehud. That the Bible provides a common language for a broad range of interests allied against Charles I places 'radical' thought on a continuum with 'milder' reform. In the early 1640s it was a biblical language that was fundamental to William Prynne's lengthy argument on parliamentary sovereignty in *The soveraigne power of parliaments and kingdoms* (1643; see Killeen at p. 163). A fascinating, and quite powerful, example is the picture here provided of John Cooke, the courageous prosecutor of Charles I, and author of two defences of the regicide, who was executed in 1660. His significance can be downplayed because, Killeen suggests, his 'detailed attack on the monarchy does not … draw on any of the "classical republican" arguments that are so often used to characterize the political thinking of radicals' (p. 179). On the rare occasions when he is considered, he can be styled a Puritan too biblicist for this world. That image does not square with the facts, and especially with Cooke's implementation of legal reforms in the Irish phase of his career, which, to the chagrin of local landlords, broadened access to just and swift resolution of property disputes. Killeen's approach allows him clearly and unreservedly to catalogue Cooke's significant contributions: 'Not only in regard to pulling down recidivist authorities, but in respect of the law, Cooke thought the unthinkable, and it is entirely skewed to relegate his importance on the grounds, implicit in most writing on republicanism, that biblical rhetoric is second-division politics' (p. 182).

The political Bible in early modern England might have been refined in some key ways. Surface errors have not been entirely eliminated, and spelling in quotations is sometimes mistakenly modernised. Much more importantly, just what constitutes a 'political language' can tend to be under-theorised. A political language is often taken simply to mean a public one, a language used to comment on current affairs. One is thoroughly convinced that the seventeenth-century political imaginary is thoroughly biblical, but the book does not make a case for this as a form of political thought with relevance beyond the seventeenth century – on this point it loses the ground that it has gained from Whigs and republicans. As a work of history more than political theory, perhaps it need not make such a case. But this leads to another issue: the primary bibliography is comprised entirely of printed tracts and sermons. The choice is supported by a too-brief explanation: 'Focusing in the public, political discourse of biblical kingship, I do not deal with manuscript material, diaries or private writings, the intention being, rather, to reconstitute how biblical exemplarity operated in the public sphere' (p. 17). This does not explain certain omissions that can feel quite odd – the speeches of Cromwell come first to mind. And the border between private and public is more porous than this explanation allows. Letters and manuscripts can give us very significant insight into the ways in which biblical references could express and solidify allegiance. Killeen does not explore this important level of political language: biblical hermeneutics as an organising tool.

These are minor concerns, however, in an excellent book: Killeen tells this story authoritatively, compellingly, and, at times, with real verve. The scholarship is of a very high calibre, and the book poses a strong challenge to the kind of narrowly secular view of the period's political thought that does violence to the archive.

CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK FEISAL MOHAMED

Edmund Geste and his books. Reconstructing the library of a Cambridge don and Elizabethan bishop. By David G. Selwyn. (The Bibliographical Society, MMXVII.) Pp. xxx + 493 incl. 110 black-and-white and colour ills. London: The Bibliographical Society, 2017. £50. 978 0 948170 24 9

JEH (70) 2019; doi:10.1017/S0022046918001823

This insightful book casts light upon the life, history and reading patterns of the seldom-studied Elizabethan bishop Edmund Geste. Living through a tumultuous period, spanning the back-and-forth reformations of the long Tudor century, Geste was a man of the Reformation and authored *A treatise againste the prevee masse* in 1548. His fortunes, like those of other reformers, suffered following the accession of Mary I, before a resurgence under Elizabeth I, when he secured positions of increasing importance within the English episcopate. The backbone to Selwyn's research is a thorough catalogue of Geste's library, supplemented by a range of indices and appendices. The resulting analysis places Geste's interests and collections among those of his contemporaries, shedding light upon sixteenth-century reading patterns, England's theological influences and the international book trade. The 140-page introductory text first provides a biography of the man before attention turns to Geste's library. Supported by detailed and analytical bibliographical research within the collection itself, and aided by around a hundred illustrations, the reader is brought into Geste's collections. Specific attention is paid to bibliographical factors including ownership inscriptions, annotations, binding instructions and provenance. What emerges from this research is that Geste was not only an avid collector, but that his books were thoroughly used. His books carry annotations and commentaries through marginalia, which bring with them an insight into the thoughts of this sixteenth-century reader. Selwyn also returns later to Geste as a book owner, shedding light upon his acquisitions and on contemporary bindings. Thereafter, Geste's collection is analysed as texts rather than books, ably segmented into genres, making the relevance and importance of the collection clear. Selwyn's research is anchored in the historiography of the period, with each genre exploring contemporary characters and controversies. Geste's collection is often compared to those of his contemporaries, with Cambridge library inventories and, in particular, the libraries of Matthew Parker and Andrew Perne providing important supporting resources. Whilst the collection specialises in religious works, it displays a range of confessional alignment, as to works of the Church Fathers and staples of medieval theology were added publications of contemporary humanists and reformers of wide-spanning convictions. Geste was international in his taste for texts, as well as physical books. Few of the extant books are by English authors, and fewer still produced by English print houses. This reflects English reading patterns of the age: the London printing industry was still maturing even as the sixteenth century