

The Lord's battle. Preaching, print and royalism during the English Revolution. By William White. (Politics, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain.) Pp. xii + 257. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023. £85. 978 1 5261 6470 4
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In this impressive book, William White investigates those clergymen who threw their weight behind the royalist cause during the English Revolution. Although, as White notes, recent years have seen greater interest in the supporters of the Stuarts, the followers of the monarchy still attract less attention than their Parliamentary equivalents. This disparity is especially noticeable when one considers each camp's coterie of preachers. Indeed, White notes that it has only been lately that 'the notion of the royalist clergy as passive, quietist "sufferers", whose only role in the conflict was to bear the brunt of puritan spite and await providential deliverance' (p. 243) has been challenged.

White's book makes a nuanced and persuasive contribution to recent criticisms of this old characterisation. The ministers who supported the Stuart cause, in White's eyes, were more bellicose and more active than was previously thought. 'Far from acting merely as pliant mouthpieces' for the party line, White's 'preachers were consistently willing to lobby and pressurise senior figures within the king's party', including the monarch himself, 'with the aim of bringing royalist strategy into line with their own ecclesiastical priorities' (p. 8). As White stresses, there was 'an inherently dialogic dimension to preaching in these years' (p. 7). The royalist clergy were keen pulpit-watchers as well as pulpit-keepers. The sermons of Parliamentary preachers such as Stephen Marshall were not just read by those of similar sympathies but also by royalists like Edward Symmons, whose 1644 *Scripture vindicated* was a refutation of the 'mis-apprehensions, mis-interpretations, and mis-applications' (p. 57) shown in Marshall's notorious *Meroz cursed*, a fast sermon delivered to the Long Parliament in early 1642. White's analysis of the back-and-forth nature of sermonising in these years involves a number of case studies of well-known and less well-known texts, all of which helps to provide a welcome thickness of texture in the book. However, while White focuses on the mid-seventeenth century to show how 'preaching played a critical role for both sides during the English Revolution' (p. 8), his book has far wider implications for the study of early modern sermons. White demonstrates the need to pay close attention to the construction of sermons, the techniques employed by ministers in giving them, their reception and, especially, the different nuances between printed and spoken versions of a sermon. The last point in particular is well-analysed throughout the book.

The book 'is structured both chronologically and thematically' (p. 10) with the first two chapters covering the First Civil War and the years immediately preceding it. In these chapters, White explores how the challenge of Parliamentary sermonising prompted a reconceptualisation of the genre by royalist ministers. They became intertwined with the royalist war effort, helping to mobilise men and money for the king's cause and often employing similar techniques and ideas as Parliament's preachers. The next two chapters also touch on events in the 1640s but are concerned with considering 'the role of preaching in intra-royalist debates over peace negotiations and ecclesiastical reform during the 1640s' (p. 11). This is possibly the best part of the book, revealing how the pro-episcopalian ministers could be a belligerent lobby within the royalist alliance. They were

suspicious of the Stuarts' willingness to cut a deal with Presbyterians and eager for the 'moderate royalist MPs' at the Oxford Parliament of 1644 to secure the outright victory over Parliament which would prevent 'significant ecclesiastical concessions' (p. 11). The paradox of ministers arguing that a lasting (and episcopalian) peace could only be secured through total military victory – which White has also explored in a Pollard prize-winning article – is useful and insightfully explained.

The next three chapters examine sermons during the Interregnum and years following the Restoration. As White shows, many ministers living under the Republican and Protectorate regimes believed that they could foster loyalty to the monarchy and episcopalian Church by remaining in their posts and 'used subtle rhetorical strategies to circumvent government censorship' (p. 11). However, to those episcopalians who had yearned for the return of the Stuarts, the early years of the Restoration were 'a profoundly uncertain, anxious time' (p. 206) as it became apparent that Charles II was willing to consider a broad-bottomed rather than narrowly episcopalian ecclesiastical settlement. The final chapter is a thematic study of how the sermons which White discusses in the book were transmitted and received, noting how listening to sermons could help auditors make 'sense of their suffering', vindicate 'their allegiances' and provide arguments to defend 'themselves, their communities and the cause from detractors' (p. 236).

In order to engage with the broad themes which the book covers, White has worked through an impressively large source base of both printed and manuscript sources and, despite the often arcane political or theological issues with which these texts dealt, his prose and explanations are clear. White is to be commended for never losing sight of politics and carves out a place for the royalist clergy in the king's party, explaining the demands of this clerical lobby and their interventions in policy-making. However, since the importance of the clergy in royalist politics is so often overlooked it would have been interesting to see White delve deeper into the connections between his ministers and lay politicians. White does discuss the connections between preachers and lay allies, especially in the context of the Oxford Parliament when he shows how ministers preaching for a total military victory found the publication of their sermons supported by royalist MPs with the same ambition (pp. 88–9). That being said, further discussion of the connections between ministers and lay patrons or allies might have better integrated White's episcopalian lobby into the landscape of royalist decision-making and cast a new light on the actions and motivations of those in the Stuart courts. However, this is a relatively minor point which ought not to detract from what is an important and nuanced new study of a previously underexplored subject.

HISTORY OF PARLIAMENT

ALEX BEETON

Dr Williams's Trust and Library. A history. By Alan Argent. Pp. xx + 335 incl. frontispiece, 14 figs and 2 maps. Woodbridge–Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2022. £75.978 1 78327 702 5

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