

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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Since its inception, under the will of the dissenting minister Daniel Williams (c.1643–1716), Dr Williams's Library (since the 1860s located in Gordon Square, Bloomsbury, London) has functioned as an exceptional resource for

historians of English Protestant Dissent and, in this book, Alan Argent charts the library's own history. The trust's creation was a product of that new-found confidence that characterised English dissenters after the Revolution of 1688 and the passing of the Toleration Act, then confirmed by the Hanoverian Succession and the political dominance of the Whig interest that followed from it. Daniel Williams was determined to provide for the education of dissenting ministers to ensure that they could both serve their congregations resourcefully and answer their adversaries with the confidence that learning might bring. Williams and his first trustees were nothing if not confident about the expansive future of Protestant Dissent, and money was poured out of his trust into charities that would spread the Word, schools in Wales were funded, missionaries despatched to convert native Americans and support offered to Harvard College, Massachusetts. But English dissent in the first half of the eighteenth century was also coloured by Trinitarian disagreements and Dr Williams's Trust was not immune from these tensions: by the mid-century the trustees had adopted Unitarian convictions that would endure for another two centuries.

A chronological approach is deployed by Argent, with the trust's various objects separately discussed within each chapter. He is not uncritical of trustees' decisions but these are always contextualised. The book is also biographically structured with each chapter built around a principal office-holder, the individuals, clerical and lay, responsible for the management of the trust, from Benjamin Sheppard in the 1720s through to David Wykes in the twenty-first century. An 'old world' atmosphere and an inward looking, somewhat exclusive Unitarianism could be said to have characterised the Library until well into the twentieth century. Nevertheless, readers from all backgrounds were drawn to use its rich collections of rare books, manuscripts and portraits that would over time establish Dr Williams's Library as a primary resort for scholars working in dissenting studies as well as those attracted by its holdings in women's history and English literature.

Under David Wykes's directorship, between 1998 and 2021, 'DWL' was turned, with the backing of the trustees, into a mainstream research library. Initiatives such as the Centre for Dissenting Studies in partnership with Queen Mary College, the creation of a digital catalogue and databases, the engagement with post-graduate students, the holding of regular symposia and the sponsorship of publications such as of Richard Baxter's five-volume *Reliquiae Baxterianae* in 2020, were all achievements of Wykes's time in office that offset – and were indeed the fruits of – the controversial sale of the First Folio in 2006. Meanwhile, the library is no longer a Unitarian preserve; trustees are drawn from several denominations, and it is likely that any profession of the Christian faith may soon cease to be required of them. Sadly, publication of Alan Argent's book coincides with the news that the trust and library will be moving out of the Gordon Square, currently for sale for a minimum of £15.5 million. The plan is for the library to be transferred in its entirety to an English university where the trust will fund a librarian and archivist. Crucially, that person and the collection itself will be under university management and control. One can only hope that this upheaval will create a new stability and that 'DWL' (which, presumably will remain its title) will retain its status as a major resource for British religious history and more.