

Jason McElligott. *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England*. (*Studies in Early Modern Cultural, Political and Social History*, Vol. 6). Woodbridge, U. K.: The Boydell Press, 2007. vi + 274pp. + 6 illus. \$90. Review by ROBERT MCJIMSEY, COLORADO COLLEGE.

The author focuses upon royalist newsbooks printed roughly between 1647 and 1650 and uses them to define royalism, analyze their production and study the measures by which the Cromwellian Republic suppressed them. In the process he offers alternatives to current historical scholarship. The presentation is well-organized and documented.

The purpose of these newsbooks was to comment on current events, arguing all the time for the best terms possible for the monarchy and slamming the opposition with a variety of invectives. Because much of this writing followed the twists and turns of events, the analysis was often, as in the case of Charles I's relations with the Scots, contradictory. More consistent themes came from portraying monarchy as the source of law, order and stability and characterizing Parliament and the army as the sources of anarchy and their leaders as debauched sexual adventurers. This latter gambit, to which an entire chapter is devoted, aimed at the forms of puritan and popular character assassination familiar at the time of the Overbury scandal during the reign of James I. These sallies were aimed at a readership of gentlemen, and the middling sort of Londoners who would be affected by high taxes, the loss of trade and the uncertainties of parliamentary and army rule. Governed, as they were, by events, the effectiveness of these arguments waned along with the progress of Charles I's capture, trial and execution. Royalism was thus a protean notion, better understood as a disposition rather than an ideology or fixed set of values.

Turning to the role of authors in the understanding of royalism, the author identifies nine London writers and provides detailed information on four of them. This information reveals the heterogeneity that lay behind the royalist publicity campaign. Each of these writers joined the cause at different times, came from differing backgrounds and pitched their appeals in a variety of ways. Of central interest was the career of Marchmont Needham. His royalist writings followed traditional themes of hierarchy and order versus anarchy, adding an interest in the avoidance of religious persecution, an apparent feature of Puritanism. Under the Commonwealth, Needham changed

sides and published the influential *Mercerius Politicus*, a publication giving the regime a thoughtful argumentative underpinning. This difference between the royalist Needham and the Needham of the Commonwealth illuminates an important interpretative point considered below. For the moment, the author uses his analysis to argue that royalism lacked any central direction and should be known for its diversity of backgrounds and opinions.

The study concludes with an examination of the revolutionary regime's efforts at censorship, and ultimately on its ability to stifle royalist writing by 1650. The formula for success depended upon a centralization of efforts at identification and apprehension, matched by a latitude of judgment concerning the punishments to be imposed. Authors could be bullied with jailing, fines and recantation, and made exemplary warnings to their fellows. Printers could be routed out and closed down. In the end the regime's success depended upon elevating the certainty of punishment over the severity of punishment, including a pragmatic willingness to allow royalist leaning writings such as Isaac Walton's *Compleat Angler* a free pass. (Here one is reminded of the Younger Pitt's willingness to allow the publication of William Godwin's ponderous *Political Justice* nearly 150 years later.) From this commentary the author argues that the early modern state possessed the means to censor effectively, provided it used these means with discretion, distinguishing between quality of high profile royalist publications and their volume of output, and allowing a high degree of on-the-spot decision making concerning apprehension and punishment.

Throughout the work the author's method of analysis is severely empirical. This approach moves his interpretative points in two directions. First, he takes issue with the efforts of others to group royalist writings under general headings, such as absolutist and constitutional, and to generalize about the inability of an early modern state to enforce censorship. Second, having eschewed any royalist ideology, he emphasizes the importance of the flow of events over the decisions of both writers and government officials. Thus he assumes that when hostility to the Commonwealth died down the rulers decided to relax their efforts at censorship, a claim for which no direct evidence is offered. In the same way he offers to reveal the blood and guts of censorship, without a single example of writers and printers being dragged out, worked over or "shown the instruments." In fact the generally scant nature of his evidence leaves the impression that the author could not have

based his interpretation of royalism on anything other than a focus on the specific and the particular. This point is revealed again when the author, near the book's end, refers to the sociology of power, a term he leaves both under developed and ungrounded in his commentary.

One interpretative point remains. At the book's beginning the author refers to England's "unacknowledged republic," a phrase, which in its medieval sense meant "self-government at the king's command." More recently, under the influence of J. G. A. Pocock and others, this medieval term has given way to an emphasis on the independence of the localities and their willingness to embrace ideas and actions critical and even hostile to royal authority. Although McElligott does not go this far, his book does much to redress this change of direction. Here Marchmont Needham provides a plausible key. Whereas Needham's royalist writings were in step with the general tenor of that of his fellows, his later advocacy of the republic featured reasoned discourse. This distinction makes sense if Needham and his royalist colleagues were assuming that the disposition of their audience was royalist, in whatever degree. (One should always remember the groaning reaction of those who beheld the raised and severed head of Charles I.) By the same token, the novelty of Cromwell's republic required that it have clear and cogent argumentation. This interpretation is consistent with McElligott's view that a royalist was a member of an undifferentiated mass, defined simply as someone personally disposed to royalism and recognized by his associates as a royalist. Royalism was thus a common disposition among English subjects, even those who formed the "unacknowledged republic."

R. Melvin Keiser and Rosemary Moore, eds. *Knowing the Mystery of Life Within: Selected Writings of Isaac Penington in their Historical and Theological Context*. London: Quaker Books, 2005. xiv + 322 pp. \$36.00. Review by SUSANNA CALKINS, NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY.

As one of the more prolific writers in the early Friends movement, Isaac Penington is often linked with some of the sect's most important and influential figures. Yet unlike George Fox, Margaret Fell Fox, Edward Burroughs, and William Penn, Penington's life and writings have never before been systematically analyzed in their theological and historical context. R. Melvin Keiser