

'exploratory,' given the extraordinary richness of the sources and their only recent accessibility" (2).

James Doelman. *King James I and the Religious Culture of England*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000. viii + 194 pp. \$75. Review by BOYD BERRY, VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY.

James Doelman sets out to examine "the interaction of James' ideas of religious life with that of his subjects" (*sic*, 4) or *King James I and the Religious Culture of England*: "While James is the starting point for this study, frequently attention comes to rest more firmly on his subjects and their response to his perceived interests and views" (2). This is an area, he feels, which has been less discussed than Caroline religious culture partly because of its neo-Latin work and partly because of James' emphasis on the verbal over the visual. Like many of his age and nation, James felt that his personal religious practices and beliefs "should play a significant role in shaping how that faith was publicly expressed" (4) and that a king should set out the form of the national church and lead it. That did not always work out, and so at times Doelman shows "the failure of the religious culture to be shaped" (5).

Doelman first takes up early assumptions about a king's role in the church, noting that "James' published writings would seem to offer a perspective on his religious views," but do not since "most deal with the question of authority in church and state rather than theology or faith per se" (12). Early on, James was affected by Scotch contests among Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians; and Doelman speculates that in 1603, James must have relished the thought of leading an Episcopalian church in England. James was also a religious poet; he enjoyed duBartas and translated a section, *Uranie*, in which the poet converts from secular to sacred verse in order to achieve the laurel.

The latter point leads to a consideration of the "optimism among writers that James would patronize religious and philosophical verse" (20) and what Doelman represents as an initial,

new flowering around his court. Clearly, Puritans felt change could be expected before Hampton Court, but Doelman represents others as expecting a change in court literature. He proposes that previously, religious poetry “was generally not inspired by the culture of the court,” or “the Queen” (24). In contrast, even while in Scotland, James was being courted by religious poets—Drayton, William Leighton, John Davies of Hereford, and translators of duBartas, although the latter ran the risk of competing with James’ own translation. Sir John Harrington cleaned up his act in anticipation of James. “Now to more serious thoughts my soule aspyers,/ This age, this minde, a Muse awsteare requiers,” he wrote (33).

Harrington’s efforts raise a question about all of these competitors for James’ attention—how serious was their religious verse—for Harrington’s turn to religious writing was not the first turn he had made. Similarly, Doelman quotes Davies’ *Microcosmos*, giving Machiavellian suggestions about the way a king should play off the nobility (32). But finally, chapter 2 concludes by showing that James had only a limited impact on would-be clients. Sylvester and a few others prospered, but James gradually lost interest in serious—i.e., philosophical and religious—poetry, and the hopes of many poetical courtiers went unfulfilled.

James himself was often termed a “prophet king” on the model of David. At the same time Doelman urges that “the prophets received little attention in England from the Reformation until 1640 (41), a view Doelman’s own argument questions. On the model of Calvin, “prophesying” could occur or be directed at the court, while the word itself was used of activities in the “conventicles” of the “godly.” Many published voices employing prophetic diction were laudatory, at least until near the end of James’ reign. Then, laments for the death of James, a summer plague, and concerns about Charles produced quite a number of less than celebratory prophesies. Charles was certainly not perceived to be a prophetic king, and Doelman repeatedly stresses that he was not received as his father had been in 1603.

Turning to the interaction between James and Andrew Melville, as well as the neo-Latin taste for epigrams, Doelman traces

out the tangled relation between James and Melville, sometimes in favor, sometimes under arrest: "Throughout Melville's years in Scotland he experienced a tension between serving a godly prince, and criticizing that prince who too often failed to measure up to Melville's understanding of godliness" (62). Once James arrived in London and pressed for an Episcopalian structure in the church, the two feuded. Finally it remains unclear how important the "epigram wars" were, although epigrams in manuscript could not be monitored as books and sermons were, and so could be more critical. By Melville's death, his Presbyterian views were ridiculed by supporters of James' Episcopalian policies, while "the use of the satiric religious epigram in this internecine fashion reflected the fracturing of the Protestant unity which had been the chief dream of both Melville and James" (72).

Doelman then turns to the religious figures used to laud James, the trend being to praise him initially as a Constantinian ruler, leading or founding the church, and later as a Solomonic peacemaker. To be sure, early on, James was likened to Solomon, partly because of his taste for writing, partly for pursuing peace even at his daughter's expense. Indeed, the situation of Elizabeth and husband and the effort at the Spanish match sparked complaints about the pacific reign. And again, James' urge to be *beati pacifici* was replaced by Charles' very different approach to rule.

Opposition to Rome created an interest in converts. Initially, "James took a personal interest in the conversions, and saw them as a central part of the theological and political controversies that were raging at the time," (103) yet "by late in his reign James' influence on the dynamics of conversion had come to an end" (134), while Buckingham and Charles seemed much more anti-Roman. The conversions seemed promising at the outset, but, as the muddy tale of Marco Antonio de Dominus exemplifies, then often became confused when *convertitos*, many from Venice, found themselves the objects of bickering in England and in some cases re-converted.

A discussion of psalm translation shows well the topsy-turvy world Doelman surveys. James revered the psalms, and while many sought to make a full translation, they were partly put off by the

possibility that James would complete and publish his own. Needless to say, that did not entirely deter George Wither. James' psalms were "a sort of phantom work" (157), and they continued much the same, although under another guise, with Charles, who concocted a set which he joined to the new prayer Book and imposed on the churches of both England and Scotland, claiming they memorialized his father.

Doelman concludes with a meditation on James' death and particularly a sermon by bishop John Williams. Williams hearkened back to James' Solomonic pursuit of peace and leadership in the church—the images which had heralded his accession—and shows how "Williams' sermon was a sort of lone light, in striking contrast to the general speed with which the late English king's life and death were forgotten, as attention turned to the immediate situation of a royal marriage and foreign conflicts" (158). Finally, he focuses on Robert Aylett's divine poem, *Urania*, which carries us back to the beginning of his tale. For James had translated a section from duBartas entitled *Uranie*, and in both the poet resolves to forgo secular for sacred writing. This is to suggest that a new crowd of sycophants formed around Charles' court, just as it had around James' in 1603.

Few of the characters Doelman takes up appear from his telling to have been very seriously religious. His is a tale of a monarch who had this or the other religious interest, which subsequently waned, or from which he was distracted, and of a number of writers about him who basically aspired for place. Part of the reason Doelman's topic has not been much developed would seem to owe to the fact that James had George Abbot and John Williams as bishops, while Charles had Laud, or that Queen Anne was a very different figure from Henrietta Maria. Matters of religion heated up after 1625, and that heat, while it may not have produced much light, generated and has generated considerably more intense reactions to royal policy in the church than they did or do under James.