

**Harmes, Marcus K.,** *Bishops and Power in Early Modern England*, London, Bloomsbury, 2013; hardback; pp. 232; 7 b/w illustrations; R.R.P. AU\$130.00; ISBN 9781472508355.

The view that the English Reformation affected the episcopacy is well known in the current historiography. Bishops had to defend against claims of 'popishness', negotiate their relationship with the monarchy, and assert their authority in a reformed church. Marcus Harmes, in studying this one hundred and fifty year period, endeavours to add to this body of work by attempting to demonstrate that 'the Reformation functioned as a legitimating agent for episcopal authority' (p. 3). To reach his conclusion, the book uses five case studies. While this approach has allowed Harmes to provide a detailed analysis of five specific events, the narrow case studies are implicitly held, somewhat problematically, to be indicative of wider patterns.

The first chapter provides an overview of the episcopacy in Reformation England. Chapter 2 juxtaposes the works of John Harrington, who argued in support of the role bishops played in reforming the Church, with those of the deprived Puritan minister, Josias Nichols, who linked his non-conformist beliefs with early reforming bishops. Chapter 3 focuses on Archbishop Richard Bancroft, and his campaign against exorcisms, which Harmes uses to demonstrate the ways that bishops responded to new challenges to their authority.

In Chapter 4, Harmes analyses the trial of Archbishop William Laud, who was tried and executed on trumped up treason charges. The brief fifth chapter focuses on responses to the abolition of the English episcopacy in 1646. The final case study considers the appearance of, and vestments worn by, bishops in the Restoration. Harmes, making good use of illustrations, argues that vestments, 'while a core aspect of anti-episcopal writings, also were central to strategies to defend episcopacy' (p. 93).

For this reviewer, the book's size was deceptive, and perhaps explains Harmes's decision to use only case studies for his argument. Of the book's 232 pages, endnotes take up forty, and the bibliography fifty, leaving just 121 pages for the analysis. This truncated space means Harmes's engagement with both the current scholarship and the relevant historiographical debates at times seems laboured. While Harmes's book is interesting and certainly well researched, it will find a more appreciative audience in students and newcomers to the field than it will in experts.

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