Kenneth Fincham. *Prelate as Pastor: The Episcopate of James I*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990. Pp. xviii, 360.

Prelate as Pastor: The Episcopate of James I by Kenneth Fincham offers a detailed examination of the nature and function of the office of bishop in England and Wales from 1603 to 1625. Based on the episcopal records of the 66 bishops active during James's reign, this book investigates the range of their activities and attempts to assess their influence on the ecclesiastical and political development of the Church during this period. In particular, Fincham provides detailed evidence of their role in central politics, in local society, and as diocesan governors enforcing spiritual discipline and supervising parish clergy.

Building on his earlier work on James I's ecclesiastical policies, Fincham's study throws new light on James as supreme governor of the Church and focuses on some of the consequences of that leadership. Fincham argues against the view that James was indecisive and inconsistent, offering instead a portrait of the monarch as shrewd and calculating in his management of the English Church. James recognized in his bishops a valuable buttress to royal power, Fincham argues, and therefore protected their temporalities and jurisdictions, eased their financial burdens, and relied on them for counsel. While James listened to favourites in selecting bishops, we are told, he was not their cipher. In fact he devised a balanced episcopate, committed to domestic unity and a plurality of representation, and served as a watchful political and spiritual head to the Church.

One significant development of Fincham's study is a clear understanding of how James I as supreme governor of the Church of England was responsible for the revival of the court prelate. He shows how, under James's leadership, bishops regained their role as royal advisors and politicians without relinquishing active involvement in diocesan affairs and acted both as pastors and prelates. As a consequence of this view, Fincham also advances the provocative and well-founded claim that the accession of Archbishop Abbott in 1611 can no longer be seen as the crucial turning point in the historical development of the early Stuart Church. He argues instead that "The real watershed of the early Stuart Church occurred in 1625, for the new Caroline regime rejected Jacobean ideals of unity and reconciliation in favour of ceremonial order and uniformity of public worship."

Fincham also concludes that under James bishops achieved an impressive measure of pastoral work in their dioceses, at court, and in Parliament. They not only exercised spiritual leadership over laity and the clergy, but they animated administrative structures within their dioceses with their own priorities and concerns. This they accomplished by exercising large powers of patronage, ordination, and visitation. Fincham demonstrates that most prelates supervised visitations, and the disciplinary work of their courts, as well as being reasonably active preachers.

Another achievement of the Jacobean episcopate to which Fincham calls attention is their recovery of the respect and affection of society. This was possible, he argues, because of James's support for the episcopal order and his policy of tolerance

of moderate Puritans. Mostly, these bishops were admired for their pastoral work. Under James, we learn, the image of the bishop as preaching pastor gained wide acceptance, and evangelical churchmanship flourished (although challenged in the later half of the reign by Arminian prelates). Their preaching record in particular vindicated bishops from slurs of Popery. Yet this new improved position was not secure. Within twenty years of James's death it faced abolition. Fincham argues that when episcopacy concerned itself with rigid ceremonial conformity or the suppression of preaching, goodwill from Puritans was jeopardized. Even under James, there was only conditional acceptance of the office, and as bishops became too closely associated with unpopular royal policies their credibility as pastors declined.

Fincham's study also adds points of detail and substance to debate over the rise of Arminianism. He dates the emergence of an Arminian court interest as early as 1610-11 and claims that an Arminian position consolidated at court by 1615. Fincham notes, however, that the rise of Arminianism was not its triumph. In particular, he points to the huge gap between hostility to Puritan practices in Arminian visitation articles and the lenient discipline most often enforced. He also points out that the division between Arminian and Calvinist was not confined to academic argument at court or in universities, but extended to episcopal practices in dioceses as the contrasting examples of Arthur Lake and Richard Neile illustrate. The triumph of Arminianism, he argues, came only after the accession of Charles I.

Fincham's exemplary study demonstrates excellent grounding in contemporary sources. His primary research, in fact, the bibliography and appendices alone, are worth the price of the book for study in the legal, political, and spiritual activities of bishops in the period. One can position the historiography of this book in the tradition of recent works by Richard Cust, Nicholas Tyacke, and Peter Lake which re-examine some of the simple dichotomies of older historical criticism and which challenge literary critics and historians of the period to avoid oversimplified and inadequately documented structures and conclusions.

The one reservation I hold is regarding Fincham's discussion of sermons. While he bases his conclusions about the pastoral influence of James's bishops in part on the number of sermons documented, he does not pay much attention to them at all, except insofar as they occurred. Like many historians, Fincham relies on the number of sermons, and occasionally on isolated quotations from them, rather than on their substance, to develop his arguments, but it must be recognized that number of sermons might not be an adequate measure of the pastoral influence and effectiveness of a bishop. Nor can one rely on quotations isolated from their larger contexts.

In conclusion, however, Fincham's book engages in dialogue with and builds on the conclusions of the historians currently mapping out this period. Although specialized, it remains accessible to readers, compelling in its arguments, and impressive in its detail. For students of the period, this is a definitive study and will become the standard reference source on this subject for all students of Jacobean history, religion, politics and literature.

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