weakly impressionistic: "How much poorer the English pulpit would be without the learning..."; "how dreary and dull" would the sermons be without the wit; how "unexciting" without the "psychological insights which abound in the preaching of the less conventional metaphysical preachers."

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Chris Given-Wilson. *The Royal Household and the King's Affinity: Service, Politics and Finance in England, 1360-1413*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986. Pp. viii, 327. \$32.50.

After falling out of fashion in the middle decades of the century, medieval administrative history seems to be getting a second wind. Recent scholars such as G.L. Harriss, Michael Prestwich, B.P. Wolffe, and others have rewritten several of T.F. Tout's *Chapters* and shed new light on the household, the institution that remained at the centre of both politics and royal finance. Chris Given-Wilson's *The Royal Household and the King's Affinity* explores the workings and personnel of the households of three kings, Edward III, Richard II and Henry IV, and contributes toward our understanding of the difficulties facing those who wielded power over the late medieval community.

The introduction provides a useful overview of the growth of the household from late Anglo-Saxon times to the mid-fourteenth century; close scrutiny is given to the gradual decentralization of the household, as more and more of its routine work was pared away into outside, "state" departments such as Chancery and Exchequer. Dr. Given-Wilson does not accept the view that medieval kings used devices such as the privy seal (and, subsequently, the signet), and offices such as the chamber and wardrobe, as short-cuts to override the slower, clumsier "out-of-court" departments. Nor does he have much sympathy for the argument, advanced by some historians, that the outside departments were too open to baronial, even "oppositional" control for them to provide much help to a king in need of fast cash. As Given-Wilson rightly says, the king's government remained just that throughout the Middle Ages—the *king's* government. There is little evidence that a concept of public departments, distinct from and independent of the service of the monarch, had developed before the early sixteenth century. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that, as the administration became both more complex and more routine, and as households grew increasingly sedentary, so kings came to rely on royal offices closer to hand, such as the wardrobe, for routine finance and for political service.

The late medieval crown was chronically insolvent, and the household often provided the bulls-eye against which aristocratic opponents of the court fired their bolts. Between 1360 and 1413, whenever a political crisis loomed, the household came under attack. Yet the reasons for such attacks often varied widely. Late in Edward III's reign, and throughout that of Richard II, political as much as financial criticisms were voiced, criticisms which would climax in the purge of Richard's household by the Merciless Parliament in 1388. Henry IV's household was scarcely more financially sound, but its critics, again offering opposition in parliament, were sufficiently satisfied with it on political grounds to cooperate with the council in its reform rather than support the assorted baronial rebellions and conspiracies of Henry's first decade.

The household's originally military purpose had largely disappeared by 1360, and its formerly large, fluctuating membership had become both smaller and more formalized. Given-Wilson demonstrates how the wardrobe functioned as the king's private bank, receiving its money direct from an Exchequer that often could not keep up with royal spending; the Chamber, which had been the centre of royal financial strategy under the Angevins and would again be so briefly under the Yorkists and early Tudors, was now used strictly as a kind of slush fund for the king's personal (as opposed to domestic) expenses. Household servants, who formerly held military commands, now served more as quartermasters in wartime and as diplomats, commissioners and even purveyors in peacetime.

As the first phase of the Hundred Years War wound down, the household began to swell again, prompting frequent demands for its reform under Edward and Richard; it continued to grow in the first half of Henry IV's reign, peaking between 1395 and 1406, after which the Council, in cooperation with the Commons, began to prune it. Whereas Richard II resented any attempt by the Commons or greater magnates such as the Appellants to interfere with the household's spending or its personnel, Henry IV wisely remained more flexible, and some of his most vocal parliamentary critics, such as Thomas Chaucer, also flourished as royal servants. Two of these, John Tip-toft and Thomas Brounfleet, provided exemplary financial management in the second half of the reign, though even they could barely dent the household debt, which in 1413 stood at £30,000.

Some scholars may have difficulties with Given-Wilson's emphasis on the gentry at the expense of the lords, and on the commons as independent critics of the crowns (especially in 1376 and 1406), but he presents his argument with laudable neatness and clarity, as well as considerable common sense. In Chapter III, on the courtiers, he compares objections raised against the *private familia* of the three kings, paying closest attention to Richard II's.

Here the spotlight falls on personalities rather than institutions. The impeachments of Alice Perrers and others of Edward II's coterie in 1376 and the attacks on successive servants of Richard II share much in common, yet subtle differences become clearer on close inspection. Under Edward, who lived his last years quite apart from his household, the most unpopular of the king's followers belonged to the small *covyne* of courtiers who controlled access to the increasingly doting monarch. In the first phase of Richard's personal rule, the most objectionable servants were those known as "chamber knights"; Richard had 35 of these during his reign, and they included some of his most unpopular friends, such as William Scrope. Though often corrupt, these men provided the King with efficient service, but failed to give his regime a broad basis of support. With their close association (at least in public eyes) to more powerful courtiers such as Robert de Vere and Michael de la Pole, the chamber knights provided an obvious target for the Appellants in 1388. A new group of chamber knights would arouse hatred in the 1390s, but in the latter decade it was Richard's councillors, John Bussy, William Bagot and others, who also held household appointments, and the king's household clerks (such as Thomas Merks, Shakespeare's bishop of Carlisle), who aroused the greatest ire as architects of the 1397-99 "tyranny." Henry IV's court differed strikingly from his predecessor's. The chamber knights ceased to have great significance, and Henry's increasing mistrust of senior churchmen, which culminated in the execution of Archbishop Scrope in 1405, ensured that no comparable clerical coterie arose.

One of the strengths of this book lies in its author's attention to the impact of curial developments on the provinces. This is best demonstrated in the final chapter, on the royal affinity, those quasi-independent gentlemen retained to do the king's service at various times. By 1360, the old "household knights," the king's private bodyguard, were losing both their formerly martial role and their old style. The rise of the chamber knights (*milites camere*) reflects both the withdrawal of households from hall to chamber, and the diversity of roles that the king expected his servants to play. The affinity stretched beyond the household, however, to include men who were neither magnates nor courtiers, but gentry of local importance. The conspicuous failure of Richard's household followers to provide him with adequate military forces in 1387-88 led the king to broaden his base of power to include retainers from all over England; prior to 1397, at least, each county had representatives in the royal affinity. These men were not chamber knights, nor old-style household knights; the documents described them instead as "king's knights" or "king's esquires," and in the 1390s they included up to 429 members of the greater gentry. That such a powerful retinue failed to stem the Lancastrian tide in 1399 is attributable principally to Richard's

growing reliance on a few counties (most notably, Cheshire) after 1397, and to the incompetence or treachery of the York regency which, in Richard's absence, failed to lead the affinity into a decisive trial of strength with Bolingbroke until it was too late. Although Richard was not deserted *en masse* by his supporters quite as instantly as is sometimes suggested, it is clear that the revolution of 1399, unlike those of 1258 and 1327, succeeded less because of aristocratic conspiracy (only three magnates, including Bolingbroke himself, out of a total of nineteen earls, marquises and dukes, spearheaded Richard's downfall) than because of Richard's staggering unpopularity in the countryside. Here again, Henry IV avoided many of his predecessor's errors while making a few of his own. His Welsh problems may be attributable in part to Henry's refusal to cultivate the formerly Ricardian north-west and border shires. On the other hand, the solid Lancastrian base in the north, and the King's use of retaining-for-life in the first two years of the new reign (though, interestingly, not thereafter) to ensure dubious loyalties, may have helped to deny the baronial rebels any widespread gentry support.

Given-Wilson's study is scrupulously researched, ably argued, and uniformly well written. Its conclusion raises rather than resolves a few questions: how far, for example, did kinship ties serve as a basis for recruitment into both the household and the affinity? To what extent did changes in royal finance and politics – the hardware and software of the household – reflect changes in aristocratic households? One might also wish for a somewhat broader consideration than is offered here of the later course of the household through its fifteenth-century difficulties. But this book will provide a solid foundation for further research, and it proves that administrative history need be neither esoteric nor dull.

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