

Baal's Priests: The Loyalist Clergy and the English Revolution

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The clergymen who suffered during the 1640s and the 1650s for their loyalty to King Charles I have long awaited a full study. This is somewhat surprising, given that John Walker's manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, which form the basis of Fiona McCall's new study, have now for a century been easily accessible to scholars. A calendar by G. B. Tatham was published in 1911, and A. G. Matthews' 'revised' companion to John Walker's *The Sufferings of the Clergy during the Grand Rebellion* was published in 1948. (1) As McCall is acutely aware, she is arguably the first scholar since Matthews to make systematic use of the Walker manuscripts, rather than merely using them for case studies of individual clergymen, or to seek evidence to support particular points.

Following the publication in 1702 of Edmund Calamy's *Account* of those ministers ejected from their livings following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, between 1704 and the publication of *The Sufferings of the Clergy* in 1714, John Walker was sent 'over a thousand letters' (p. 9), together with some contemporary correspondence and legal documents dating back to the 1640s and the 1650s, which detailed the travails of those clergymen who had suffered for the royalist cause. Many of the accounts were vivid in their detail, having frequently been written by correspondents who were either members of the sufferer's family or clergy who held livings previously occupied by sufferers. Clergymen were often imprisoned: Richard Towgood, the vicar of St. Nicholas' parish in Bristol, was imprisoned in a cell with over 50 prisoners (p. 126), and George Buchanan, the vicar of Kirkby Lonsdale in Westmorland, was imprisoned at Lancaster for three years (p. 123). Clergymen were often the targets for plunder, though Thomas Grey, the vicar of Ponteland in Northumberland, was fortunate in having sympathetic parishioners willing to hide his moveable goods (p.

113). Clergymen's families often shared in their sufferings. Paul Prestland, the rector of Market Deeping in Lincolnshire, lived for six months in a barn with his wife and five children (p. 164), and Frances King, the daughter of John Manby, ejected as rector of Cottenham in Cambridgeshire, recalled that other children in the parish were prompted by their parents to exclude her from their games (p. 37). None of this is to suggest that these clergymen simply accepted their lot as mere sufferers for their king. Jonathan Swift, the grandson of Thomas Swift, the vicar of Goodrich in Herefordshire, claimed that his grandfather's setting of a trap in a river resulted in the deaths of 200 of the enemy (p. 107), and McCall has calculated that no fewer than 150 of the Walker accounts include acts of aggression by the 'sufferer' (p. 201).

McCall's book opens with a context-setting chapter, which outlines the legal bases which were established by the authority of Parliament for the removal of ministers accused of royalism and scandalous actions, as well as some of the work undertaken on this topic by, for example, Ian Green and James Sharpe. Whilst the chronological outline covers all of the major committee establishments and ordinances, I think that it would have benefited from being interwoven with a general account of the civil wars and republic: the execution of Charles I in January 1649 is omitted from McCall's chronology, and it is not made clear when governance without a monarchy commenced (pp. 4–8). Table 1.1, which illustrates the geographical distribution of ejections, is interesting, but the regions listed need defining: what are the 'Home Counties' or the 'East Midlands', for example (p. 13)? It becomes clear during this chapter that McCall has a keen interest in the familial dimension of the ejections as recorded in the Walker manuscripts, incorporating concepts such as memory and trauma, and these aspects are further explored in chapter two. In many respects, this is the best chapter in the book. McCall traces the place of the accounts sent to Walker in the context of what was by the early 18th century a developing 'Cavalier' memory, as accounts recalled how pivotal and highly symbolic life cycle events, such as pregnancy and childbirth, were disrupted by the interventions of hostile persecutors (pp. 29–30). Indeed, female contributors sent to Walker several very detailed accounts (pp. 34–41). McCall is particularly strong when dealing with issues of memory. Some of Walker's correspondents were anxious to guarantee the veracity of their accounts, including signatures by elderly parishioners who claimed to be able to remember the events described (p. 49). Other correspondents were less forthcoming, with even some sons of ejected clergymen claiming that they could not recall their fathers' sufferings (p. 50), though one son, William Nicolson, the Bishop of Carlisle, was keen to secure a place for his father Joseph amongst Walker's sufferers, despite another of Walker's correspondents, Hugh Todd, pointing out that Joseph Nicolson's clerical career had actually progressed quite nicely during the 1650s (pp. 45–6). However, despite such inconsistencies, McCall is happy to treat the Walker manuscripts as a generally reliable corpus of materials (pp. 46–7).

Chapter three moves back in time to consider the pre-Civil War situations of the clergy who would go on to suffer for their king. McCall presents some particularly telling findings, using contemporary materials surviving in collections other than the Walker manuscripts. In tables 3.3 and 3.4, she shows that in Wiltshire and Leicestershire, the higher the value of the living, the more likely it was to be sequestrated during the 1640s and the 1650s (pp. 100–1). Also of value are tables 3.1 and 3.2, which use the surviving petitions sent to Parliament between 1640 and 1643, and also the records of ejections in Essex, Cambridgeshire, Leicestershire and Wiltshire, to evaluate the respective extents to which accusations of immorality and of the use of condemned religious practices (such as the 'Laudian' ceremonialism pressed upon the Church of England during the 1630s) were used against clergymen. It is unfortunate, though, that these tables are not immediately comprehensible to the reader, and would have benefited from having a full explanation and apparatus presented perhaps as an appendix; in particular, table 3.2 suffers from not having sub-headings (such as 'Total ceremonialism') highlighted in the manner in which they are set in bold type in table 3.1. However, the hard work which McCall undoubtedly undertook in creating these tables does pay off with some insightful observations, such as that in Leicestershire, only a third of ejected ministers were accused of supporting the 'Laudian' innovations, with others being targeted for resisting subsequent religious changes, such as the introduction of the *Directory for Public Worship* in 1645 (p. 90). This is an important finding, but in her analysis, McCall follows a line propagated by (amongst others) Ian Green of a mainly 'conservative conformist' body of royalist clergymen, couched between two extremes of 'Laudians' and 'puritans', who would suffer for their loyalty to the king during the civil wars (pp. 90–2).⁽²⁾ Yet, in

Cambridgeshire, 25 out of 28 clergymen in McCall's survey were accused of 'ceremonialism', which would suggest a more complex relationship between clergymen and the Laudian innovations (table 3.2, p. 85). Here, I think that some of the gaps in McCall's secondary reading become evident. No works by Patrick Collinson, Kenneth Fincham, Peter Lake, Nicholas Tyacke, or Tom Webster are cited in the book, and I think that at least some of these authors' works could have led to a more sophisticated understanding of Laudianism. Rather than the rigid tripartite conceptualisation of 'conformist', 'Laudian' and 'puritan' used by McCall, I think that Anthony Milton's argument that 'Laudianism' is best seen as a 'process' with which clergymen interacted at various points would have been useful: a clergyman may only have complied with the Laudian innovations over certain issues and out of obedience to his episcopal superiors, but to his opponents seeking to build a compelling case against him, this could easily have been construed as 'ceremonialism'.⁽³⁾

Chapter four contains some very instructive examples of the variety of ways in which loyalty to the royalist cause was manifested, and is supplemented by a very useful tabulation of the forms of activism of which clergymen were accused, using the same sample of petitions used in the tables in chapter three (table 4.1, pp. 105–6). Whilst much of this chapter is useful in providing an overview of the nature of clerical royalism during the 1640s and the 1650s, caution should be exercised with table 4.2, which illustrates sequestrations by county (pp. 130–1). In the first instance, 'sequestration' was a formal legal process, whereas a significant proportion of ejections were enacted by informal means, such as following harassment; thus, the term 'ejection' rather than 'sequestration' would have been more appropriate. Sadly, for northern England at least, the proportion of sequestered livings (here following McCall's usage) in each county is unreliable. In Lancashire, for example, McCall claims that 18 out of 36 livings were sequestered, giving a proportion of 50 per cent. However, McCall uses as the basis for her statistics an Elizabethan list of parishes preserved in the Stowe manuscripts in the British Library. In reality, the Commonwealth commissioners identified 60 parishes in Lancashire in 1650, meaning that the proportion of parishes affected by ejection was closer to a third.⁽⁴⁾ This problem may arise from the fact that for her total number of Yorkshire parishes, McCall amalgamates two figures in the manuscript for 'Yorke' and 'Richmond', but the figure for Richmond may well refer to the archdeaconry of Richmond, which included Lancashire north of the River Ribble (as well as the parts of southern Cumberland and southern Westmorland situated in the diocese of Chester), and would thus explain the low number of parishes given for Lancashire. Also, McCall claims that she has found over 50 additional parishes affected by ejections which were missed by A. G. Matthews in his *Walker Revised* (p. 10), yet her statistics in table 4.2 are based upon *Walker Revised*. An appendix of these additional parishes and their incumbents would have been a valuable addition to this book (and an important supplement to *Walker Revised*), and one cannot help but wonder what impact the inclusion of these additional parishes (particularly if they were concentrated in a particular region) would have had on her tabulation.

Chapters four and five complement each other, examining how ministers responded to ejection, and how they coped with the humiliations and loss of status which often ensued from such a fall from grace. Many ministers were subjected to violence, which was often described within the accounts which were sent to John Walker (pp. 154–60). A variety of sources are used in these chapters to explore the sufferings of clergymen and their families, including contemporary petitions to various county quarter sessions and later petitions to the Corporation for the Sons of the Clergy, and also the records of Parliament's Committee for Compounding with Delinquents. In particular, throughout the book, McCall makes extensive use of two diaries preserved in the Bodleian Library: that of Thomas Wyatt, the vicar of Ducklington in Oxfordshire, who managed to avoid ejection despite apparent royalist sympathies, and the less fortunate Richard Drake, rector of Radwinter in Essex, who lost his living after several intense confrontations with his parishioners, and who described some of his experiences in Latin in his diary. It is unfortunate, though, that McCall never once cites John Walter's excellent reconstruction of the politics of Drake's ejection at Radwinter, and this does raise some further questions about the extent to which she fully engages with the secondary literature surrounding this topic.⁽⁵⁾ One example of this will suffice. McCall includes in chapter five a fascinating comparison of the account by the royalist newsbook *Mercurius Rusticus* of the ejection of Henry Fowler as rector of Minchinhampton in Gloucestershire, which she correlates with other sources in the Walker manuscripts, and to the published churchwardens' accounts (pp. 150–3). She then attempts to support these

correlations with the example of Thomas Wright, the rector of Wilmslow in Cheshire, claiming that the *Mercurius Rusticus* account of Wright's ejection is supported by other parish sources (p. 153). However, McCall's source for this claim (Judith Maltby's *Prayer Book and People*) actually makes no such claim, and the churchwardens' accounts for Wilmslow (which McCall cites via Maltby without apparently consulting the original manuscript in the Cheshire Record Office), though acknowledging disruption during the period, do not substantiate the *Mercurius Rusticus* account as McCall supposes.⁽⁶⁾ It is thus unfortunate that the strong case study of Minchinhampton is undermined by a much weaker case study of Wilmslow.

Chapter seven offers a corrective to anyone who may think that the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II in 1660 might have represented a triumphal return to their livings of ministers who had suffered during the preceding two decades. Whilst Walker's correspondents sent to him some dramatic accounts, such as that of Robert Clarke, the vicar of Andover in Hampshire, who confronted the intruder during a service, before preaching 'an excellent sermon of forgiving injurys' (p. 250), other ministers were faced with dilapidated parsonages and parochial difficulties, with Rowland Haywood, the ejected vicar of Frodsham in Cheshire, apparently thinking better of returning to his former parish (p. 256). The conclusion which follows contains an interesting comparison between the ejected clergy of the 1640s and the 1650s and the clergymen ejected during the early 1660s, though McCall's contention that after the restoration settlement, 'the Anglican clergy were tolerated as a least-worst solution' by the new 'power brokers' is strange, and requires further explanation, especially as its location in the final paragraph of the book means that it is hardly hidden away (p. 270).

In *Baal's Priests*, Fiona McCall has written a valuable study which will once again direct historians' attentions towards the Walker manuscripts, and McCall's book provides more extended quotations from the manuscripts than either Tatham or Matthews, highlighting the variety of information contained within them. She displays an impressive knowledge of the Walker manuscripts, and spots some nice details amongst them. There are some problematic issues with her methodology though. At no point does she define what she means by a 'loyalist' clergyman, and if this is used as a synonym for 'royalist' (a term which she uses, for example, on p. 143), is the term 'loyalist' really preferable to the much more widely used term of 'royalist'? She also uses the term 'Anglican' equally uncritically, with the only attempt at a definition being in explanatory note to table 3.2 (p. 86). This would not necessarily be a problem, but McCall attempts to argue that 'Anglican' rationalism and stoicism influenced the attitudes of suffering clergymen, whereas surely Christ's own example (as noted by McCall herself) was far more influential than any kind of particularly 'Anglican' mindset, the existence of which in mid 17th-century England is highly debateable.

There are also some problems with McCall's usage of the Walker manuscripts, which, though far from undermining the work's value, are nevertheless worthy of discussion. Her habit of using ellipses in quotations (nine ellipses are used in one five line long extract on page 205) does raise the issue of what text has been left out, and what relevance it may have had. Also, an unintended consequence of viewing the royalist clergy through the lens of the Walker manuscripts is that those presbyterian clergymen who came into royalism after the regicide, and for whom the restoration settlement provided a dilemma, are here ignored, for their royalism was hardly the royalism which Walker sought to discover. At times, statements allegedly made by ejected clergymen (for example, the statement attributed to Christopher Hindle on page 210 that ejected clergymen were reputed to be 'the filth, and off-scouring of the world') are presented as fact by McCall, and she does not consider the possibility that they could be the constructions of Walker's correspondents: indeed, the reconstruction in the same account of Hindle by George Ogden, Hindle's successor as vicar of Ribchester in Lancashire, of a whole sermon by Hindle surely raises questions about the possible use of artistic licence by Ogden.⁽⁷⁾ In contrast, McCall virtually ignores the collections of contemporary manuscripts which were sent to Walker concerning clerics such as Isaac Allen, the rector of Prestwich in Lancashire, and Joseph Bentham, the rector of Broughton in Northamptonshire (pp. 127, 206). I also cannot help but wonder if, given the generally negative reputation of scholars in England at this time (as explored by Steven Shapin), some of Walker's correspondents are mocking the poor cleric's efforts: Christopher Jellinger, the German émigré intruder at South Brent in Devon, apparently spent the night at the bedside of a newly married couple, praying that they might have 'tens of Millions' of children (p. 245)!⁽⁸⁾ It

may be possible that if such stories did originate during the mid 17th century, rather than as attempts to mock Walker, their origins may lie in localised attempts to subvert the ministry of intruders through mocking them, and that these mockeries, over the next 50 years, gained the status of truth. It may be telling that this account of Jellinger was not included by Walker in the printed *Sufferings of the Clergy*, a text which is rather neglected by McCall.[\(9\)](#)

There are some small errors in the text: Isaac Allen was a minister in Lancashire, not Cheshire (p. 216), and Guy Carleton was a future dean of Carlisle, not bishop as is here claimed (p. 213). The index lacks in quality: the reference to Nathaniel Ward, the curate of Staindrop in Durham, leads nowhere, and the intruder at Greystoke in Cumberland named as 'Dr. Gilpin' in both the index and the main text (p. 252) was Richard Gilpin, a prominent congregationalist with a *Dictionary of National Biography* entry. Whilst McCall has undoubtedly done a great service to historians of the 17th century in highlighting the treasures of the Walker archive, this book is hardly the final word on either clerical royalism, or the Walker manuscripts.

Notes

1. G. B. Tatham, *Dr. John Walker and The Sufferings of the Clergy* (Cambridge, 1911); A. G. Matthews, *Walker Revised: Being a Revision of John Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy during the Grand Rebellion 1642-60* (Oxford, 1948).[Back to \(1\)](#)
2. I. M. Green, 'The persecution of 'scandalous' and 'malignant' parish clergy during the English Civil War', *English Historical Review*, xciv (1979), 507–31.[Back to \(2\)](#)
3. Anthony Milton, 'The creation of Laudianism: a new approach', in *Politics, Religion and Popularity in Early Stuart Britain: Essays in Honour of Conrad Russell*, eds. Thomas Cogswell, Richard Cust and Peter Lake (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 162–84.[Back to \(3\)](#)
4. *Lancashire and Cheshire Church Surveys, 1649–1655*, ed. Henry Fishwick, Record Society for the Publication of Original Documents relating to Lancashire and Cheshire, i (1879), passim.[Back to \(4\)](#)
5. John Walter, 'Affronts & Insolencies': the voices of Radwinter and popular opposition to Laudianism', *English Historical Review*, cxxii (2007), 35–60.[Back to \(15\)](#)
6. Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 213–14; Cheshire Record Office, Chester, P123/3466/9/2.[Back to \(6\)](#)
7. Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS J. Walker, c. 3, fo. 4r.[Back to \(7\)](#)
8. Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago, IL, and London, 1994), p. 171.[Back to \(8\)](#)
9. John Walker, *An Attempt towards recovering an Account of the Numbers and Sufferings of the Clergy of the Church of England, Heads of Colleges, Fellows, Scholars, & c. who were Sequester'd, Harrass'd, & c. in the late Times of the Grand Rebellion* (2 vols., London, 1714), ii., p. 69 (account of John Gandy).[Back to \(9\)](#)

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