

owne mynde and conscience” (148), this reviewer, and surely many researchers to come, applauds the publication of this volume.

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ALAN ARGENT. *Dr Williams's Trust and Library: A History*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2022. Pp. 360. \$115.00 (cloth).
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Daniel Williams was born in Wrexham, north Wales, around the year 1643, during the British Civil Wars. A regular preacher by the age of 19, he refused to conform in 1662 following the passing of the Act of Uniformity. By conviction he was a trinitarian Presbyterian, but not a high Calvinist. He ministered in Ireland 1664–87 and thereafter in London. Through his two marriages he became wealthy, and at his death in 1716 he left almost all his £50,000 estate to charitable causes, the administration of which required the establishment of a Trust in 1717. Alan Argent has written a compelling study of the Trust and what became its primary concern, Dr Williams's Library.

The advancement of Protestant dissent in Wales and Ireland, and its support in England, lay at the heart of Dr Williams's interests. The promotion of evangelical religion, he believed, would improve morals and make a stand against Catholicism. Argent describes how these causes were nurtured and promoted by the Trust. Although initially hindered by legal wrangling, by the early 1720s the trustees were overseeing the letting of property, the endowment of seven charity schools in north Wales, the distribution of funds to ministers' widows, grants to ministerial candidates to study at the Carmarthen Academy or, for more distinguished candidates, at Glasgow University (entry at Oxford and graduation at Cambridge being barred to dissenters), and the support of evangelists who could preach in the Irish tongue. As Argent suggests, there was an inconsistency in the fact that the Irish language was to be employed in Ireland while, despite the provision of bibles and pious literature written in Welsh, schoolteachers in Wales were to use English. Argent suggests a further tension in that trustees were moving from “evangelical dissent” to “rational dissent” while still distributing Dr Williams's work which held a more orthodox point of view. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that Congregationalists and Baptists appear to have benefitted most from the grants.

In sixteen chapters, Argent recounts the history of the Dr Williams's Trust and Library in a chronological manner, following the appointment of Trust Secretaries and Librarians (with the more recent appointments taking on both roles). Account is given of changes in trustees (those who were frequently absent would be relieved of their duties), activity in relation to property and tenants, the award of grants to widows and prospective ministers.

Williams had envisaged a lending library to house his own collection of 7,600 volumes and to make them accessible to ministers of the dissenting denominations. It finally opened at Red Cross Street in 1730, moving to 8 Queen Square in 1864, to 16 Grafton Street in 1873, and finally to 14 Gordon Square in 1890. Subsequent donations to the Library included artefacts and portraits as well as personal papers and books. As a result, the collection increased significantly. In 1917, it contained an estimated 66,000 volumes. By 2022, the estimate was 134,000 volumes.

One of many interesting aspects of the story is the apparently egalitarian approach adopted by the trustees in some areas. Girls as well as boys were to be educated in most of the schools,

and education was to be provided through the medium of Gaelic in Ireland. Furthermore, when the north Wales schools began to receive support from the rates in 1870, the Trust diverted its contributions to fund a boarding school for girls in Dolgellau. Mention is also made of the early acceptance of women as readers, though it took until 1944 to appoint a woman as a trustee. By the mid-nineteenth century the library also had international readers.

Argent records how, by the late-twentieth century, the Trust had repositioned its activity away from supporting dissenting ministers to the promotion of academic research making use of the specialist collections (not restricted to the history and theology of dissent) housed in the Library. Perhaps the development of academic specialism is best reflected in the establishment, in 2004, of the Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies in collaboration with Queen Mary, University of London. A number of publications emerged from the Centre, while the Dissenting Academics project is of particular note. It is regrettable that the Centre was disbanded in 2015.

Combining a wide knowledge of dissenting history, a close, decades-long acquaintance with the Library and an analysis of a variety of manuscripts associated with the Trust, Argent has produced a comprehensive, scholarly but captivating account. *Dr Williams's Trust and Library: A History* is attractively written and provides a detailed and not uncritical narrative of the Trust's activity, ending with the retirement of the then Director in 2021. What is clear throughout is that financing the aims of Dr Williams's will has proved to be a constant challenge. Even in the 1730s, Argent suggests, "DWT was living hand to mouth" (57). Despite ownership (and subsequent sale) of several properties as well as the sale in 2006 of the Shakespeare First Folio, once the property of Daniel Williams himself, for £2.5 million, the library continued to struggle financially. The plan to modify the building in order to generate additional income was thwarted by a structural survey conducted in 2017 which discovered defects requiring significant investment to put right.

Both the Dr Williams's Trust and Library now have a worthy history, handsomely produced and illustrated. The past has been well-covered. While precisely what happens in the future is unclear at the time of writing (with the Gordon Square property about to be sold), it is to be hoped that such a unique collection, representing an important if often ignored aspect of English religious history, can be preserved. Its loss would be nothing short of tragic.

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ALEX W. BARBER. *The Restraint of the Press in England, 1660–1715: The Communication of Sin*. Studies in Early Modern Cultural, Political and Social History 47. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2022. Pp. 352. \$115.00 (cloth).
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Consistently interesting, *The Restraint of the Press in England, 1660–1715* is in part a call to arms against public sphere theory and some of the more closed elements of recent historiography, not least the tendency to downplay religion and to emphasize secularization. Alex Barber tackles the established accounts of newspaper history and the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688–89. The system of press control was greatly weakened when William III (of Orange) seized power. He indeed brought a mobile printing press with him when he invaded as he knew the value of publications. As a consequence of the "Glorious Revolution," it is possible to relate the rise of press freedom to the end of Stuart authoritarianism. Nevertheless, once in control, William