

ELLIOT VERNON. *London Presbyterians and the British Revolutions, 1638–64*. Politics, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021.

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Despite long being a practicing lawyer, Elliot Vernon has nonetheless contributed significantly to the field of early modern British history for many years, presenting papers, publishing articles and chapters, editing collections of essays, and offering mentorship to younger scholars. Consequently, it is wonderful to finally see research that first began with his PhD dissertation on the Sion College Conclave now a monograph, *London Presbyterians and the British Revolutions, 1638–64*. The book complements work over the past two decades—produced by such historians as Gary De Krey, Julia Merritt, Ann Hughes, David Como, and Jordan Downs—on the centrality that the city and its suburbs held in shaping the British Civil Wars, Revolution, Interregnum, and Restoration. Scholars interested in this period—especially regarding its religio-political dynamics and consequences—must familiarize themselves with Vernon’s new book.

Vernon declares in the introduction that London Presbyterians, especially clergy, were “a historical failure,” as their movement proved unable “to achieve its hopes or aspirations” (1) that largely revolved around “king and Covenant” (242), with the goals to limit monarchical power within frameworks like the Calvinist two-kingdoms theory and to seek further reformation of the Church of England at both the national and parochial levels. While losing in their endeavors, they nonetheless “came close to controlling the political settlement” (1) of the British revolutions that resulted from the tumults of the 1640s and 1650s. Independency’s rising influence and the New Model Army’s increased political power in dictating the parliamentary cause ultimately curtailed these dreams, as the revolution took more radical paths that resulted in the regicide, the creation of the Republic, and the emergence of the Protectorate. Yet London Presbyterians “remained a centrifugal force for many old parliamentarians” (1) throughout the Interregnum, and they also proved significant players in shaping the Restoration. Under both Cromwells, presbyterian-congregational rapprochement provided London Presbyterians the ear of the Protector, a springboard that propelled them into an advantageous position of influence upon the return of the Stuarts. With Charles II and his episcopalian clergy like George Morley and John Gauden open to the prospect, specifically as it culminated with the Worcester House Conference in the autumn of 1660, many believed a blend of presbytery and episcopacy—echoing James Ussher’s vision—would define the national church. The possibility met an end with the Cavalier Parliament’s revanchism and the 1662 settlement that marked large swaths of English Protestantism, including Presbyterianism, as officially nonconforming confessions to the Church of England.

A particular strength of Vernon’s study is how he, in twelve fairly concise but dense chapters, demonstrates that Presbyterians’ vital asset in this period were godly networks that relied less on institutional bases of operation and more on voluntary, if not informal, associations that revolved around the nexus of London. Roots of these networks predated the 1640s, predominantly consisting of puritan clergy—like Edmund Calamy, Cornelius Burges, Stephen Marshall, and Arthur Jackson—radicalized by the Laudian reforms during the Personal Rule. They came to lead much of the initial parliamentary mobilization against Charles I, and Calamy’s home in St. Mary Aldermanbury proved an important center for coordinating the effort by 1641. The “Aldermanbury junto” (43) spawned the famous Smectymnuus tracts; it mediated the so-called Aldermanbury Accord that helped keep intra-puritan disputes over presbyterian and congregational ecclesiology in check in order to focus energy on breaking the episcopal hold on the national church; and it maintained key contacts with Scottish Presbyterians leading up to and after war broke out between Parliament and the king. Such organizational prowess placed London Presbyterians in prime position to assume further leadership

in the parliamentary cause as they took advantage of developments that emerged from the civil wars, the most significant being the Solemn League and Covenant and the Westminster Assembly that provided to them powerful religio-political mechanisms and platforms to shape national agendas. Nevertheless, the religio-political shifts that eventually placed Independents and the New Model Army in the driver's seat of the revolution negated these early advantages. Again, relying on their existing networks—funneled this time through parish vestries, Sion College, the printing press, and the London Provincial Assembly—London Presbyterians proved adept at continuing as a movement to promote their vision of king and covenant. Even during perhaps their greatest challenges in the Interregnum—the Engagement controversy and the execution of Christopher Love for plotting against the Republic—London Presbyterians survived to play their crucial roles in the Protectorate and at the Restoration despite never regaining the same level of power they enjoyed at the outset of the British revolutions.

Vernon applies careful precision laying out this portrait of London Presbyterians in a thorough and convincing fashion. Acutely sensitive to contingency, he does well in illustrating that their movement was a fluid one, both in the development of their religious and political ideas and in how they responded to events in the period. Drawing complex links between Scots and London Presbyterians, Vernon thoughtfully provides a British dimension to his study. His reliance on networks as a category of analysis also pays excellent scholarly dividends in underscoring London Presbyterians' key contributions to the revolutionary changes that occurred in the British public sphere between the 1640s and 1660s. If there are any missed opportunities, one is that Vernon could have perhaps discussed further the implications of London Presbyterians' actions and thoughts on the religio-political landscape after the passage of the Clarendon Code and the emergence of comprehension campaigns before the Glorious Revolution. He covers these themes briefly in his epilogue and conclusion, briefness perhaps due to space restrictions imposed by the press, a more than likely explanation for why the monograph also lacks a bibliography. All this said, however, Vernon's monograph will surely please historians once they read it.

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CORD J. WHITAKER. *Black Metaphors: How Modern Racism Emerged from Medieval Race-Thinking*. The Middle Ages Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019. Pp. 256. \$49.95 (cloth).
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With his thoughtful, learned, subtle, and lucidly written study, *Black Metaphors: How Modern Racism Emerged from Medieval Race-Thinking*, Cord Whitaker brings a rhetorical bent to recent conversations on race and race thinking in the English Middle Ages. He tracks the polysemous black metaphor, linking blackness with sin and whiteness with innocence, across a range of pre-modern texts, including Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*, *The Turke and Sir Gawain*, the *King of Tars*, *Handlyng Synne*, the *Three Kings of Cologne*, Julian of Norwich's *Showings*, and the *Book of John Mandeville*. Whitaker's black metaphor, in its medieval flexibilities, is not simply a racially divisive hierarchy but rather an interpretive process that pursues interplays of black and white to reveal them as mutually constitutive. The medieval black metaphor gains power and persuasive force from its instability, which draws readers into surprising identifications. While the black metaphor can foster and solidify racist divisions of black and white and thus create racial mirages, it can also de-universalize whiteness, enticing readers to identify with blackness as they acknowledge their own internal sinfulness. Whitaker thus shows how medieval texts can solicit blackness as a powerful, universal foundation for spiritual transformation.