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J. Sears McGee. An Industrious Mind: The Worlds of Sir Simonds D'Ewes. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015. Pp. 536. \$70.00 (cloth).

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J. SEARS MCGEE. *An Industrious Mind: The Worlds of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015. Pp. 536. \$70 (cloth).

*An Industrious Mind* is the first full biography of Sir Simonds D'Ewes (1602-50), which is surprising, given both D'Ewes' significance for early Stuart history, and the volume of his papers (most of which are easily accessible in the British Library). As J. Sears McGee points out, historians have principally relied on only four of the more than 70 volumes of his personal papers. Of the many reasons for this, McGee points to both poor cataloguing, and D'Ewes' notoriously difficult hand in his less formal writing. McGee has negotiated these challenges, as well as the sheer volume and range of his papers, to produce what will undoubtedly be the starting point for work on D'Ewes for generations. McGee brings to this project a lifetime of study of religious laymen in the seventeenth century, from his first book, *The Godly Man in Stuart England* (1976), and his edition of minor writings of John Bunyan. *An Industrious Mind* is a big book both physically and intellectually; it will join Paul Seaver's *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (1985) in providing a map of how laymen made meaning of and lived with Puritan theology, though the two inhabited different social worlds.

D'Ewes was in many ways a typical seventeenth-century gentleman: he attended both Cambridge and the Middle Temple, and though admitted to the bar, practiced law for a very short time. His first marriage at the age of 24 to an heiress produced 10 children, all but two of whom died before their father; his second marriage to yet another heiress led to the birth of 2 more children, one of whom survived him. While most seventeenth-century historians know D'Ewes was a historian and antiquarian, a member of the Long Parliament and a diarist with strong Puritan leanings, D'Ewes' voluminous writings allow McGee to explore the meanings of

his work and experiences in great depth. D'Ewes was an assiduous letter writer, he took notes on his readings and on the many sermons he attended, and he wrote a detailed autobiography covering the first 35 years of his life. The archive thus allows McGee to get inside D'Ewes' mind to an extraordinary degree. His account underlines the importance of a group of essentially conservative men in the resistance to Charles I; at least in D'Ewes' case, that opposition was grounded in extensive research in primary sources: he collected books and manuscripts and visited archival collections. In addition to those already mentioned, D'Ewes' writings include a history of the Parliaments of Elizabeth I, and a number of theological and historical works, most of which were unpublished in his lifetime. His research was both an emotional comfort—after the death of his twin sons in 1633 he consoled himself by turning to his “sweete and satisfying studies” (218)—and tied to his Protestant convictions. He may have been wrong about England's proto-protestant identity in the fifth century (268-9), but he made the claim after study of multiple sources, refracted (inevitably) through his own theology. It is hard for a historian not to have some fondness for D'Ewes, in spite of his prickly nature.

The biography is written in a narrative and chronological mode, and it is a biography of D'Ewes, not a “life and times” study. Insofar as McGee offers an interpretation of D'Ewes, it is embedded in the narrative, which creates strong connections between D'Ewes' interest in history, genealogy, religion and politics. And it's obvious that McGee came to have both affection and respect for his subject. Yet at times the material cries out for more critical analysis and connections to other scholarship. D'Ewes married his first wife when she was 13 ½; at her grandmother's request, he delayed sexual relations with her, but only for 8 months. McGee even mentions (as if recounting a great romance) that D'Ewes met his first wife as early as 1620, when he was a student at Cambridge; she would then have been 7 years old at the time! He was

devastated by her death, but just over a year later, he married again: she was 14 and he was 40. Both wives were unusually young, even among the gentry, but the reader would never know it. Yet the age of his wives inevitably raises questions about his understanding of himself as a man and his authority over his wives; one can acknowledge this without diminishing his affection for them and his children. Some awareness of the vast literature on gender (especially the history of masculinity) and the family would have helped his readers interpret this dimension of D'Ewes' life.

Such criticism does not diminish the accomplishment of this invaluable book. McGee's comprehensive treatment means that future historians will begin from it, rather than starting anew. And there are plenty of interesting directions such work could go in. D'Ewes connects to multiple areas of historical interest, from Protestant masculinity to decisions about migration, to the development of historical scholarship. As new areas of research develop, scholars will have an outstanding foundation from which to work.

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