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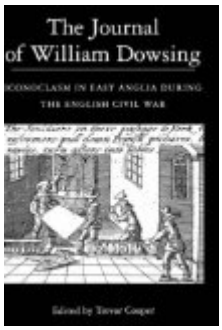

Trevor Cooper, ed.. *The Journal of William Dowsing: Iconoclasm in East Anglia during the English Civil War.* Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2001. xxiv + 551 pp. $85.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-85115-833-4.

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Getting Rid of Angels

Iconoclasm, as Margaret Aston, John Phillips, and others have amply documented, was one of the brutal accompaniments of the religious changes of the sixteenth century and of the "Second Reformation" in England in the 1640s. Parliamentary ordinances of August 28, 1643 and May 9, 1644 enjoined the removal from churches of all monuments of superstition or idolatry. William Dowsing (1596-1668) occupies a special place in this later chapter in the history of iconoclasm in England, not simply for what he did but for the unique record of it which he left behind. His journal has long been known to historians and portions of it were published in editions which appeared in 1739, 1753, 1786, 1885, and 1926. In the first of them the Cambridge antiquary Zachary Grey used the opportunity to denounce the puritans in general and Dowsing in particular for the "terrible havock" and "hard usage" they inflicted. Evelyn White, the editor of 1885, gave Dowsing pride of place among the "sacrilegious invaders of the churches of East Anglia" (p. 414), and accepted as genuine fabricated accounts of instances of destruction. (Nineteenth-century East Anglia seems to have been fertile ground for the production of historical forgeries! The notorious Squire Papers which Thomas Carlyle cheerfully included in his edition of the *Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* were passed on to him by a malicious crackpot who hailed from this region). This new edition of the journal seeks to set the record straight both about Dowsing and the nature of Civil War iconoclasm and offers (for the first time) an integrated text of Dowsing's account of his Cambridgeshire and Suffolk visitations.

Lavish is the only word to describe it. Nearly three pounds in weight and with over 570 pages, it is adorned with 78 plates, 40 maps, 27 tables, 16 appendices, 80 pages of notes, and an 18 page bibliography. The book even has an internet website. Dowsing's text itself--which does not survive in the original--appears for a variety of reasons to be an incomplete record of his iconoclasm and is relatively brief; without any editorial matter its 273 entries could be published as a pamphlet. Here, however, with an enthusiastic editorial team leaving no stone (or even pebble) unturned, the origi-

nal text becomes a veritable leviathan. The opening entry of the journal, for instance, deals with Dowsing's visit to Peterhouse, Cambridge (bastion of Laudianism) on December 21, 1643 and has twenty-one lines of text. To this the editors provide five pages of elucidation plus twenty-two footnotes which appear three hundred pages further on in the book. The same kind of examples could be multiplied. Dowsing's visit to King's College, Cambridge on December 26 of the same year occupies a bare three lines of text in the journal, but to this the editors add seven-and-a-half pages of commentary and thirty-five footnotes. Dowsing's two-line summary of his visit to St. Mary the Great, Cambridge on December 27, 1643 is here augmented with another seven-and-a-half page gloss from the editors and a further thirty-eight footnotes. In several places in the text, editorial commentary sees fit to inform us about nineteenth-century church rebuilding and other matters, such as the disappearance of Dunwich. Thus, though the different county sections of Dowsing's journal have been re-united in this edition, the prolix editorial apparatus has the paradoxical effect of splitting it up again (in a different way). The reader struggles to move through Dowsing's own text uninterruptedly.

It is certainly worth the effort, however. Dowsing's commission as "Iconoclast General" came in December 1643 from the Earl of Manchester, commander of the army of the Eastern Association, who in so doing undoubtedly took the first Parliamentary Ordinance against monuments of idolatry at more than face value. Dowsing moved into action very much as Manchester's man--and was seen as such. The Earl's eclipse at the end of the following year was the preliminary to Dowsing's own. But in the space of less than a year, Dowsing, with the aid of deputies drawn usually from a circle of friends and family, hurled himself into action, targeting stained glass images; statuary; roof bosses; elevated, railed-off altars; prayer inscriptions on church brasses; and stone crosses. Angels and cherubim were designated as prime targets for demolition or defacement. At Haverhill, Suffolk, for example on January 6, 1644 Dowsing records: "We brake down about a hundred superstitious pictures; and seven fryers hugging a nun; and the picture of God, and Christ; and divers others very superstitious. And 200 had been broke down afore I came. We took away 2 popish inscriptions with ***Ora pro nobis*** and we beat down a great stoneing cross on the top of the church" (p. 214). The church at Laxfield, Suffolk, Dowsing's birthplace, received similar treatment on July 17, 1644. Sometimes churchwardens and clergy of parish churches assisted in the good work; at other times the iconoclast met with open resistance or non-cooperation. At Pembroke College Dowsing, an autodidact not a university graduate, brushed aside all the objections raised by the Fellows and firmly insisted that they were in error. The combination of his army background and his unflinching faith clearly served Dowsing well in any company.

Team editing of a single text undoubtedly has its pros and cons and relatively few other examples from English history spring to mind. One which does, and from a rather later period, is ***The Autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster 1665-1752*** which J. D. Marshall and a team of eight other editors brought out in 1967. Trevor Cooper, Dowsing's principal editor, had three others working with him. Their complementary specialties clearly made possible a useful division of labor--the most obvious advantage of joint publication--but repetition (the downside of the same enterprise) has not always been avoided and some of the stockpiling of detail at times verges on the antiquarian. In one sense, obviously, the outcome of all this scrupulously painstaking labor is a definitive edition of Dowsing's journal, but the editors themselves admit at several points that particular lines of enquiry have not been followed and appendix 16 consists (unusually) of a substantial list of unanswered questions of varying importance. One of these relates to the oil portrait "said to be of William Dowsing" which appears

opposite the main title page. Its provenance, to say the least, looks dubious and it really does look too late for the period in question.

The editors provide much information about Dowsing himself and his reputation, his family, and his deputies, and the Cambridgeshire and Suffolk contexts in which he figured. Much is said, helpfully, about iconoclasm elsewhere in East Anglia and about the text of the journal and its earlier editors. John Morrill, though not one of the editors, contributes a much-revised version of an essay on Dowsing which first appeared in 1993. Drawing on evidence relating to the iconoclast's library and reading habits--he was an avid collector of Long Parliament fast sermons--he makes a telling case for Dowsing to be recognized as a man of conscience, a devout, if bureaucratic, puritan who passionately believed in the necessity of his actions. The images under attack, he was absolutely convinced, were irreligious and spiritually harmful and had no aesthetic value of their own.

The "Dowsinging" of two counties is abundantly documented in this bulging edition of the iconoclast's journal (complete with the pseudo-seventeenth-century title page the editors have jokingly invented for themselves, p.150). Given the widespread destruction which dominates this text it is not a little ironic that one of the editors (Robert Walker) should be employed as a Conservation Manager and that the foreword should be provided by the Secretary of the Council for the Care of Churches.