

former chaplain to Charles I to encourage support amongst his congregation for the exiled monarch. The pulpit, like the press, was an avenue which could be used to gain and mould public support. A sermon could be given which would comment upon the politics of the day through the clever use of biblical analogies. The Church of England had been a powerful ally to previous monarchs, and had buttressed the myth of the divine right of kings. The civil war had destroyed the very fabric of that myth but it was now, in the early months of 1660, winning favour amongst some of the clergy and the people. However, if one was to offer a sermon with some political content one had to be prepared for the consequences. Matthew Griffith had reminded his congregation, on Sunday 25 March 1660, that to usurp the divine relationship of God and King was to court destruction. The sermon delivered by Griffith would bring into conflict, once again, John Milton and Roger L'Estrange.

Griffith had chosen Proverbs XXIV: 21 as the text for his sermon on the 25 March: 'My son, fear God and the King, and meddle not with them that be seditious or desirous of change.' Solomon's statement was the pretext for Griffith's extended commentary on the nation's problems lightly veiled by a tissue of biblical and mythological references. His intent was obvious when the 'seditious' were stated to be the party responsible for:

first kindling the coals and their blowing up the quarrel betwixt king and Parliament: till to gratifie their own factions, and satisfie themselves and their own friends, they had brought us to this generall want, & woes, through want of Religion . . .¹⁶

Griffith's confidence exceeded his tact and on 31 March he registered the sermon for publication in Stationers' Hall. However, the clearly political sermon carried a dedicatory epistle to General Monck and appended *The Samaritan Revived* in which he offered remedies and 'speedy healing of our present dangerous Distractions'. The opening Epistle must have been an unwanted embarrassment to General Monck:

My Lord, as it must needs grieve you to see these three distressed kingdoms lye like a Body without a Head . . . You may by this one Act [the restoration of Charles] ennoble and eternize your selfe more in the hearts and chronicles of these three kingdoms . . . It is greater to make a King; then to be one.¹⁷

The premature and tactless pronouncement seen alongside the contents of his pamphlet made Griffith an unwitting danger and in order to placate the anger of powerful Republicans he was arrested and placed in Newgate 'for writing and publishing a seditious and libellous book'.¹⁸ Four days later Serjant Northfolk was issued with