

Charles W. A. Prior and Glenn Burgess, eds. *England's Wars of Religion, Revisited*.

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These are papers presented at a conference to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of John Morrill's article "The Religious Context of the English Civil War." In that piece Morrill argued that rather than being the first modern revolution the events of the mid-seventeenth century were the "last of the wars of religion." The authors convened to examine the question of whether the concept of the wars of religion was a valuable heuristic or simply an elegant turn of phrase. In a forthright introduction, Glenn Burgess surveys the long historiography of the English Revolution and the ways in which its religious aspects have been elided into political ones. Even after Morrill's call to arms (or rather to souls) Burgess finds little movement toward an interpretation of the revolutionary period that privileges religion over politics. Indeed, he admits that the latest developments in the history of political thought have marginalized the significance of religious motivation, a theme taken up at the beginning of a valuable essay by Jeffrey Collins.

Burgess's riposte is to remind us that in the seventeenth century it was impossible to separate religious and political concerns. If in the modern world the personal is the political, in the early modern one the religious was the political. There is no denying the intertwining, but this was surely not Morrill's point. He has argued vigorously that those who impelled the revolution forward were inspired by their godly beliefs and that they measured all of their revolutionary actions by religious standards. They viewed their opponents as apostates and their struggle as Manichean.

One need only look to the period before 1640 to find the historiography for which Morrill pined. The story of the pre-revolutionary era once was told in political terms as the high road to civil war. It was a series of constitutional conflicts beginning with the Apology of the Commons in 1604 and whose mile markers were the Protestation of 1621, the Petition of Right, and the great legal case against

Ship Money, *Rex v. Hampden*. Such an account disappeared a generation ago. The pre-revolutionary crisis instead became a struggle to preserve the Calvinist church from the crypto-papism of the episcopate and the crown. It is written entirely in terms of religion, emphasizing the fine points of Calvinist theology, ecclesiology, and liturgy and the even finer points of its Arminian opposition. And it is a story that stops dead with the publication of the canons of 1640.

The essays in this collection attempt to repair this interpretive disjunction, though only Alan Cromartie meets the challenge head on in a sparkling piece on the mind of William Laud. Elsewhere, Ronald Asch and Robert von Friedenburg expand the horizons of the subject by adding European comparisons, Asch on the French concept of sacred kingship, Friedenburg on the relationship between the Counter-Reformation and popish plots. One of the more curious aspects of this collection is that while its subject is religion, many of its authors are known for their work on political thought. Even those who have contributed directly to our understanding of midcentury religion here take the opportunity to write about religion as ingress to ideas. Rachel Foxley examines Oliver Cromwell's articulation of his reasons for fighting by unpacking a resistance theory that she finds to have deeper secular than sacred roots. Cromwell was never a contemplative man and the consonance between his sentiments and those of classic resistance theory are an expression of what might be called atmospheric ideas, political thinking rather than political thought as Morrill might have it. Sarah Mortimer makes a similar discovery in her treatment of the concept of natural law. Even parliamentary divines took a conservative approach to the concept of Holy War and used it cautiously. Michael Braddick's examination of the prayer book and the protestation has the merit of maintaining focus on concrete religious issues in the early years of the Long Parliament, but he too is decidedly uncomfortable with the either/or nature of the distinction between an event of religious or constitutional significance. He reminds us that context is everything and that context is always in flux. It is a dizzying conclusion and may stand as epitaph for a collection of essays whose historiographical context is far different than the one in which Morrill, perhaps over-schematically, propounded the thesis of England's Wars of Religion.

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