

Perhaps more controversially, Vale argues that Henry V's particular interest in the reform of monastic houses (including the dissolution of alien priories) and his confirmation of earlier statutes restraining papal jurisdiction in England suggest he was "beginning to cast himself in the role of 'Supreme Head and Governor' of the Church in England" a century before Henry VIII (130). Given ongoing concerns about the spread of Hussitism in Bohemia (and Lollardy closer to home) and uncertainty over the extent of papal power in the wake of the Schism, Henry's concern with reform is understandable. Moreover, as Vale himself points out, Henry V was also enthusiastic in establishing and protecting monastic institutions (such as the Brigittine double monastery of Syon and the Carthusians at Sheen), and left them significant provisions (in the form of both money and books) in his will. In light of this, it seems less obvious how Henry V's dissolution of the alien priories (whose mother houses were in lands of French allegiance during the Hundred Years War, and were thus of political as well as financial interest) represented "a smaller-scale prefiguration of Henry VIII's later complete suppression of the monasteries" (149).

Vale covers a lot of ground in his thematic exploration of Henry V's thoughts and actions beyond the battlefield, though it would have been interesting to hear more about the king's letters "in English, in his own hand" to "his own kinsmen or kinswomen" (71–72), which might have revealed an even more personal voice than can be gleaned from his administrative notes. Yet, as Vale himself notes, any attempt to fully capture the lived experience of any historical figure (especially a king, shrouded in layers of bureaucratic ritual and formulaic rhetoric) is doomed to be frustratingly incomplete. Nonetheless, through his sensitive and detailed reading of the surviving archival material, Vale allows us to hear an echo of the king's own voice (and even a pluck from his own royal harp), which would otherwise be lost amid the battle cries of Agincourt.

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John Walter's tightly argued and richly detailed *Covenanting Citizens: The Protestation Oath and Popular Political Culture in the English Revolution* is a significant contribution to English Revolution scholarship, and in particular to the scholarship on the outbreak of the Civil War. But that alone does not begin to encapsulate the importance of *Covenanting Citizens*, both historiographically and methodologically. As Walter notes in his short, crisp introduction, Patrick Collinson's nearly three-decade old invitation to historians of early modern England to write "history with the politics put back" (2n2) has taken some time for scholars of the 1640s and 1650s to answer. Walter's study directly addresses that lacunae as it considers the social depth of politics during the English Revolution while also establishing an approach that demonstrates the significant connections between high and popular politics, and the local and national arenas of pre-Civil War England.

The reader interested only in the months before the outbreak of the Civil War will obviously find much of interest here. One of Walter's central aims of *Covenanting Citizens* is to address the abiding question of how and why Parliament was able to mobilize a military comprising of people who might ordinarily consider themselves loyal to their monarch. For Walter, the

Protestation Oath was important because it provided a diverse range of people—including those usually excluded by age, gender, and class—with agency to protest against the threat to the reformed religion from all popery. In one of his most insightful analyses, Walter suggests that taking the Protestation Oath bestowed obligations upon subscribers, conferring on them an “office” (199). Moreover, the Protestation Oath provided Parliament with the opportunity to establish and legitimize its authority. Taken together, these two strands created a space for the emergence of an “active citizenry” (232) who were bound to support Parliament in its defense of protestation, the king, and, ultimately, itself. The upshot was the fostering of a popular parliamentary culture that Parliament could mobilize for war. Walter argues that conscience is the key to understanding how Parliament was able to mobilize for a civil war. Advancing recent work on oaths and oath taking, Walter demonstrates how conscience had a “radical dynamic” (224, 243): Parliament could promote the obligations of the oath, while crowds could draw upon it to legitimize their own actions against opponents. In short, the people were given an active role in the reform of the church and state. The implications of Walter’s arguments should provoke renewed debate surrounding the outbreak of war and how far Parliament was anticipating a war throughout 1641.

The beguiling effortlessness of Walter’s exposition is underpinned by a substantial amount of archival digging for Protestation returns: the lists that detail the names of subscribers and nonsubscribers to the oath. Walter reads these returns, alongside the two significant versions of the Protestation of May 1641 and January 1642, and a wealth of print and manuscript material with an eye to interrogating the social and cultural history of the Protestation Oath. The wide distribution of the Protestation Oath across the country, through a variety of networks, associates, and activists allows Walter to make convincing statements about the reach, impact, and diverse reception of the Protestation Oath. Although Walter does not explicitly state it, *Covenanting Citizen* is a microhistorical analysis of “an-out-of-the ordinary event” (4).

Throughout the book, Walter offers a series of close readings of the Protestation Oath in a variety of contexts. Beginning with the first introduction of the Protestation Oath in 1641, Walter carefully details how the case for the oath was made and promoted. From there, he meticulously describes the networks of associates and activists, from the parliamentary leadership downwards to parish level advocates, who promulgated the text of the Protestation Oath, debated its meaning, identified the most opportune moments to encourage subscription, and created rituals for taking the oath. In each chapter Walter offers a thick description of the contexts upon which parliamentary leaders capitalized to introduce and then make the Protestation Oath.

The limitations of *Covenanting Citizens* are a necessary result of method and focus. Walter is alive to the shortcomings of his own approach. In a brief set of concluding comments, he leaves us with tantalizing questions about the Protestation Oath’s longer-term legacy, its effects upon parliamentary governance, the impact of exhorting the public to active citizenry, and the broader shifts from subject to citizen to which the study gestures. More specifically, some may question the minutiae of his interpretations, especially on those occasions when his arguments turn on a close reading of texts. For example, his dissection of the early draft of the Protestation Oath requires a careful exposition of the fine differences between the draft and the later version recorded of the oath in the House of Commons’ *Journal*, which has been repeated without significant comment by later scholars. For Walter, the omission of keywords from the *Journal* copy point to an oath that initially had a more “radical intention” (44, Walter’s emphasis) than the later toned down and more conservative Protestation Oath that was finally produced. Walter *is* convincing here, but the limits of the evidence forces him to take a circuitous path to his conclusion.

With *Covenanting Citizens* Walter resurrects the Protestation Oath as a crucial part of the experience of the English Revolution, acknowledging what contemporaries, from the top to the bottom of society, knew immediately. While Walter’s study is about the making of the

Protestation Oath, it is equally about the making of Parliament and of a nation in those extraordinary months of the early 1640s. It is a landmark study.

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