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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Bernard Capp. *England's Culture Wars: Puritan Reformation and Its Enemies in the Interregnum, 1649-1660.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. xiii + 274 pp. $125.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-964178-9.

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Published on H-Albion (May, 2013)
Commissioned by Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth

This People I Have Formed

For historians of early modern England, the interregnum is both familiar and not. On the one hand, it is the context that produced many of the major works in political philosophy of the seventeenth century, while on the other hand it saw a major reordering of the political landscape. We tend to focus on the larger features: Oliver Cromwell and his fraught relations with Parliament, the settling of the church around a version of Congregationalism, the gradual centralization of power, the republican backlash, and the fall of the Protectorate. There is much darkness and failure: Drogheda and Wexford, the treatment of John Lilburne, the Western Design, and the rule of the Major Generals, for example. Yet the 1650s are also sometimes puzzling. Did they actually ban Christmas? And alehouses? And dancing? Many other untested assumptions about the rule of the godly abound, and the result is that the interregnum can be mistaken as a dour theocracy.

Bernard Capp's new book adds significant depth and nuance to our view of this period, by focusing on how contemporaries used the revolution as a point of departure for the fundamental reform of English society. Broadly speaking, the reformers were motivated by godly zeal and the desire to establish a civic commonwealth that was animated by humanist values, such as civility and good order. In this sense, the aims of the reformers agreed with the social values of the nobility, magistrates, and city corporations, all of which were underpinned by the humanist elements instilled through formal education. However, this was not a unified movement but a spectrum, along which positions were defined by the relative proportion of godliness to civility.

The book is divided into three parts. The first concentrates on the various loci of political power, and here chapters examine the program of legislative reform carried on by the interregnum parliaments, by the government and the church at the county and local levels, and in an excellent chapter by propaganda and the press. The second part consists of six detailed chapters that take up the puritan "reformation of manners." This was a broad effort, aimed at curtailing swearing and blasphemy and enforcing the observance of the Sabbath. Yet Capp reminds us that there was a larger purpose in making people behave: for the godly, the great unfinished work of reformation was the agenda that guided them. After all, the failure to achieve a consensus on important ecclesiological issues was what marked out the godly from the rest, and Capp explores this theme in a chapter that looks at parish-level attempts at reform. The next four chapters examine spicier topics: sex, from the conventional to the extreme; drink and disorder; worldliness, expressed by means of clothes, music, and art; and collective pleasures of the theater and playhouse, sports, and hunting. The third part of the book looks in some detail at local contexts, illustrating that reform proceeded very much according to the whims and will of local magistrates.

All in all, the results are mixed. Reformers had to contend with a series of structural and practical obstacles. For example, the character of interregnum politics was fragmented. Parliament never really recovered from Pride's Purge and its cohesion was never regained. In spite of the desire to limit religious expression, a fervent climate of sectarianism remained. The Cromwellian state was itself not in a position to impose its will throughout the realm, and was obliged to settle for ad hoc compromises on a range of issues. As Capp notes, the state "willed the end but not the means of godly reformation" (p. 258). This left the godly to sort it out among themselves, and like revolutionaries the world over they disagreed as to who was fit to join the rule of the saints.

This brief summary belies the amount of detail and evidence that the reader encounters in Capp's pages. This is a densely researched work, drawing on over a dozen national and local archives, letters, pamphlets, and ser-

mons. There are dozens of telling vignettes and anecdotes, all of which add color to the text.

However, the book is slightly detached from larger issues and contexts, and this tends to diminish its apparent relevance to any but specialists in the religious culture of mid-seventeenth-century England. Granted, Capp does provide some brief concluding remarks to show how the reforming impulse survived in Restoration nonconformity, but surely all of this detail adds up to something larger. For example, the material and arguments presented in this book go some way toward challenging the view that one major effect of the civil war was that the "state" emerged in its modern form. That is, politics transcended confessionalism and embraced legal values, secularism, and the rigid control of religion by the state. By contrast, Capp's work suggests that religious dispute continued to destabilize politics at all levels, and that the state, if it existed at all, was obliged to defer to local custom. Second, the book entirely overlooks the vital parallel case of the evolution of godly society on the other side of the Atlantic, chiefly in New England. There too, godly reformers struggled with themselves and others to establish a form of government (what Michael Winship has called "godly republicanism" in his *Godly Republicanism: Puritans, Pilgrims, and a City on a Hill* [2012]) that brought civil and religious values into balance.

These qualifications notwithstanding, *England's Culture Wars* sheds considerable light on the postrevolutionary history of seventeenth-century England.

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Citation: Charles W. Prior. Review of Capp, Bernard, *England's Culture Wars: Puritan Reformation and Its Enemies in the Interregnum, 1649-1660.* H-Albion, H-Net Reviews. May, 2013.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=37755

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