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Brennan Pursell. *The Winter King: Frederick V of the Palatinate and the Coming of the Thirty Years' War.* Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. xv + 320 pp. $89.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7546-3401-0.

Reviewed by Matthew O'Brien

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Scholarship and general works on the Thirty Years' War have long placed religion at the forefront of causes leading to the breakdown of the fragile confessional status quo in the Holy Roman Empire, which had been held in place since the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. Other factors, such as the relationship between the emperor, territorial rulers, and estates, are accorded a secondary role in this regard. Brennan Pursell attempts to redress the primacy of religion in bringing about the war by an examination of the role of constitutionalism in the Holy Roman Empire. He does this by offering a fresh look at the role of Frederick V of the Palatinate, arguing that Frederick's actions through the Bohemian Crisis and his acceptance of the Bohemian throne in 1619 to his attempts at restoring his Palatine titles and lands until his death in 1632 were largely motivated by his views on the constitutional nature of the Holy Roman Empire and were influenced to a lesser degree by his confessional fervor. Pursell wishes to prove through a close examination of Frederick[1]s personal, political, and diplomatic correspondence "that it is best to understand [the Thirty Years[1] War] as an extended constitutional conflict, entailing religious and political factors together, fought within the Holy Roman Empire" (p. 2). In this vein, Pursell follows those who view the Thirty Years' War as part of the process of the expanding state.

Pursell provides a new understanding of Frederick V. He does this by demonstrating how Frederick was the architect of his own destiny. Previous research has marginalized the Elector Palatine as the dupe of, among others, his advisor, Christian of Anhalt; his uncle, the French Calvinist leader, the Duke of Bouillon; and his court chaplain, Abraham Scultetus. This cabal, according to the older view, sought to manipulate the revolt of the Bohemian estates against the Archduke Ferdinand to place Frederick on the Bohemian throne--as a possible candidate to the Imperial throne. This placement was the culmination of a long-standing, Calvinist-oriented Palatine policy against what Calvinists perceived as the anti-Christ, Rome, and its forces, the Habsburgs. Pursell presents Frederick as the standard-bearer for all, Protestant and Catholic alike, who sought to prevent the Habsburgs from establishing an ab-

solute monarchy over the Holy Roman Empire, and Frederick is seen as the champion of the Bohemian estates to maintain an elective monarchy. Pursell claims that neither group held complete control over Frederick and his decision-making. Anhalt was most often away from the Palatine court at Heidelberg, thus, Pursell believes, not having the close contact necessary to direct policy. Bouillon counseled his nephew to decline the Bohemian throne and feared the reprisal of the king of France should he give direct military assistance to Frederick thereafter. Scultetus was no clerical firebrand. Instead, Pursell demonstrates that Scultetus often preached religious toleration and unity among Protestants and discussed the Bohemian Crisis with Frederick only after Frederick had accepted the throne.

Pursell is interested in showing how Frederick V "was usually in control of his affairs and determined the formation of his policy" (p. 19). Of course, Frederick must bear final responsibility for his actions. Yet in determining those decisions, Frederick continued to rely upon the advice and counsel of those who would validate them. And Frederick chose to ignore the advice of those who would not. It was only after Anhalt's urging acceptance that Frederick assented to the offer of the throne from the Bohemian estates. It was to Sedan, the seat of his uncle, that Frederick retreated to gather forces to protect the Palatinate. And though Pursell states that Scultetus did not have a direct hand in decisions such as acceptance of the Bohemian offer or reform of the cathedral of St. Vitus in Prague, the author gives every indication that the chaplain wholeheartedly approved them. Pursell does an excellent job at demonstrating how Frederick was at loggerheads with his father-in-law, James I of England. Frederick's actions threatened James's policy of irenicism. The English king believed that by accepting the Bohemian throne, Frederick usurped it from Ferdinand of Habsburg. Thereafter, James proved reluctant to provide military assistance to his son-in-law, instead exhorting him to submit to the emperor and renounce any right to Bohemia. Pursell portrays Frederick in response as a man whose honor could not allow him to submit. Again and again, Pursell describes how Frederick shaped his actions with an eye towards his dignity as a prince, an ideal that blinded him to reality. It is here that Pursell provides the key to understanding Frederick. From the beginning of the Bohemian Crisis, Frederick, Pursell writes, "manifested a character that would contribute much to the Thirty Years' War: his tendency to believe what he wished and to expect what he hoped for, in other words, an inability to distinguish the probable from the possible" (p. 73). All these judgments may point not to a man of firm decision but perhaps one who was unsure of his own capabilities, seeking advice from those he thought would be favorable to his own desires and rejecting that from those who would dash them.

While Pursell admits to Frederick's limitations in intellect and vision, at times he places too little emphasis on the importance of Frederick's connections to others. Frederick's close blood ties to the British and Danish kings and the Dutch Republic, as well as his leadership of the Protestant Union, made him more attractive as a candidate to the Bohemian estates than his individual qualities. His election as king, the estates hoped, would bring others to aid in Bohemia's constitutional wrangle with the Habsburgs. Pursell carefully reconstructs the constitutional arguments the Bohemian estates used to legitimize their refutation of Ferdinand's election and their selection of Frederick. At its core, though, that constitutional conflict emerged for religious reasons. The Bohemian estates chose Frederick, Elector Palatine, as Bohemian king, because he was a ***Protestant*** prince with ties to other ***Protestant*** rulers and princes, thus clearly linking a local conflict to a wider ***Protestant*** cause against a resurgent Catholicism led by an expansive Habsburg policy. Pursell quite rightly shows that confessional conflicts, such as the Juelich-Kleves succession, did not inevitably lead to war. Nonetheless, religious policies, such

as those pursued by the Archduke Ferdinand in Styria, and conflicts, such as that over Juelich-Kleves, and more importantly, that over the Letter of Majesty in Bohemia in the years leading up to 1618, made war probable.

Pursell does not want to separate constitutional conflict over the liberties of estates, territorial princes, and the extent of the power of the emperor from their religious context, but he seeks to separate constitutional and religious motivations in Frederick--not always convincingly. Religious conviction remained an integral part of Frederick's character. Pursell reminds the reader that throughout Frederick's many trials and tribulations, his faith provided him with stability and consistency in the righteousness of his cause. Yet, Pursell also wishes to prove that Frederick could "make political decisions without giving great weight to their clergymen's enmities" (p. 34). Frederick's visit to the Anabaptist community outside Prague and acceptance of their gifts, his overtures to rulers such as the Catholic Duke of Savoy and even the Ottoman sultan to join with him against the emperor, and the lack of reform along Calvinist lines of the churches of Bohemia with the exception of St. Vitus Cathedral and the Jesuit church in Brünn, Pursell asserts, all point to a pragmatism devoid of religious zealotry. This may be so. Another interpretation could highlight that the short duration of Frederick's tenure in Bohemia and the more pressing needs of the defense of his Bohemian title and lands precluded the more thorough implementation of Calvinist reform. The Catholicism of the Duke of Savoy differed greatly from the fervor of the Tridentine Catholicism of Ferdinand, thus allowing Frederick to treat Savoy as a possible ally. Pursell locates Frederick's anti-Catholicism within the context of responses to Jesuit-directed Tridentine Catholicism, but a contrast between the confessional fervor of Charles Emanuele and Ferdinand could further prove Pursell's claims. Pursell's suggestion that Frederick's attempts to solicit Turkish aid against the Habsburgs displayed his political rather than religious motives is intriguing. It might also have been a sign of his desperation. By 1623 Frederick had lost not only Bohemia but also his Palatine title and lands. He looked to any quarter, even the Muslim Turk, for help at restoring his titles and lands.

Pursell compartmentalizes Frederick's Calvinist faith so that it confirms rather than drives his politics. He concludes that Frederick's "faith cemented his constitutional convictions" (p. 293). One expression of certitude was Frederick's belief in the providential hand of God working in the world. Pursell points out that providentialism was a belief shared across the confessional spectrum. Indeed, Ferdinand accounted his deliverance to the workings of providence. It did more though to fortify Frederick's cause as a Protestant cause than a constitutional one. His entreaties for help from James and his correspondence with other Protestant princes, such as Bethlen Gabor, are infused with references to how his actions were part of a divine plan and how the will of God worked in his favor. These appeals to a common religious cause and the righteousness of that cause formed bonds for any coalition for Frederick. Constitutional issues over the liberties of estates and territorial rulers and the prerogative of the emperor provided the glue that held the religious bonds together. These were not as evident until the Edict of Restitution in 1629. The edict was a watershed. Ferdinand II's actions were a direct threat to the sovereignty of territorial rulers. A more firm coalition against an expansive Habsburg absolutist policy came together after this date, and it is only then that more clearly drawn lines between the political and the religious can be made. Constitutional conflict could not displace religious conflict at the center of the Thirty Years' War until then. I believe Pursell acknowledges this in the course of his work. Frederick may have embraced "the Bohemian rebellion out of a firm conviction of the legitimacy of their cause and their constitutional right to elect him" (p. 290). Yet, Pursell adds the caveat that faith often drove

Frederick's actions and provided those actions with consistency, stability, and righteousness.

Pursell's work attests to the difficulty of separating politics from religion in the early modern period. Still, Pursell makes a convincing case for greater attention to the political causes for the Thirty Years' War. He provides a good background to understanding the constitution of the Holy Roman Empire, and an equally good analysis of the constitutional conflict resulting after 1629 and the Edict of Restitution. This analysis will be helpful to historians, graduate students, and indeed a wider audience. Pursell could have made a stronger thesis if he had demonstrated a more gradual teasing out of constitutional factors from religious conflict from 1618 to 1629. Despite Pursell's pleading, the image of Frederick V as a misguided individual will continue. Through careful mining of Frederick's correspondence, Pursell brings greater focus to the part played by Frederick in his fate. This work also provides fodder for future research. Pursell asserts that Elizabeth Stuart, Frederick's wife, had little influence on Frederick's political decisions. However, her image motivated men such as Halberstadt to take up arms for Frederick. Pursell's study revolves around high politics, but a fruitful avenue for future research may lie in an exploration of how the image of the Palatine couple served to rally popular support for the Palatine cause.