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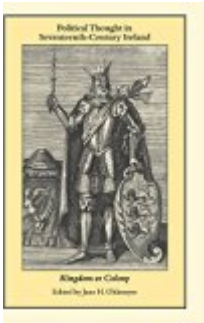

Jane H. Ohlmeyer, ed.. *Political Thought in Seventeenth-Century Ireland: Kingdom or Colony.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. xvii + 290 pp. $59.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-521-65083-0.

Reviewed by Karl S. Bottigheimer

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Between 1996 and 1998 the Folger Shakespeare Library and Institute in Washington, D.C. sponsored a series of three semester-long seminars devoted first to sixteenth, then seventeenth, and finally eighteenth century political thought in Ireland. Scholars were invited from both sides of the Atlantic, and their contributions have now taken the form of three volumes of papers, albeit issued by two different publishing houses. The volume discussed here derived from the middle seminar, co-ordinated by Jane Ohlmeyer of the University of Abderdeen, who also served as its editor. The Anglocentric Folger's excursion to John Bull's Other Island took place under the auspices of its Centre for the History of British Political Thought, and of Professor J.G.A. Pocock of Johns Hopkins University. Pocock appropriately contributes a summary "afterword" to this volume which, as a whole, can be viewed as yet another response to his seminal mid-1970s articulation of the "British History Problem."

Aidan Clarke writes on "Patrick Darcy and the constitutional relationship between Ireland and Britain"; Patricia Coughlan on the political thought of Vincent and Daniel Gookin; Patrick Kelly on William Molyneux and the sources of "The case of Ireland ... Stated" (1698); Raymond Gillespie more generally on Irish political ideas and their social contexts; Bernadette Cunningham on representations of king, parliament, and the Irish people in the writings of Geoffrey Keating and John Lynch; Tadhg O'Hannrachain on Irish political ideology and Catholicism; Jerrold Casway on "Gaelic Maccabeanism: the politics of reconciliation"; Allan J. Macinnes on "Covenanting ideology in seventeenth-century Scotland"; David Armitage on "The political economy of Britain and Ireland after the Glorious Revolution"; and Charles C. Ludington on "William Atwood and the imperial crown of Ireland."

In an introductory essay, Ohlmeyer explains that "the term ^Ñpolitical thought' has been loosely defined to include anything generated about politics in Ireland by thinkers of all ethnic and religious backgrounds, irrespective of whether they resided in Ireland or not" (p. 1). A generally appreciative summary and review of the twelve individual essays by Nicholas Canny can be found in

History Ireland, 8, 4 (Winter 2000): 47-8, and here I will approach the volume as a whole in terms of the questions it addresses. The problem which occupies all of the contributors in one way or another is the anomalous status of Ireland, constitutionally, politically, economically, socially, and culturally. Was it "conquered" by Henry II, or did its twelfth century nobles willingly put themselves and their subjects under the Angevin king's generous protection? If it was proclaimed to be a "kingdom" from 1541, how did that differentiate it from other areas with unruly populations, like Virginia, which are usually thought of as "colonies"? If it was subject to the Tudor (and then the Stuart) monarchy, what rights, if any, did the Parliament of England have to legislate for, or to adjudicate over, Ireland and its inhabitants? And what were the monarch's responsibilities to the people of Ireland, as distinct from those of his or her other realms?

All of those vexed questions are complicated by the variety of Ireland's communities, which, by the middle of the seventeenth century, included Old English, Gaelic Irish, New English, and Presbyterians from lowland Scotland; many members of the latter two groups being fairly recent arrivals. And the borders between the groups, though sometimes sharp, were at other times virtually indeterminable, due to intermarriage, intermingling, and assimilation. If each of these groups was capable of asserting a political "interest," something amounting to "political thought" was an inevitable accompaniment, despite the lack of an intellectual titan, comparable to Thomas Hobbes or John Locke. Political thought in seventeenth century Ireland flourished in the rough and tumble of daily contention and occasional conflict.

In his *History Ireland* review, Canny contends (*contra* Pocock) that the seventeenth century was "the truly ^ÑEuropean century' in the history of modern Ireland. First Spain, then Scotland, then France, Spain, the papacy, and finally France alone, successively joined with elements of the Irish population to challenge the claims of England (or Britain) to be the sole arbiter of Ireland's destiny" (p. 48). In Canny's view, a preoccupation with the divided loyalties of the Old English conduces to what he sees as an excessively British contribution to Pocock's "New British History."

Perhaps it is less important to establish which was the most disaffected community than to see the broad spectrum of disaffection embracing both natives and newcomers. The Gaelic Irish were disaffected because an expanding monarchy encroached on their traditional autonomy. The Old English were disaffected because their former hegemonic status was increasingly undermined. The New English, too, were disaffected in the late-seventeenth century because of the continuing insecurity of their land tenure, and the commercial discrimination against their exports in the English Parliament. And the Calvinistic Scots in Ulster were no less embattled than the island's other inhabitants. As English/British rule became more obtrusive and ambitious, it found few natural allies, although a pretense of loyalism was a card which every community was capable of playing when it seemed advantageous. Political thought in seventeenth-century Ireland is largely the story of political complaint against, and resistance to, the changing forms of English/British authority. This volume and its contributors usefully explore the many permutations of that theme.

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