

shared past for the benefit of future generations' (p. 90). Fusing the past with the future was central to the creation of communal identities, a claim which runs through all the book's chapters. Goodrich demonstrates that this was not only done through the writing of community histories, such as the history compiled communally in 1695 by the nuns at the Paris convent (based on memories and written accounts), but also through the practice of reading death notices. Readers might be surprised to learn that obituaries were one of the most important forms of *Life-writing* within the convents, 'second only', Goodrich claims, 'to the genre of statutes in their ability to establish corporate identity' (p. 95). Teasing out the construction, reception and significance of death notices is one of this chapter's great strengths.

In the final chapter Goodrich quells any temptation that readers might have to view these works as having only limited impact. Here she illustrates skilfully the ways in which these nuns, allegedly 'dead to the world', not only spoke to secular audiences, but also, through polemics, influenced wider religious, secular and political debates. The breakdown in the monastic order that ensued from the Protestant Reformation in some respects forced the nuns to enter into the world of what she calls 'imagined communities that substituted a virtual communion with the English Catholic counterpublic for spiritual fellowship of the cloister' (p. 126).

The book ends with an afterword, rather than a conventional conclusion: 'Notes toward a feminist philosophical turn.' This is a call which may not sit easily with her earlier assertions that 'recent scholarship has moved beyond the search for proto-feminist foremothers' (p. 3). Notwithstanding this criticism though, this book is a more than welcome addition to an ever-expanding field of the history of early modern female religious.

DURHAM UNIVERSITY

CORMAC S. BEGADON

*The National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant, 1660–1696.* By James Walters. (Studies in Early Modern Cultural, Political and Social History.) Pp. viii + 213 incl. 2 ills. Woodbridge–Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2022. £75. 978 1 78327 604 2

*JEH* (74) 2023; doi:10.1017/S0022046923000453

The National Covenant of 1638, to which most Scots subscribed to oppose the religious policies of Charles I, and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, or the military alliance between the English Parliament and Scotland to extend Presbyterian church government to England and Ireland, have long been regarded as formative documents in British history. Both documents have recently been subjected to fresh scholarly insights by historians such as Laura Stewart and Edward Vallance who have demonstrated how the covenants facilitated an unprecedented level of public engagement and were subject to different interpretations by the people who subscribed them. James Walters's book builds on these recent historiographical advances by investigating how the covenants were perceived in the decades after the Restoration of the Charles II in 1660 when both documents were proscribed.

Walters's primary argument is that in the decades after 1660 the covenants were relieved of their initial religious objectives and ultimately provided an alternative model of constitutional thinking that contributed to a pluralistic vision of Protestantism by the end of the seventeenth century. In short, the covenants came to represent a model of civil religion. To demonstrate this the book contains six chapters excluding the introduction and conclusion. After Walters sets out his argument in the introduction, the first chapter contextualises the covenants. Chapter ii focuses on the religious ambiguities that surrounded the Restoration, and how the supporters of the covenants initially hoped for a settlement that accommodated their views. The implications of the Act of Uniformity of 1662, which required ministers to renounce the covenants and assent to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, along with the mass ejections that followed this, are addressed in chapter iii. Chapter iv focuses on how the supporters of the covenants negotiated the conflicting attitudes of persecution and toleration that were promoted by the authorities in the 1660s. The role of the covenants during the Exclusion Crisis of 1678–81 are investigated in chapter v. Chapter vi focuses on how the ideas within the covenants became part of the constitutional mainstream after the revolution of 1688–9. Finally, the conclusion makes a further pitch to demonstrate why the covenants represented a form of civil religion and why their legacy should not be overlooked by historians.

There is a lot to be admired in Walters's approach. He has provided some welcome insights into the role of the covenants after 1660 and has shifted the focus away from Scotland, where most of the historiography tends to be focused. However, there are issues in the book that hinder the author's argument and could perplex readers. The primary issue is Walters's contention that the covenants came to represent a form of civil religion, or the appropriation of religion by politics to serve a more civic-minded and pluralistic vision of Protestantism. Walters makes this case in the introduction, but he does not carry it throughout the book. Furthermore, when the author does come to discuss the relationship between civil religion and the Covenants it frequently reads as though he has grafted a concept on to a source base that does not support it. Walters acknowledges that the covenants were not understood by contemporaries as civil religion, but often makes ambiguous claims to demonstrate how the 'civil religion aspect' might be present in the documents (p. 51). The analysis he uses to support this contention often comes across as vague and is not adequately supported by the sources.

The author's claim that the covenants came to represent a form of civil religion is further hindered by the book's suggestions that the covenants played a bigger part in English and Scottish life after 1660 than they did. Most Scots remained committed to the covenants after 1660 and only a militant fringe, which the author acknowledges, took up arms against them. In England only a small proportion of the dissenting ministers who were ejected after 1662 were actively committed to the covenants and their numbers declined in subsequent decades. The author is often unclear on who, exactly, were the groups that promoted the covenants after 1660 and he often suggests that the covenants formed part of the mainstream of constitutional and religious opposition to the administrations of Charles II and James II & VII. This is not to deny the importance of the covenants, as they did

provide the authorities with an example of what a coordinated religious opposition could achieve, but the author does not adequately situate them within other theories of government and religion that were articulated by contemporaries such as Algernon Sidney and John Locke.

The book's structure allows the author to provide some beneficial insights on key historical moments, but certain events are absent. It would have been useful, for example, to have had some discussion on the covenants and the 'Tory Reaction' of the early 1680s. Furthermore, as the work of Edward Legon has shown, memories of the covenants were a significant factor in Restoration discourse, but this does not come across in the author's analysis. The book could have also benefitted from a wider source base. The author relies on key printed texts to carry his argument throughout each chapter; it is unusual that a study of this nature did not consult relevant material in the main repositories in London and Edinburgh. Some of the author's analysis could have been sharper and less sweeping. Certain parts of the book, such as chapter 1, contain a lot of summaries of the sources and the writing style within the book appears colloquial at times.

Overall, this is a useful study that provides some valuable insights on the role of the covenants after 1660. The connections that the book makes between the covenants and civil religion could be more clearly defined, but it does leave the door open for future research on this area.

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

BEN ROGERS

*From toleration to religious freedom. Cross-disciplinary perspectives.* Edited by Mariëtta Van der Tol, Carys Brown, John Adenitire and E. S. Kempson. (Histories of Religious Pluralism, 1.) Pp. x + 306 incl. 6 figs. Oxford–New York: Peter Lang, 2021. £50. 978 1 78997 576 5

*JEH* (74) 2023; doi:10.1017/S0022046923000441

Concepts of toleration and freedom are rooted in modern-day political, social and religious discourses. In bringing together nine chapters from scholars active in the fields of history, law, political science, philosophy and theology, the editors of this volume seek to demonstrate how different perspectives and disciplines can help to make sense of how the theory and practice of toleration and religious freedom operates in the 'real-world'. The volume supports recent challenges to the assumption that the move towards toleration and religious freedom is defined by linearity, arguing instead that 'the emergence of the idea of religious freedom was far from a straightforward narrative of the eventual triumph of religious freedom over state intolerance and ingrained prejudice' (p. 2). The editors stress that inter-disciplinary discourse and collaboration is vital in coming to understand present-day notions of 'toleration' and 'religious freedom'.

There is a concerted effort throughout the volume to demonstrate how historical problems can help to shape responses to modern-day issues regarding toleration and religious freedom. The first three chapters are centred on seventeenth-century England. John Coffey considers the 'emergence of the idea of religious liberty as a natural right' and suggests that its origin can be found in Anglophone political discourse from as early as the English Revolution (p. 26).