more complex than a faultless saint. This book is well worth the attention of serious scholars of seventeenth-century France.

Brennan C. Pursell. *The Winter King. Frederick V of the Palatinate and the Coming of the Thirty Years' War.* Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. xviii + 320 pp. $89.95. Review by MARK CHARLES FISSEL, THE AUGUSTA ARSENAL.

This is a most auspicious inaugural monograph from a young scholar. Brennan Pursell begins by committing the sin of writing a biography for his first book. The personality under scrutiny is the star-crossed Elector Palatine, Frederick V, whose election to the throne of Bohemia by Protestant rebels in 1618-1619 prompted the Holy Roman Emperor to drive the Elector from his territorial possessions and thus ignited three decades of warfare. The author is then guilty of the heinous crime of suggesting that classifying the Thirty Years' War as primarily a war of religion is a misnomer, despite contemporary descriptions to the contrary.

One might conjecture that in place of religion, the author would ascribe a greater causal role to blind and overpowering forces such as social change and economics. Instead he resuscitates a pair of factors from nineteenth century historiography: constitutionalism and human free will (144). If the paradigms sometimes appear to be Victorian and Edwardian, however, the breadth of research is of twenty-first century caliber. *The Winter King* reflects a maturity characteristic of the work of a distinguished senior scholar.

Pursell demonstrates facility in languages, palaeography, and diplomatic. He discloses what manuscript collections were most useful and where he has used microfilms in place of the original sources. When discussing Czech sources, the author acknowledges that these came with German language summaries, and that he used the latter. In short, he is forthright about the evidential basis of this book, which is impressive in its scope. Resting securely upon these foundations, *The Winter King*'s succinct introduction outlines Pursell's argument. The narrative that follows is punctu-

ated with subheadings and analyses that are mostly of a political nature.

The author sees constitutional issues at the heart of the Thirty Years' War. The "constitution" of the Holy Roman Empire incorporated an electoral system, and after 1555, the protection of Protestant worship in many quarters. The imperial constitution therefore entwined within an ancient electoral framework the secular and the spiritual. The order and peace that resulted from good government included the *cuius regio, eius religio* that was the legacy of the Golden Bull (1356) and the Peace of Augsburg (1555). In other words, the ruler oversaw the practice (and safety) of the "official" religion within his domains. In the Erastian tradition that in the late 1700s would inform "constitutionalism," the secular sword was sharper than the spiritual sword. Paraphrasing Swedish Chancellor Alex Oxenstierna, "Religion was an aspect of public peace that needed protection" (267).

Safeguarding Protestant worship within the Empire and elsewhere was a major preoccupation for Frederick. While the Winter King was a "deeply religious man" (293), Pursell downplays his religious zeal: "Frederick's personal attitudes about religion . . . [have their place], but an exclusively Calvinist confessionalism seems to have had at best a limited influence in making his political decisions" (4). The Elector Palatine was not so much championing his personal faith of Calvinism, Pursell argues, but rather was defending his honor and status as Elector Palatine, the imperial constitution, and the rights of the Bohemians.

The defenestration of Prague signaled the assertion of the "constitutional religious rights" (44) of the Bohemians, not a rebellion against their monarchy or the Empire. Thus the assumption of the throne of Bohemia by the Elector Palatine was a defense of the Empire and its constitution against a subversive Emperor (*pace* Professor Koenigsberger). Frederick alone of the German princes possessed the prerogative to judge an Emperor in the event of an alleged violation of the imperial constitution. In such a situation, the Elector Palatine would summon an Imperial Diet and require the Emperor's attendance. In the case of an interregnum, Frederick

and the Elector of Saxony would serve as the two Imperial Vicars, maintaining a protectorate until the next imperial election. The integrity of the electoral nature of the Holy Roman Empire made inviolable the rights and privileges of its princes and prelates, the foremost of whom was the Elector Palatine.

At the risk of sounding pedantic, "constitutionalism" rested upon religious foundations, not vice versa. This is not merely a Whiggish cavil or a case of putting carts before horses. Was contractual government in the "constitutional" sense possible before religious pluralism and *de facto* toleration were secured in the seventeenth century and after? Pursell very reasonably admits of the possibility of anachronism in separating church from state (289), so perhaps it is not ungracious to suggest that in the seventeenth century (as was the case in the centuries that preceded the 1600s) affairs of state reflected a divine order. This would be particularly true for a devout Calvinist such as Frederick V and within a predominantly Calvinist state such as that of the Palatinate.

The pervasiveness of the Calvinist Covenant (witness the Scots' attempts to make the Solemn League and Covenant the "constitutional" basis for an international Protestant Cause in the 1640s) provided a spiritual framework for worldly pursuits. Contemporaries (i.e. the Scots) saw the wars as a cosmic struggle between Christ and anti-Christ. James I, Frederick's father-in-law from whom he sought aid, certainly judged the conflict swirling around Bohemia, disapprovingly, as a war of religion, and told his son-in-law as much. The Thirty Years' War was described to the Doge of Venice in identical terms, if in a different language: "questa guerra si facesse per guerra di religione" (90). Perhaps Frederick was at pains to emphasize constitutional aims because perpetrators of religious violence were breakers of the peace and destroyers of the polity.

Frederick's view of an ordained polity was reminiscent of the world of the Old Testament. Further, his almighty was a God of Battles, or in Frederick's own words, "God the Most High Prince of War." It was divine will that kings fight steadfastly and uphold their honor. Frederick's heavenly sanctioned bellicosity was shared

by his primary antagonist, Emperor Ferdinand II. Divine war-mongering was a conviction held by the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus, whose battlefield successes rejuvenated the Protestant Cause when he intervened in the war in July 1630.

Personal honor made individual initiative and free will important causal factors in the events of the Thirty Years' War. Pursell sees Frederick's conscience as an amalgam of religious faith and personal honor. Each ruler's (Frederick's, Ferdinand's, and Gustavus's) individual sense of honor narrowed the choices that he would allow himself to make. Ferdinand could not compromise with the Elector until the latter admitted he had erred in assuming the throne of Bohemia. However, Frederick refused steadfastly to admit wrong, which would be "an offense against his honor" (153). First, Ferdinand must acknowledge his violations of the elective nature of the imperial constitute (the most flagrant being the Edict of Restitution of 1629) and his unjust campaign against Protestant worship guaranteed under the law. Stubborn personalities armed with dogmatic constitutional principles thus perpetuated the first phase of the war.

In the final measure, *The Winter King* does not denigrate the importance of religion in understanding the Thirty Years' War. Pursell succeeds in balancing the holy and the profane, thus expanding our conceptualization of the place of religion in the seventeenth century. Justice, personal honor, consent, the preservation of the well-ordered polity, and the maintenance of individual conscience, were as much a part of the confessional divisions of seventeenth-century Europe as were liturgy and ecclesiastical organization. By emphasizing the constitutional dimensions of the wars of religion, Brennan Pursell places the conflict in a more authentic contemporary historical context. His careful dissection of the personalities involved and the decisions they made proves that while the wars of religion were distressingly endemic, they were not inevitable, but rather were within the grasp of free will.