

in Rome particularly worthwhile. Above all, he provides a valuable challenge to a rather monochrome understanding of how literature influenced ideas about sovereignty and nationhood during the early modern period. We often hear about the journey towards a modern, centralised, self-sufficient state but other paths were available and they were taken for rather longer than we might imagine.

John Walter. *Covenanting Citizens: The Protestation Oath and Popular Political Culture in the English Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. x + 266 pp. \$100. Review by BRETT F. PARKER, ISOTHERMAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

In this extensively researched and skillfully crafted study of Parliament's Protestation oath in 1641, renowned social historian John Walter advances two fundamental arguments. The first, which is the aim of the first two chapters, is that the Protestation was created and intended as a loyalty oath to both Parliament and the "true reformed church." It sought to secure and continue Parliament's reform agenda by binding the nation into a Protestant association. The second, developed especially in chapters four and five, is that the taking and administering of the Protestation revealed a level of popular political consciousness that justified violence and legitimized Parliament in its war with the king. Although Walter focuses his study on 1641–1642, he suggests that the Protestation served as a charter of governance and faith for the nation throughout the Civil War. It is these two claims that move the Protestation from the margins of English historiography into the center of the mid-seventeenth century upheavals.

The Protestation was born of fear and anger, specifically over suspicions that the king was preparing to suppress Parliament and free the Earl of Strafford from the Tower (13–14). Mistrust between the king and Parliament was exacerbated by swirling rumors of a popish plot at court, moving John Pym to lay out the idea of an armed association to defend both crown and church. Significantly, two questions arose immediately; one, what was exactly meant by an oath, a word that carried great importance in post-reformation England, and second, was this to be a Parliamentary oath or a national covenant. As Walter

makes clear, these questions were answered by the growing radicalism of Parliament and its “godly” members, who used the Protestation as a loyalty oath by which to extirpate opposition to their reform agenda (33–35). Of course, the Protestation was not without controversy, and suffered severe criticism from moderates and constitutional royalists who sought to highlight the Protestation’s promise to defend the king. This is an important point, one that Walter might have followed more in his analysis of the counties. What he does show is that much of the uneasiness over the Protestation, as well as its protean meaning, stemmed from the various copies of the oath, copies that historians have failed to take into account. These differing copies, he argues, reflect the concern many had over the meaning of “true reformed religion,” as well as the conditional promise to defend the king.

The linchpin of Walter’s argument is that the Protestation was not simply an act of Parliament, but a performance by the London crowds, city activists, and Puritan ministers in the provinces, without which the Protestation would not have become a national loyalty oath. This “joint achievement” was in part a spontaneous response to the crisis gripping London and reveals the intimate network of godly reformers who sought to arm the nation in defense of the church and Parliament (79). This coordination was especially salient in the drafting and printing of the “Explanation” of the Protestation, which Walter contends came from those outside Parliament who wanted a more precise statement concerning the “true religion” (62). Of course, all was not smooth sailing, as debate took hold as to whether the House of Commons had the authority to compel subscription to the oath. Such an unprecedented step was helped, however, by events in January 1642, when Charles attempted to arrest five members of Parliament for high treason. With crowds taking to the streets and news of the event circulating in print, it was then that the Protestation came “into its own” (78).

The importance the Protestation played in the events of 1641 and early 1642 meant that its meaning was fluid, and Walter seeks to show in chapter three how the Protestation generated intense debate over the nature of political authority and the role of conscience. The first area in which the Protestation was shaped was in the pulpit, where Puritan preachers like John Gere told parishioners they were

swearing a covenant with God to remove popery and defending the true reformed religion. This entailed a program of radical reform, including the elimination of the Prayer Book and episcopacy. Walter rightly notes royalist pushback against the Protestation, demonstrating how Parliament's authority was challenged and its members tarred with inciting violence and condoning seditious print. This dispute over political authority elided with the Parliament's appropriation of notions of popular sovereignty and mixed government. In an effort to assuage subscribers' consciences, pamphleteers like Henry Parker justified the Protestation by distinguishing the office of the king from the man (108–109). At the heart of the debate was the issue of obligation and obedience, as well as the ultimate question of where sovereignty rested.

If the Protestation suffered from “linguistic indeterminacy,” its importance was revealed in the nature, speed, and logistics by which the nation came to take it in early 1642 (111). Walter emphasizes two points: one, that Parliament was much more successful in shaping political opinion and appropriating royal machinery of government that has historiographically been given credit and two, the swearing of the Protestation demonstrates a politically engaged network of Parliamentarians, ministers, and local activists. A key source to making this latter case is the “City Orders,” a resolution drawn up by radical ministers in London that directed how the oath was to be administered (119–20). The “City Orders” provided a model for the counties, and surveying many county returns, judicial records, and ministerial letters, Walter concludes that it had much to do with the growing alacrity of taking the Protestation.

If the speed and direction of which the Protestation was sworn tells us about the ability of Parliament to seize political events on the eve of the Civil War, then how the oath was taken in local communities and by individual subscribers tells us how Parliament and people came together to form a political nation. Taking the reader deep into individual counties, Walter examines the thousands of subscription lists extant in parish registers and Parliamentary archives. What these returns establish is that subscribers were eager to take the oath and knew it was a sacred act, rightly carried out in sacred spaces. Engaging the masses in an unprecedented way, taking the Protestation was

a collective, individual, and public act (167). Nevertheless, Walter rightly highlights the fact that many refused to take the oath, especially more moderate ministers and, of course, Catholic recusants. The Protestation, therefore, helped shape local identity around “confessional exclusion” and “confessional association” (184).

The radical and hereto underestimated power of the Protestation was its illocutionary force. As the Puritan minister Richard Ward emphasized, “things protested must be performed” (198). This meant that taking the Protestation “bestowed an ‘office’ on all takers. It obliged them active to defend institutions and individuals under attack” (199). As a personal obligation to defend Parliament and the “true reformed church,” subscribers were even encouraged to inform local authorities of suspected enemies. The Protestation even emboldened some to appeal to the law of God to justify crowd violence, presaging the increasing diminution of the *lex terra*. All of this was intended to give marginalized groups a direct say in the state’s confessional and political identity. In the end, the Protestation was a charter of action and badge of Protestant identity, one that was appropriated and broadened as the Civil War unfolded.

Covenanting Citizens is a welcomed contribution to our understanding of early modern oath-taking and political engagement on the eve of the Civil War. Walter’s detailed and balanced research into manuscripts, diaries, and print culture, shows that the Protestation was much more than an act by Parliament; it was a sacred promise, taken in every county, to defend a reformed Protestant nation. What is remarkable is how central the Protestation became to the political upheavals of the 1640s as ideological positions hardened and the king became demoted in the identity of the new English state. To Walter’s credit, he does what so few works of the period are able to do effectively, i.e., show how high and popular politics intersected to significantly shape historical events. Walter’s argument that Parliament’s radical intentions fit the fears of local Protestants confirms that the road to civil war was paved with puritan intentions at all levels. One does wonder how this godly discourse played to the ingrained constitutionalism of the age or how this charter of freedom compared to the highly politicized Magna Carta. This study also raises questions about the politics and procedures of Parliament’s bookend Engagement Oath in 1650. It too

was intensely contested and given variegated meaning. Despite these minor considerations, *Covenanting Citizens* is a substantial contribution to seventeenth-century scholarship.

Palmira Fontes da Costa, ed. *Medicine, Trade and Empire: Garcia de Orta's Colloquies on the Simples and Drugs of India (1563) in Context*. Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015. xxiii + 279 pp. £78.99. Review by ALESSANDRO GIOSTRA, DEPUTAZIONE DI STORIA PATRIA—ANCONA.

During the Renaissance and early modern age, the hunt for new botanical species and investigation on their properties formed an integral part of medicine. New chairs in medical botany and botanical gardens were established in the most important universities. This new trend influenced the demand for more accurate naturalistic illustrations in botanical books and more complete descriptive publications as a consequence of the complexity of the argument. The growth of colonial empires helped increase Western medical knowledge, as Europe was not the only site of the botany-medicine interaction. This volume includes papers delivered at a conference, held in April 2013 at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, to celebrate the 450th anniversary of the edition of Garcia de Orta's *Colloquies on the Simples and Drugs of India* (1563). Despite the fact that Garcia de Orta had received a traditional education, he can be considered an innovator. His move in 1534 to Goa, the capital of the Portuguese empire, as Chief Physician of the Spanish Captain of the Indian Seas, allowed him to collect a wide range of information about Indian medical treatments. The final outcome of de Orta's investigation consists in this dialogical structured work, in which the reader is fully involved in this specific subject. The choice of adopting a dialogical form reflects his relationship with many different people, whose learning enriched his knowledge. He was aware of the didactic relevance of the dialogical form for scientific communication; through the dialogical form he intended to create a room where different opinions could be expressed. In the dialogue, Western medical ideas are personified by Ruano, a fictitious colleague interested in the medical practice.