

Wolfgang Palaver, Harriet Rudolph, and Dietmar Regensburger, eds.

The European Wars of Religion: An Interdisciplinary Reassessment of Sources, Interpretations, and Myths. Farnham: Ashgate, 2016. Pp. vi + 269. Hb, \$149.95.

This is a difficult book to review. It consists of twelve contributions, many of them extremely densely written, that discuss from different perspectives the relationship between religion and violence elaborated by William Cavanaugh in his rightfully influential *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Cavanaugh's aim was to dispel the myth widespread today that religion was naturally violent. This myth is rooted principally in the interpretation of three wars of the early modern period, the French Wars of Religion, the Thirty Years' War, and the English Civil War, as essentially wars of religion but it extends to many other conflicts as well. It was then the rise of the secular state, according to the myth, that tamed the violence of the religious wars and brought peace at last to Europe. So the new nation-state overcame religion and saved its subjects from the violence of religion restricting it to the private sphere.

For reasons of space I will restrict my comments to what I consider to be three of the most important contributions. Philip Benedict, the well-known scholar of French Calvinism, answers the question posed in the title of his persuasive contribution, "Were the French Wars of Religion Really Wars of Religion?" in the affirmative. In the course of the eight wars between 1562 and 1598, the role of religion varied, according to Benedict. But whether we look at the ways in which the parties justified their violence or the actual motivation for the violence or the level of institutional and international support for the parties, "the later sixteenth century was a period of wars of religion because in France once Reformed Protestants began setting up churches of their own and gained enough strength to meet in public in many localities throughout the kingdom, the most important question with which the kingdom's governing authorities had to grapple, and the one that sparked the most intense passion and the most recurrent conflict on all sides, was that of whether or not to tolerate two religions within the same kingdom, and if so, on what terms" (79–80). Of course, this does not exclude other sources of conflict. In an extended overview of the historiography of the wars, Benedict shows that after considering them for a long time to be religious conflicts, in the first half of the twentieth century historians tended to see them as fundamentally over dynastic and political issues. But subsequently when the focus of research turned to local situations stimulated by the work of Natalie Davis, scholars began to emphasize once again the religious character of the conflicts.

Harriet Rudolph in "Religious Wars in the Holy Roman Empire? From the Schmalkaldic War to the Thirty Years War" states that religion was clearly a significant factor in the conflicts. But recognizing the complexity of the issues involved in the wars especially regarding the constitution of the empire, she hesitates, wisely, to call them religious wars. She notes correctly that Charles V in the Schmalkaldic War proclaimed that his goal was to punish states for not obeying imperial authority, not to limit or suppress Protestantism; but privately he asserted that his goal was precisely to subdue Protestantism. So he hoped to win over some Protestant states to his side. Ferdinand II pursued a similar tactic at the time of the Bohemian rebellion. Rudolph fails to discuss the Edict of Restitution of 1629 through which the Catholics hoped to reclaim all the church lands that the Protestants states had seized, illegally in Catholic eyes, since the Peace of Augsburg of 1555. It was claimed already in the nineteenth century that this measure marked the high point of the religious character of the war. Before and after its issuance the edict was long debated between militants and moderates at the courts of Elector Maximilian of Bavaria in Munich and of Emperor Ferdinand in Vienna. The militants led by the Jesuit confessors of the two princes (whom other Jesuits opposed) argued that both princes had a religious obligation to support the edict, indeed that God was calling them to this measure. And the militants prevailed until the Peace of Prague in 1635. To answer the question about the Thirty Years' War we must distinguish the phases of the war and also for whom the war was religious, for the policy-makers, the soldiery, the general population? If it was only so for the policy makers, was it then a religious war? Perhaps the most that we will be able to say is that religion was a significant factor; there will never be agreement on whether it was the predominant factor.

Cavanaugh himself in his contribution "Secularization of the Holy: A Reading of the 'Wars of Religion'" asserts that his purpose is "the purely negative one of arguing that the idea that the state saved Europe from the violence of religion is highly implausible" (180). He succeeds in showing this. This idea elevated to a myth, he contends persuasively, has been used by liberals to vilify religion starting with the anti-religious Enlightenment. He does not deny that Christians killed one another for reasons of religion during the wars of religion. But in the concrete it was and is impossible to separate religious and other, especially political motivations. It was not as if the Reformation came first and then the growth of the national state. State-building began well before the Reformation and became closely intertwined with it. Indeed, the success of Luther's Reformation was as much the result of state-building as of the reformer's understanding of Paul. Cavanaugh cites Charles Tilly to the effect that "war

made the state, and the state made war" (178). It caused massive disruption within territories and internationally. Nor did the Peace of Westphalia lead to a long period of peace in Europe as the myth asserts. Cavanaugh might have pointed out that the war between the two Catholic powers Spain and France for hegemony in Europe continued as an extension of the Thirty Years' War until 1659.

Other contributions to the volume deal with the Hussite Wars (Paul Soukop), the war in the Swiss Confederation (Thomas Law), and the English Civil War (Charles W.A. Prior), and then with philosophical and theological reflections on the issue of religion and violence one of which looks in detail at the war in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s (Janez Juhant).

This volume, one hopes, will promote further research on the relationship between religion and violence. Several of the articles display many errors of grammar and style and point to inadequate proof reading either by the press or the editors.

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