



God's Fury, England's Fire: A New History of the English Civil Wars

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The sequence of civil wars that ripped England apart in the seventeenth century was one of the most devastating conflicts in its history. It destroyed families and towns, ravaged the population and led many, both supporters of Charles I and his opponents, to believe that England's people were being punished by a vengeful God.

This masterly new history illuminates what it was like to live through a time of terrifying violence, religious fervour and radical politics. Michael Braddick describes how pamphleteers, armies, iconoclasts, witch-hunters, Levellers, protestors and petitioners were all mobilized in the chaos, as they fought over new ways to imagine their world.

God's Fury, England's Fire: A New History of the English Civil Wars Details

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From Reader Review God's Fury, England's Fire: A New History of the English Civil Wars for online ebook

David Mcracken says

Relies heavily on original sources. That leaves it a bit weak in terms of narrative, but interesting. Couldn't read it without a computer nearby to search out random terms/names to get context. With those caveats, a good intro into the nature of English society before and during the Civil War.

Drake says

I often have to separate how good a book was from how much I enjoyed it, and this is no exception. This is a well-written, thoroughly-researched, thought-provoking history of the English Civil War(s), with good explanations of the theological as well as civil conflict. However, as I began to understand how religion determined the course of the descent into violence and anarchy, the needlessness of the conflict made me lose interest.

Separation of church and state is a technology, and one that we depend on as much as electricity or refrigeration for the maintenance of modern civilisation .

4triplezed says

One of the best books I have read on the subject of the English Civil wars. Heading into areas that I had not thought of previously such as the written word as a propaganda tool. Superb in detail with a rich bibliography and footnotes. Though not for the beginner or those with just a passing interest this is a highly recommended history for those looking to advance their knowledge.

Natalie Bleau says

Interesting

Tom Stallard says

One of the few books I've not only failed to finish, I've struggled to get started with. I'm not sure what in particular pushed back against me as I read this, but I only managed to get to page 158. It is highly academic in tone and didn't seem to highlight the importance of events beforehand, drily detailing the religious core of the war. I wondered for a long time whether the subject itself was too complex to properly write about, but have since found far more engaging books that bring this fantastic story to light.

Andy says

Definitely not a primer history of the English Civil War. The author assumes you know much of the causes, events, and effects of the wars. It includes almost nothing about Cromwell's role except for occasional mention of his leadership of the New Model Army which did not occur until well into the conflict. The author does expend much ink on the religious aspects of the war which pitted a sometimes loose, sometimes strong alliance of Puritans and presbyterians (who did not appreciate the Catholic-like idolatry of the Anglican church) against the Royalty and the High Anglicans. Also, the role of the Scots in the conflict was interesting to me. Since Charles was a Stuart, I had thought the Scots would have sided with the Royals, but their Presbyterian demands was what initially led to the conflict. Just goes to show you that no matter what war you read about, there always seems to be some religious cause to it. While it was interesting and well researched; his assumptions of reader knowledge was off-putting.

Lauren Albert says

It's hard to do justice to the complexity of the book. It is the first one I've read that focused more on politics than on religion. Though it starts with religious rebellions in Scotland and Ireland, these rebellions had political as well as religious results.

Braddick shows how England drifted into war or as he says "the war was starting with a series of whimpers rather than a bang..." He also shows how confused it all was "on the ground" with people varying in responses even with themselves. "Fear of popery," writes Braddick, "was juxtaposed to fear of religious and social anarchy. The really pernicious thing about these concerns was, of course, that it was possible to be equally worried by them all: the real political failure of the Long Parliament lay in the fact that they came to be seen as alternatives." He points to the same issue with the prerogatives of Parliament and of the King with people being forced to choose between two things that could have coexisted. One thing to remember is that there were not just two "sides" in these wars. The New Model Army ended up in opposition to the Parliament. Covenanters in Scotland and their sympathizing Presbyterians in England were disliked by others who felt that Presbyterianism was replacing one pope with many.

The people who lost the most, I think, besides the Royalists and Charles himself were the Catholic Irish. Accused of atrocities they were the victims of it during the Civil Wars with surrendering soldiers and their camp followers (including women) being frequently massacred if they were thought to be Irish.

Overall an excellent look at the complexities of the wars.

Alex Raines says

Now I know that Cromwell is an important figure to the ECW, I just know it. But, if you read this book, you learn nothing of the man. The book doesn't do a good job telling the actual story of the English Civil War(s).

Bethany says

Not quite what I was looking for. This isn't an introductory book and it also doesn't go into the Protectorate at all. Still, I am glad I read it - I definitely learned a lot.

Matthew says

Not knowing much about the English civil wars, I was seeking a good introductory history to the subject in "God's Fury, England's Fire". In this regard, it proved to be a frustrating read. I found the bigger-picture narrative of the events of the period to be swallowed up by the copious detail that Braddick brings to his work. In many ways, it read like a university source book, with each chapter almost cataloguing anecdotes and quotes on any given aspect of the wars. In my view, the book and the reader would have benefited immensely from a few chapters here and there along the way in which the author took a step back to summarize key themes and trends before diving back down into the supporting evidence.

Christina says

Painfully detailed for someone looking for an overview. There's no question the author knows his stuff, but for me, this is reference material and not a fun read.

Jason Beech says

Dense, but rewarding history of the English Civil Wars. I'm pretty vague about the conflict but I thought Cromwell played an intensely major part in it. He seems like a bit-part player in this study, as does Fairfax. However, if you like detail, this is a great book.

David Shannon says

Comprehensive Look at Religious and Political Motivation

If you are looking to understand the motivations behind the conflict this is a fantastic source. Does a great job of sorting out and explaining the various religious and political factions that were involved and shedding light on the shifting alliances.

Terrybisk says

As a norwegian reader with a general interest in history I found this book too academic and detail oriented.

But it may interest specialists. I don't think the book is intended for the common norwegian reader with just a fair prior knowledge of english history.

Chaundra says

A very interesting wide ranging view of the English Civil War(s). It is predominantly focused on the use of pamphlets as well as the maneuvering of various factions, both political and religious. It does NOT encompass (and in this respect I was a little disappointed) an overview or history of the development of religious splinter groups of the period. For those that are military history buffs, you may particularly enjoy his description of the battles and movements of the two armies.

One of the major themes that surprised me, but makes quite a lot of sense in hindsight is how much of these wars was an "accident". Neither side had particularly well defined goals and both found themselves fighting for very vague ideals, which in the end no one could agree on. I went into this book hoping to get a better insight into the British political history and got much more than I bargained for. Many of the authors conclusions are no doubt rather controversial, but in my view that's what makes it so thought provoking. A great start for those wanting a slightly non-traditional view of the period.
