



God's Irishmen: Theological Debates in Cromwellian Ireland (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology)

Crawford Gribben

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Conflicts between protestants and Catholics intensified as the Cromwellian invasion of 1649 inflamed the blood-soaked antagonism between the English and Irish. In the ensuing decade, half of Ireland's landmass was confiscated while thousands of natives were shipped overseas - all in a bid to provide safety for English protestants and bring revenge upon the Irish for their rebellion in 1641. Centuries later, these old wounds linger in Irish political and cultural discussion. In his new book, Crawford Gribben reconsiders the traditional reading of the failed Cromwellian invasion as he reflects on the invaders' fractured mental world.

As a tiny minority facing constant military threat, Cromwellian protestants in Ireland clashed over theological issues such as conversion, baptism, church government, miraculous signs, and the role of women. Protestant groups regularly invoked the language of the "Antichrist," but used the term more often against each other than against the Catholics who surrounded them. Intra-protestant feuds splintered the Cromwellian party. Competing quests for religious dominance created instability at the heart of the administration, causing its eventual defeat. Gribben reconstructs these theological debates within their social and political contexts and provides a fascinating account of the religious infighting, instability, and division that tore the movement apart.

Providing a close and informed analysis of the relatively few texts that survive from the period, Gribben addresses the question that has dominated discussion of this period: whether the protestants' small numbers, sectarian divisions and seemingly beleaguered situation produced an idiosyncratic theology and a failed political campaign.

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