



# The Winter King: Frederick V of the Palatinate and the Coming of the Thirty Years' War

*Brennan C. Pursell*

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Elector Palatinate Frederick V - the Winter King - would be an insignificant figure in the history of Europe were it not for the tremendous conflagration that he helped to ignite. Frederick's conflict with Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II over the throne of Bohemia plunged Europe into thirty years of savage violence, fiery devastation, and terrible privation during the first half of the seventeenth century. More than simply a biographical study of Frederick, *The Winter King* provides a fresh and compelling study into the causes of the Thirty Years' War. Examining the early stages of the war through the locus of Frederick, it reconciles the forces of confession, conscience and constitutionalism that affected Frederick's decision making at critical junctures throughout the crisis. By placing constitutionalism rather than religion at the centre of events, it offers a subtle yet convincing new account of the conflict. Drawing on political and personal correspondence, backed up with a wealth of archival and secondary sources, Dr Pursell presents Frederick's choices and alternatives and interprets his words and responses to them. Considering the war from Frederick's perspective he argues convincingly that the war is best understood not simply as a struggle between Protestant and Catholic powers, but rather as an extended constitutional conflict, entwining religious and political factors, fought within the Holy Roman Empire.

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