The number and range of books addressing the early Stuart period of British history continues to grow each year, and this is only good news for casual readers and serious students of the period, alike. It is now possible to obtain short, succinct treatments of the lives of key figures such as Charles I, alongside longer, more arcane examinations of a variety of subjects surrounding the turbulent seventeenth century. The reader, therefore, is presented with a growing variety of interesting choices and themes which will take him or her far beyond the boundaries imposed by what used to be known as “standard works.”
Typical of the options available are the two volumes reviewed herein. Christopher Durston’s *Charles I* is the latest offering from the Lancaster Pamphlet Series, which is being compiled to provide students with an introduction to major historical figures and topics. As the editors of the series stress on the back cover of all their editions, each pamphlet is intended to “provide a concise and up-to-date analysis” of given topics, by featuring “central themes, incorporating traditional and revisionist approaches, and using the most recent research to stimulate critical thought and interpretation.” Overall, the formula works very well. Durston’s treatment of Charles contains a healthy mixture of biographical information coupled with a clear presentation of the events and issues which dominated his life and reign, especially in England. Indeed, the work reads much like a series of lectures, in which Durston takes his audience through Charles’ life step-by-step, always introducing issues, presenting a variety of possible explanations, then offering his own interpretation.

The result is a balanced, though somewhat wooden portrait of Charles, as a prisoner to his own stubbornness. In reaching this conclusion, Durston makes liberal references to many recent studies of Charles’ reign, and indicates how serious readers might approach these works to obtain additional information and perspectives. Of particular interest is his discussion of the “Personal Rule” of the 1630s, during which Charles refused to call an English Parliament. Here, he offers a judicious précis of Kevin Sharpe’s *The Personal
Rule of Charles I (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992), which portrays the period as one of peace and prosperity for England. Durston clearly disagrees with Sharpe's analysis, but offers the reader an insight into this important work nonetheless. The capacity to introduce key historiographical debates into such a short work is thus one of Durston's true strengths.

As with any short work, there are bound to be gaps, unanswered questions, and outstanding issues which might have been addressed. Durston, for example, provides only scant treatment of Scottish and Irish issues, and there is almost nothing about these two kingdoms prior to the outbreak of the Bishops' Wars in 1639. One might also have wished for a clearer analysis of those who supported and opposed the king throughout his kingdoms during the War of the Three Kingdoms. On quite a different level, I found the referencing style featured in this book to be highly inadequate. As mentioned, Durston makes many references to other works, but does not provide these via scholarly citations. Instead, he opts for giving authors' names and book titles alone. Perhaps I am old-fashioned, but a publication aimed at entry-level history university students ought to feature footnotes or endnotes, and provide full page and publication information. While the decision to employ this style may have come from the editorial board, it nevertheless deprives the pamphlet of an opportunity to set a high scholarly example for its readers. In the spirit of the series, however, I have little hesitation in recommending
this work to those who wish to be introduced to Charles I.

The Celtic Dimensions of the British Civil Wars is
drawn from the proceedings of the Second Conference of
the Research Centre in Scottish History at the University
of Strathclyde, 5 April 1995. I was fortunate enough to
attend that conference and can only echo the comments
of John Morrill, who, in his introductory essay, notes
that the essays featured in the volume more than reflect
energy and insights which developed during the original
sessions. Morrill makes another important point when
he states that these essays by six Scottish and four Irish
scholars are not so much about the “Celtic” dimensions
of the British Civil Wars, as about the “non-English”
dimensions of the British Civil Wars. These are, of
course, two different things, although the distinction
tends to become lost within this volume’s title. That
said, these are ten challenging and original essays.
Readers who wish to study the fall of the Stuart
monarchy as something more than English issues
writ-large will find plenty to consider within these
pages. John Scally and William Kelly, for example, probe
the ways in which two leading subjects, the Marquis of
Hamilton and the Earl of Ormond, attempt to maintain
their loyalty to their sovereign, Charles I, as he blunders
into a three-kingdom catastrophe. Sharon Adams offers
a highly detailed regional study of the growth of radical-
ism in the Scottish South-West during Charles' reign,
while Padraig Lenihan debunks the notion that the
mode of fighting employed by the Irish Confederates
had become outdated. The essays by Ronnie Lee on
the Restoration Parliaments in Scotland, and Clare Jackson on Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh’s notions of political virtue, are especially poignant, as they challenge the reader to consider what the Covenanting Revolution in Scotland actually stood for, and what it accomplished.

It is sometimes difficult for young scholars to gain their first publications. For that reason, John Donald is to be complimented for publishing this bold and refreshing collection. If nothing else, these essays present the reader with a wide-ranging discussion of the non-English aspects of the British Civil Wars, and pose a timely reminder of the complexity of the British Multiple Kingdoms in the seventeenth century.

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