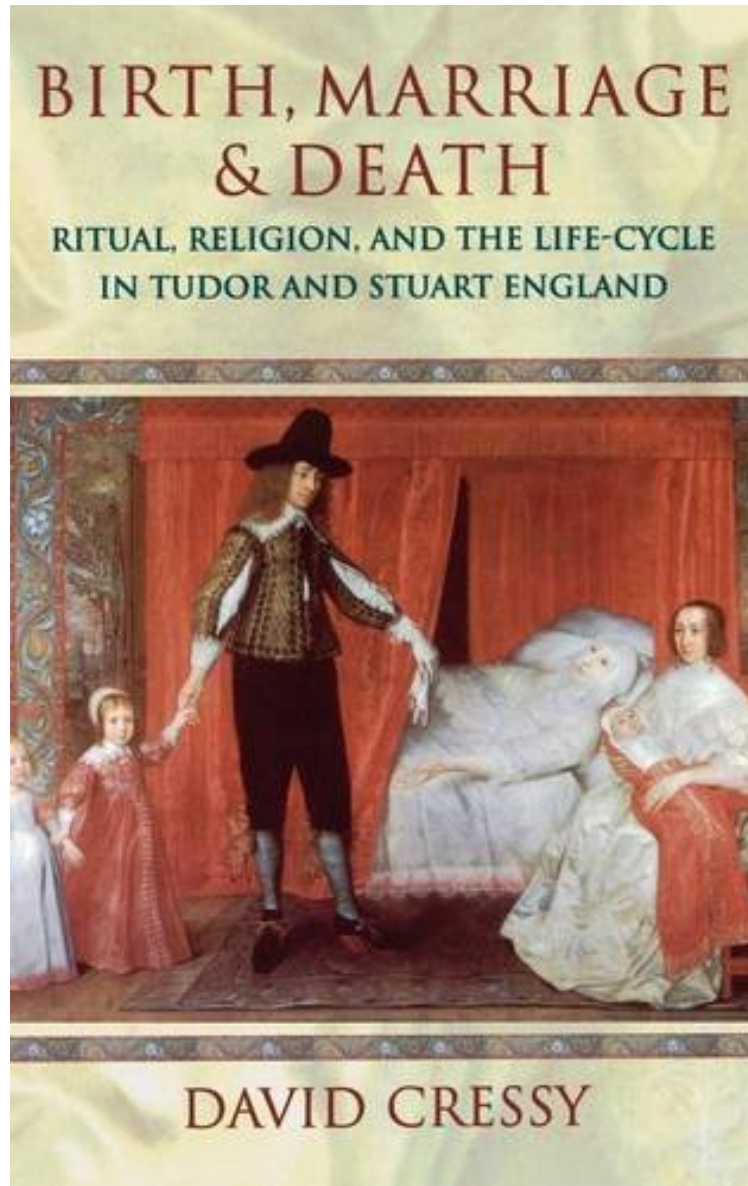


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Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England

David Cressy

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From childbirth and baptism through to courtship, weddings, and funerals, every stage in the lifecycle of Tudor and Stuart England was accompanied by ritual. Even under the Protestantism of the reformed Church, the spiritual and social dramas of birth, marriage, and death were graced with elaborate ceremony. Powerful and controversial protocols were in operation, shaped and altered by the influences of the Reformation, the Revolution, and the Restoration. Each of the major rituals was potentially an arena for argument, ambiguity, and dissent. Ideally, as classic rites of passage, these ceremonies worked to bring people together. But they also set up traps into which people could stumble, and tests which not everybody could pass. In practice, ritual performance revealed frictions and fractures that everyday local discourse attempted to hide or to heal. Using fascinating first-hand evidence, David Cressy shows how the making and remaking of ritual formed part of a continuing debate, sometimes strained and occasionally acrimonious, which exposed the raw nerves of society in the midst of great historical events. In doing so, he vividly brings to life the common experiences of living and dying in Tudor and Stuart England.

From Library Journal Both Cressy (*Religion and Society in Early Modern England*, Routledge, 1996) and Morrill (editor of *The Birth of the Elizabethan Age*, Blackwell, 1993) provide current scholarly insights into early modern England. Cressy writes for the specialist, while Morrill writes for the educated reader. Cressy's study of the life cycle in Tudor-Stuart England should be read by all serious students of the period interested in history from the bottom up. This work remains entertaining while depicting the pace of social change in the ordinary activities of real people and the divisive social issues that caused conflict among the 16th- and 17th-century English. Cressy provides solid evidence of the key importance ritual played as society coped with implementing the Reformation, and he demonstrates his scholarly depth by a judicious recognition of the diversity of experiences and viewpoints found in early modern England. Morrill has assembled an impressive list of scholars to provide both a chronological and a topical overview of the period. To broaden his work's appeal, he includes a high-quality collection of color plates and appropriate maps; he also offers useful study helps in his chronology, glossary, and in-depth bibliography. Recommended for academic reading and reference collections in liberal arts colleges. Susan A. Stussy, Kansas City, Kan. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Provide[s] current scholarly insights into early modern England. . . . Cressy's study of the life style in Tudor-Stuart England should be read by all serious students of the period interested in history from the bottom up. This work remains entertaining while depicting the pace of social change in the ordinary activities of real people and the divisive social issues that caused conflict among the 16th- and 17th-century English. Cressy provides solid evidence of the key importance ritual played as society coped with implementing the Reformation, and he demonstrates his scholarly depth by a judicious recognition of the diversity of experiences and viewpoints found in early modern England." --Library Journal "[A] remarkable book... Highly recommended." --Choice "...A masterly summary of the ways in which these past people are the same as us and separated from us..." --The Observer "David Cressy has given us a blockbuster, which immediately becomes the staple work upon its subject. Birth, Marriage, and Death is a massive compendium of information, showing what persisted and what altered in the rites associated with the life cycle and their social setting between 1540 and 1700... its material is so extensive and often so novel in itself that it opens a door on a lost world of experience, dispelling popular myths and removing areas of scholarly ignorance." --History "...remarkable book... Highly recommended." --Choice From the Back Cover From childbirth and baptism through to courtship, weddings, and funerals, every stage in the life-cycle of Tudor and Stuart England was accompanied by ritual. Even under the protestantism of the reformed Church, the spiritual and social dramas of birth, marriage, and death were graced with elaborate ceremony. Powerful and controversial protocols were in operation, shaped and altered by the influences of the Reformation, the Revolution, and the Restoration.