

Affairs of Humanity: Arguing for Humanitarian Intervention in Britain and Europe, 1698-1715

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Catherine Arnold is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Memphis in Memphis, Tennessee. Her primary research interests are in the histories of human rights and humanitarianism, religious toleration, transnational advocacy, and international law. Before joining the University of Memphis, she received her Ph.D., with Distinction, in History from Yale University and held a *Past & Present* Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Institute of Historical Research. Her first article, "Affairs of Humanity: Arguments for Humanitarian Intervention in England and Europe, 1698-1715," appeared in the *English Historical Review* in August 2018 and she is currently at work on her first book, which explores why and how a politics of humanitarian intervention developed in early eighteenth-century Britain and Europe.

The paper:

In the first decade of the eighteenth century, Huguenot polemicists and politicians reinvented natural law as a protection for vulnerable people. This paper explores why and how they did so. It suggests that Huguenots were trying to solve a particular political problem when they turned to natural law: namely, how to secure the release of a group of Huguenot men who had been sentenced to hard labor as oarsmen on the French monarchy's galleys after refusing to convert to Catholicism. Because the French monarchy insisted that these men were rebellious French subjects, they rarely succeeded in claiming foreign protection on the basis of naturalization, military service, or even shared Protestantism. Between 1698 and 1715, at the urging of the prisoners, and with their input, Huguenots living in exile developed a new set of claims for foreign protection, grounded in the moral obligations that all human beings owed to one another. They argued that intervention on the galley slaves' behalf was warranted because the French monarchy had treated its Huguenot prisoners unjustly, abusing them in ways that could not be tolerated in human society. Huguenot arguments and advocacy, this paper concludes, combined questions about moral, just state action with concern for victims' bodily suffering in a way that later came to define high Enlightenment rights talk and made possible the development of a politics of humanitarian intervention in eighteenth-century Europe.