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Hugues Daussy, *Le parti Huguenot: Chronique d'une désillusion (1557-1572)*. Geneva: Droz, 2014. 882 pp. \$42.00 U.S. (paper). ISBN 978-2-600-00554-8.

Review by Allan A. Tulchin, Shippensburg University.

This is a work of exceptional precision—its title gives a very good summary of its contents. It is an account of the evolution of the French Protestant party's thinking over the period 1557-1572. In the late 1550s, Protestants confidently expected France, with God's help, to become a Protestant nation. By the mid-1570s, they had lowered their sights. They instead merely hoped to be able to profess their religion in peace. Daussy's writing is smooth, limpid, and elegant. The research is simply extraordinary, both in primary (printed and manuscript) and in secondary sources. The bibliography is seventy pages long, and includes not only works in French but also in English, German, and Spanish. Its extensive analysis of the language used by the Huguenot party is usually well documented and convincing. Readers can rely on Daussy.

Nonetheless, many potential readers will balk at reading it. It is immense—approximately 275,000 words of text (excluding notes). If they do not want to read it cover to cover, it is a hard book to dip into. It has an index of names, but not places or subjects. Its organization is chronological, but its chapter titles and subheads do not give dates.

As the title suggests, the book is a detailed account of the Huguenot movement as a political party from 1557 to 1572. It does not give an account of French Protestantism as a social movement and it does not discuss theology. It aims to supplement the classic account of Bob Kingdon, *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion*.^[1] Kingdon focused on the creation of institutions, and Calvin's role in creating them. While Daussy does not ignore institutions, he instead focuses on the evolution of Huguenot thinking, both on the level of day-to-day strategy and on the broader level of its "political imaginary." Its account of the Huguenot leadership's attempts to obtain help from foreign Protestants is particularly well done. It shows that most foreign princes were unwilling to sacrifice money or prestige for their faith. *Realpolitik* triumphed.

The other major historical work revised in this study is N.M. Sutherland's *The Huguenot Struggle for Recognition*.^[2] As Daussy's subtitle indicates, France's Protestants gradually realized that God had not foreordained them to become the majority of the country. In the later 1550s and early 1560s, the movement grew by leaps and bounds, and its leadership presumed that this was a Sign. These extravagant hopes were not to be realized. Not only did Protestants not become the majority, they were even subjected to the largest massacre of pre-modern Europe, Saint Bartholomew's (1572), when Catholics—mostly under the auspices of civic militias and other organized military groups—killed thousands of Huguenots. This did not eliminate Protestantism from France, but it did reduce Protestant aspirations. Instead they would have to strive for toleration, for the right to practice their minority religion as they wished. Sutherland, as her title indicates, sees the entire period as a "struggle for recognition" but as Daussy points out, this was really only true after 1572.

Daussy begins his story on the night of September 4, 1557, when Protestants were discovered taking the Eucharist in Paris. Daussy uses this to symbolize the dramatic conversions that led to the increase of the French Protestant movement in this era. Henri II's persecutions did not prevent its growth and his dramatic death in 1559 seemed to Protestants to be a divine judgment. It also led to a political crisis as the young François II and the even younger Charles IX ascended the throne in rapid succession. The Guise family, much to Protestants' distress, monopolized power under François II. Protestants preferred Antoine de Bourbon, the King of Navarre, but he vacillated and generally failed to live up to expectations. Despite Navarre, French Protestants at this point harbored extremely high aspirations. They assumed that with God on their side, they would soon triumph and Protestantism would become the religion of the country. Unfortunately, by 1562 the wave was breaking. Leading Protestant champions were banished from court, and Navarre eventually turned against them--Theodore de Bèze compared him to Julian the Apostate in a letter to Calvin (p. 280). And then news came of the massacre of Wassy, which led to the outbreak of civil war. This also led to the creation of a "politico-military organization" (p. 385) designed to help the various French Protestant communities band together to protect each other. French Protestants also sought help abroad. Unfortunately, Europe's Protestant princes offered little to their French co-religionists for free. Acceding to Elizabeth I's demands damaged the reputation of France's Protestant movement. However, her intervention did help lead to peace in 1563 (p. 467).

All parties remained intransigent. Some German princes were tempted to insist that French Protestants adopt the Confession of Augsburg before they would offer aid (p. 468). Huguenots stubbornly continued to believe that God favored their cause (p. 506), and believed that Poltrot de Meré's assassination of the Duc de Guise was heroic (p. 509). Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that civil war broke out again in 1567, this time because Huguenots feared a conspiracy between the French crown and Spain (pp. 565-6). Thus although the Protestant leaders started the conflict, they saw it as defensive. This marked something of a turning point, since it suggested that they were fighting for survival, not to convert France to their religion. Still, they insisted on complete freedom of religion (p. 588), which left open the door to future conversions. The party also began in this period to develop more cohesive institutions (p. 597). Even at this period Protestants tried to avoid blaming the king, instead holding the Guises and other evil counselors responsible (p. 646). However, Protestants began to recognize the difficulties they faced (p. 671), which implied that complete victory might not be possible. They were becoming more realistic.

In 1566, the Dutch Revolt began, and this led the Protestant party to try again to internationalize the conflict. Since the Dutch rebels were also rebels against a Catholic power, Spain, many observers saw a relationship between the Dutch and French wars. They were part of a Europe-wide struggle--for liberty, or against heresy, depending on your point of view. The Huguenots hoped that German and other Protestant princes would now be more willing to help them, and began an organized diplomatic initiative (p. 678) designed to persuade them that they were all equally endangered by a comprehensive Catholic campaign (p. 692). These diplomatic efforts were at least partially successful (p. 704). However, although aid from foreign Protestant princes was quite helpful, it was in the end limited because German Protestants did not want the conflict to spread to Germany (p. 721). Nonetheless, in 1570 French Protestant leaders were still reluctant to compromise, because they knew that the crown was also at the end of its financial rope (p. 726). In the end, they signed a peace treaty that infuriated militant French Catholics (p. 729).

After the peace, the Protestant Admiral Coligny reluctantly went to Paris, this time to negotiate a deal where France would send troops to help the Dutch Calvinist rebels (p. 746). Catherine de Médicis also proposed marrying her daughter Marguerite de Valois to the Protestant leader Henri de Navarre. A united France could use its arms on its enemies rather than itself. In the end, Catherine and other royal counselors thought invading the Netherlands was too risky (p. 757). Coligny adopted an increasingly arrogant tone to the king, which is why the King, Catherine, and the duc d'Anjou were "prepared to

accept a decision which was so incredible for all observers who were not aware of the dispute between the Admiral and the monarchy," (p. 764), namely to authorize the murder of the leading Huguenots in the Saint Bartholomew's Massacre. This finally destroyed the Protestant dream of converting France to Protestantism (p. 765).

Daussy concludes that only a royal conversion would have led to France becoming a Protestant country (p. 769). Although this was unlikely, a French "middle way" akin to Henry VIII's might have been possible, particularly if Antoine de Bourbon had been more active and effective (p. 770). But the party's efforts to win the conflict by internationalizing it were ineffective, since they merely encouraged foreign Catholic powers to intervene (p. 774). The surprisingly durable myth of the king's good will--were he not manipulated by the Guises and other evil counselors--permitted Protestant leaders to continue to hope for a Protestant France long after they should have woken up to reality (p. 776). In that sense, Saint Bartholomew's helped clarify matters: "Faith in Charles IX being henceforth broken, a new era could begin, that of contract" (p. 777).

Most scholars of the period will not be surprised by the story Daussy recounts. But the story is very well told.

NOTES:

[1] Robert M. Kingdon, *Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France, 1555-1563* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1956).

[2] N.M. Sutherland, *The Huguenot Struggle for Recognition* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale UP, 1980).

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