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Raymond A. Mentzer and Andrew Spicer, Eds., *Society and Culture in the Huguenot World, 1559-1685*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. xvii + 241 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, bibliography, and index. $60.00 U.S. ISBN 0 521 77324 5.

Review by Daniel Hickey, Université de Moncton.

It is usually a difficult assignment to review a collective work; however, this is not so in regard to *Society and Culture in the Huguenot World*. Editors Raymond Mentzer and Andrew Spicer have done a top-notch job of selecting, editing, and presenting the twelve essays that constitute the book. Posing the question of what it meant to be protestant in France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, their introduction notes that the essays comprising the volume cover the chronological period from the 1550s, when reformed churches first set root in the kingdom, to the proscription of protestantism in the 1685 revocation of the Edict of Nantes. They go on to explain that each of the essays tries in various ways to reply to the questions first posed by Émile Léonard: who were these French protestants and what were their collective achievements and frustrations? Many of the essays take us back as well to the work of Jannine Garrisson concerning the strategies sought and pursued by the French protestant minority in its quest for survival in a hostile environment. Why remain a protestant in such a difficult atmosphere? What cemented the community together, reducing losses and providing a social and religious coherence to the group? The introduction presents us with one of the basic paradoxes that comes back over and over in the essays--the fact that the Huguenots remained fundamentally loyal to the Crown and the established order even as the French state became increasingly involved in upholding the authority of the Catholic church. The Edict of Nantes institutionalized this dichotomy, which remained a basic problem for French protestants right up to its revocation.

Organized in chronological order, the first six essays explore the theme of a developing identity, treating the beginning and the consolidation of the Huguenot movement in France. In a very exciting essay on the Reformed church of Lyon, Timothy Watson, instead of using a model of conversion based on the motives of the new believers, proposes to examine the mechanics of implanting the new Reformed community. To do so he divides the Lyon Huguenot movement into two phases: the way it spread and the eventual institutionalization of the national movement. To study the first phase, Watson sets aside the stereotyped models explaining why people converted to the new confession, essentially such works as Jean Crespin's *Histoire des martyrs*. Watson explains that such documents, drafted by looking back at the early proselytization and conversions, overemphasize doctrinal coherence and internal cohesion. Employing the more neutral and sketchy records of the Lyon city council, court documents, and private correspondence, Watson paints a more confused but realistic portrait of early Huguenot activity. Everywhere there is a mix of old and new religious elements. For Watson, it was only after the death of Henri II that the Huguenot movement in Lyon entered its second phase, consolidating with the national movement. Seen from Lyon, this phase was not as much about seeking new converts as it was about controlling old ones. It culminated in April 1562 when, at the very beginnings of the wars, the city was occupied by a protestant army. The capture of Lyon changed the conditions under which the Reform movement had been flourishing. For Watson, the earlier looseness of the Reform coalition had created ideal conditions for growth, but the events of 1561-62 forced it into "a rigid frame", hardening the lines of division between the two confessional groups. When the royal

armies returned to the city in 1563, the Huguenots were no longer "tolerated" by catholic councilors, and they became the targets of the newly energized Catholic church. Much as Philip Hoffman, who is strangely absent from his notes, Watson argues that the group was unable to survive in the more combative conditions of the wars and particularly when faced with the strikingly effective catholic reform movement.[1]

Continuing the theme of the proselytism of the early protestant movement, the second essay by Luc Racaut returns to the very Jean Crespin whose writings were deemed too ideological by Timothy Watson. However, Racaut's motives for studying Crespin are precisely to show how the *Histoire des martyrs* was an ideological construction. He notes that early versions of the work carefully avoided the more loaded expressions such as "martyrs" that began to appear in the 1580s (p. 36). For Racaut, it is the massacre of St Bartholomew in 1572 that gave a new lease on life to the theme of Huguenot martyrdom. It was this event that allowed Simon Goulart to redefine the status of martyr for French protestants, and the theme of the persecuted protestants emerged forcefully in his re-editions of Crespin, which appeared between 1582 and 1619. Philip Benedict likewise treats the emergence of a separate and distinct protestant confessional grouping in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. His essay distinguishes between strong and weak theories of confessionalization developed by German theoreticians. For the French case, Benedict rejects the strong theory, revolving around "control," and prefers the weak theory developed by E.W. Zeeden. In this context, confessionalization is seen a long gradual process evolving over several generations. Arguing for this approach, Benedict cites the long campaigns by both catholics and protestants in France against cross-overs, customs, and social practices that facilitated confessional co-operation and allowed members of one faith to choose god-parents from the other religion. He produces new evidence of such cooperation in Montpellier, showing that mixed marriages in the city might have reached as high as 5-10 percent of the total. He concludes, however, that if dividing lines between religious groups were more fluid at the beginning of the seventeenth century, there was a powerful tendency toward religious endogamy as the century advanced.

Increasing Huguenot cohesion and self-confidence is also clear in Penny Robert's essay on protestant petitions presented to the Crown in the course of the sixteenth century. She shows that the right to petition the Crown was accorded in a March 1560 edict, issued shortly after the Conspiracy of Amboise. It was hoped that granting this right would lead Huguenots to express their grievances through legal channels rather than to resort to arms. Roberts has studied the registers of the King's Council to determine the number of such petitions presented to the Crown and has tracked down a good percentage of these documents for qualitative analysis, although she never really gives us clear statistics on the different categories of petitions. Roberts' sources demonstrate that protestants were most assertive of their rights in the years preceding the Civil Wars; that in terms of numbers, the heyday for such petitions came during the years of peace established by the early wartime treaties, 1563-67 and 1570-72; and that as the war years advanced there were fewer and fewer petitions. Within this context, we are again confronted with the trilogy of players in the civil wars: Crown, Huguenots, and local catholic populations. For Roberts, the perception of Crown justice as being above the fray up to the 1572 Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre led to the Huguenot belief that it was possible to convince and win over the Crown, thus explaining the conservatism of the petitions and the use of these legal means to obtain redress of their grievances.

Finally, Mark Greengrass has contributed a very perceptive text on Huguenot letter-writing as indicative of another means of building up and maintaining an informal network of French protestantism. He argues that Reform sociability emerged in a variety of contexts and particularly through a systematic use of letter writing to retain contacts, sustain believers, encourage those confronted by difficulties, and organize the early church. Greengrass notes that French protestantism, a religion of the written word, put particular emphasis on such writings and followed the norm of letter writing between cultivated men. Such letters were often published and, like Racaut, Greengrass looks to Crespin to find examples of the numerous missives written by the early "martyrs" of the new church.

Written while they awaited their fate, these documents became powerful models for Huguenot believers. In the 1570 folio edition of *Histoire des martyrs*, over 100 such letters were published, to be circulated, read, and used to the greater good of the Reformation.

If the first section of the book deals with the building up of Huguenot cohesion in the difficult context of the sixteenth century wars, the six essays of the second section consider the reinforcement of the early church by new structures and practices extending from judicial institutions to education, poor relief, and burial rites. Raymond A. Mentzer begins this transition with a perceptive essay on the Edict of Nantes and its institutions. Discussing contemporary views of the edict as well as its historiography, Mentzer concentrates his analysis on two of the politico-legal institutions it created. These were, first, the Commissions dispatched to different regions of the kingdom to hear grievances and to persuade local elites and notables to accept and to implement the different clauses of the document and, second, the *Chambres de l'Édit*, the separate judicial court system set up to deal with cases involving Huguenots. In the case of the *chambres*, Mentzer concentrates on the case of Castres, the court for Languedoc. His analysis covers the types of cases it heard, the social and religious make-up of its judges, and the predicaments facing its protestant members, often torn between supporting the Crown or the Huguenot community up to the suppression of the court in 1679. Amanda Eurich continues the examination of the protestant judicial officers as she tries to isolate how the conflicting demands imposed by the Crown and the Reformed community led these men to develop strategies to protect the social and economic capital of their families. To do this she compares officeholders in Castres with their colleagues in the *conseil souverain* of Pau, capital of the autonomous and principally protestant region of Béarn. Examining land transfers and dowries, Eurich shows how each of these protestant elite groups prospered, efficiently managing the real estate and matrimonial markets to position its younger sons and to form an office holding oligarchy. However, they had to revise considerably their strategies as the Crown increasingly turned its back on the Huguenot community.

Other Huguenot institutions are examined in Karin Maag's essay on the academies and in Andrew Spicer's contribution on the temples. Maag considers the differing origins and goals of the eight academies founded in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and pinpoints the weaknesses in the structures they developed. Apart from Montauban and Samur, established and regularly subsidized by the national synod, the other six schools were a mix of creations by local nobles or municipalities. After 1603, the national synods tried unsuccessfully to impose standardized regulations and statutes for these institutions, but as Maag indicates, the divergences over goals, types of teaching, levels of teaching, and recruitment were too important. She shows that the enrollments of these institutions, never high, were on their way down well before Louis XIV closed Montauban and Samur in 1685. In his essay on the temple, Andrew Spicer provides us with an original interpretation of the role of the Huguenot place of worship. Arguing from Jean Calvin himself, Spicer shows that temples did not, like catholic churches, possess a sanctity or holiness of their own. Calvin, citing Saint Paul, held that the believer himself is the true temple of God. For Spicer, this approach helps us understand the temporary, utilitarian buildings that Huguenots often used for worship. Obliged to abandon the Catholic churches they had occupied during the war years, they often met in temporary structures, below a market hall or in shelters or covered barns, until more permanent buildings were constructed. Spicer notes that it was only in the early years of the seventeenth century that what is often seen as the typical protestant architectural style, the polygone, was developed at Charenton, Ablon, and Montauban. But by the 1650s and 60s, catholic protests against the legal rights of protestants to worship in numerous towns and haggling over the approved sites of churches led to massive demolitions (between 1661 and 1785, 650-700 temples were destroyed). The Catholic church saw these demolitions as a triumph over heresy, but for Spicer, this vision imbued the temple with an importance not shared by their protestant compatriots.

In going beyond institutions to practices, Martin Dinges outlines the originality of the movement's approach to poor relief and health care. At the same time that the Calvinist approach to charity was essentially family-centered, protestants were told that it was the responsibility of all members of the

church to look after the poor. Individuals were encouraged to bequeath money to the church for aid to poor families of the protestant community, aid that was seen as important in maintaining the internal cohesion of the group. Dinges strongly emphasizes how protestant theory contributed to building up the work ethic of those in difficulty. He documents practices that went beyond simply leaving money to the church for appropriate distribution to the needy to contributing modest amounts to supplement the revenues of poor families, provided they themselves earned enough to live on, or organizing apprenticeships for poor boys. He contrasts these to traditional catholic forms of almsgiving, such as indiscriminate hand-outs on the streets (pp. 161-62); however, in making such an argument, he loses sight of a large body of research (Jean-Pierre Gutton, Immanuel Chill, Jean Imbert) on similar catholic changes in attitude.[2]

Continuing on original Huguenot practices, Bernard Roussel's essay treats their funeral corteges and burials, showing that they convey a whole new image of death. At the same time that catholics were developing the new baroque rite of death with all its ceremonial and trappings, protestants were simplifying the funeral procession to the extreme: family and friends were to gather at the house of the deceased and in silence accompany the mortal remains to the burial place, "a pit, hollowed out of the earth" (p. 194). The minister was to have no official place in the rite. While this change in ceremonial representation seems to turn its back on human tradition, Roussel sees it as a logical ritual sequence dependent on the rite of the Lord's Supper, the sacrament at the heart of protestant worship. Both depend on a procession and on words disassociating the body and the soul, the precise definition of death. As tempting as is Bernard Roussel's analysis, it is not clear that all Huguenots understood or immediately accepted this new representation of death. The recent article by Keith Luria as well as some of the examples given by Roussel himself lead us to believe that at least some of the Huguenot elite remained attached to the symbolic capital of the more visible catholic death and burial.[3]

Alan James returns to one of the basic themes developed in the book, the deep divisions within the reform community over whether or not to confront the Crown militarily. In treating the "last Wars of Religion," James contends that the increasing militancy of the Huguenot Assemblies from Samur in 1611 to La Rochelle in 1621 was a major factor in bringing forth a Crown response in the military campaigns of Louis XIII in 1620-22 and in the siege and capitulation of La Rochelle. For James, the initiatives taken at the 1621 Assembly to set up a national Huguenot military structure created deep divisions within protestant ranks and institutionalized separations between the Huguenot military leaders, the Assembly, the conservative ranks in La Rochelle, and the radical groups. In short, James comes back to the paradox introduced at the beginning of the book concerning the need to cooperate with a Crown that was more and more hostile toward the Huguenots. The fall of La Rochelle and the defeat of the militants obviously strengthened the role of the Huguenots, who argued that quiet co-operation was the best way to guarantee their preservation--although they too were ultimately to be proved wrong.

The twelve essays in this book, although treating a wide variety of subjects and confronting a myriad of sources and methods, do follow through on the basic themes introduced by Mentzer and Spicer. As with an impressionist painting, each essay develops our overview of the predicament that faced the Huguenot movement both at its inception in sixteenth-century France and at its crucible in 1685. At both junctures there were diverse opinions as to the road to follow and various indicators to show that the cohesion of the group was often lacking. These essays bring out the diverse groupings, practices, and institutions within the movement It is a good book with innovative, well argued, and well-written essays, a must for scholars interested in the history of the Huguenot movement.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Raymond A. Mentzer and Andrew Spicer, "Introduction: Etre protestant"

Timothy Watson, "Preaching, printing, psalm-singing: the making and unmaking of the Reformed Church in Lyon, 1550-72"

Luc Racaut, "Religious polemic and Huguenot self-perception and identity, 1554-1619"

Philip Benedict, "Confessionalization in France? Critical reflections and new evidence"

Penny Roberts, "Huguenot petitioning during the wars of religion"

Mark Greengrass, "Informal networks in sixteenth-century French Protestantism"

Raymond A. Mentzer, "The Edict of Nantes and its institutions"

Amanda Eurich, "'Speaking the King's language': The Huguenot magistrates of Castres and Pau"

Karin Maag, "The Huguenot academies: preparing for an uncertain future"

Martin Dinges, "Huguenot poor relief and health care in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries"

Andrew Spicer, "'Qui est de Dieu, oit la parole de Dieu': the Huguenots and their temples"

Bernard Roussel, "'Ensevelir honnestement les corps': funeral corteges and Huguenot culture"

Alan James, "Huguenot militancy and the seventeenth-century wars of religion"

Mentzer and Spicer, "Epilogue"

NOTES

[1] Philip Hoffman, *Church and Community in the Diocese of Lyon, 1500-1789* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984).

[2] Jean-Pierre Gutton, *La Société et les pauvres. L'exemple de la généralité de Lyon, 1534-1789* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1971); Emmanuel Chill, "Religion and Mendicity in Seventeenth Century France," *International Review of Social History* 7 (1962): 400-425; and Jean Imbert, "L'Église et l'État face au problème hospitalier au XVIe siècle," *Études d'histoire du droit canonique dédiées à Gabriel Le Bras* (Paris: Sirey, 1965), pp. 577-92.

[3] Keith Luria, "Separated by Death? Burials, Cemeteries, and Confessional Boundaries in Seventeenth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 24:2 (Spring 2001): 185-222.

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