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Andrew Pettegree, Paul Nelles, and Philip Conner, Eds., *The Sixteenth-Century French Religious Book*. Aldershot, England, and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2001. xviii + 366 pp. Figures, tables, notes on contributors, abbreviations, and index. \$99.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-7546-0278-8.

Review by Brad S. Gregory, Stanford University.

This eclectic collection of eighteen articles (fourteen in English, four in French) is devoted to various aspects of French religious publishing in the sixteenth century. Historiographically, it lies at the intersection of two chief lines of scholarly inquiry in recent decades, namely the relationship between printing and the Reformation (a subject much more thoroughly explored for Germanic regions than for France) and the history of the book in the early modern era, pioneered in France by Henri-Jean Martin and other scholars, carried further by historians such as Roger Chartier, and perhaps best known in the English-speaking world through the magisterial works of Elizabeth Eisenstein and Adrian Johns. This collection appears to be related to the important bibliographical project to catalogue all of the French vernacular religious works published in the sixteenth century, under the direction of Andrew Pettegree at the St. Andrews Reformation Studies Institute. In the absence of an introduction to the volume, however, the relationship between the bibliographical project and the articles presented here is unclear. Aside from the first essay, the St. Andrews project is mentioned only once in the volume (p. 302), and the eighteen articles are given in what seems to be no significant order. Consequently, the reader is left with something of a grab-bag of contributions devoted variously to synthesis, printed genres, individuals, and case studies, some of which are more directly concerned with books and publishing than others.

Two contributions in the volume may be designated as synthetic overviews, namely those by Andrew Pettegree and Paul Nelles, respectively. Pettegree's article describes the aforementioned St. Andrews bibliographical project in comparison to broader inventories of sixteenth-century French publications, explains the criteria for "religious" books, and justifies the decision to exclude Latin publications while including French publications published outside France. The article offers a few preliminary remarks on trends revealed by the project, the most significant of which is perhaps the short-lived nature of vigorous Protestant printing in French, which began in earnest around 1555 and lasted only until about 1567. Pettegree suggests that "perhaps, the true untold story of the French religious book is the triumph of Catholic printing, and its role in shaping the successful defense of the French Catholic identity" (p. 16). Nelles's article is built around three different yet overlapping audiences for French religious books and begins with a distinction, familiar to historians of the book, between the production of books and "the distribution, circulation and consumption of printed materials" (p. 256). His three audiences comprise one for works of piety and devotion that included both clergy and laity and reached across the social spectrum; a second audience of clerical professionals, for works devoted to aspects of liturgy, the sacraments, and Catholic apologetics; and a third, socially wide-ranging audience concerned with contemporary religious and political affairs related to the Wars of Religion. As much as can be learned from individual and institutional book inventories (and Nelles commendably assembles much scholarship on the subject, some of which derives from relatively obscure publications), as well as from the analysis of book provenance (where known), Nelles himself rightly acknowledges that "Given the limitations of the inventories, the actual role of the book within French religious life must have been far

greater, and perhaps far different, than available evidence of ownership suggests” (p. 264). One need not have owned a book to have read it (or to have heard it read) at the prompting of a relative, friend, or colleague—a critical point for anyone interested in how books were actually used and the influence that they had, and yet one for which our evidence can only be extremely fragmentary.

Five contributions in the volume are devoted to distinct genres of French religious books in the sixteenth century: religious drama, emblem books, books of hours, Calvinist religious instruction, and Protestant historiography. Graham Runnalls’s article is particularly interesting for its analysis of a form of expression, religious drama, that between the late fifteenth and the early seventeenth centuries was transformed from a public spectacle into published literature through the medium of print. He includes a complete list of the 125 editions of mystery plays published in France (95 of them in Paris, 20 in Lyon) from 1484 through 1630, analyzed by printer, date of publication, place of publication, format, and title (pp. 29–32). Alison Saunders argues that most sixteenth-century French emblem books, even those published during the Wars of Religion, emphasized virtue and morality in a humanist idiom that was shared by educated Catholics and Huguenots; it was generally not until the seventeenth century that emblem books in France acquired a sharply confessional edge. Among the few sixteenth-century exceptions to this trend were those by Georgette de Montenay (which was popular and relatively unpolemical) and Théodore de Bèze (which was polemical and relatively unpopular), both of which Saunders examines. The leading authority on French books of hours, Virginia Reinburg, confirms our knowledge that these collections of prayers, originally adapted from the clerical breviary for lay use, were the most popular, widely-owned religious books in sixteenth-century France. Reinburg hypothesizes that the decline in the number of new editions of books of hours after about 1530 might be attributable to market saturation and/or to changing devotional tastes related to the spread of Erasmian emphases on educationally informed prayer. Karin Maag situates a variety of Calvinist educational works—ABC books, instructional manuals, and supplementary catechisms—within the context of the three principal levels of schooling in sixteenth-century France, namely vernacular schools, Latin schools, and universities and academies. Insofar as the vast majority of schooling and religious instruction in sixteenth-century France remained Catholic, a stronger comparative element would have strengthened this article. Finally, Jean-François Gilmont discusses French Protestant historiography up to the early 1560s and its indebtedness to German writers (especially Philip Melanchthon) and to English writers (especially John Bale), stressing the importance of the printer-martyrologist Jean Crespin in Geneva from 1552. Ironically, this article from an expert on sixteenth-century printing has little to do with books or publishing *per se*; it is rather an essay in intellectual history.

The same is true of Jennifer Britnell’s article on religious instruction in the writings of Jean Bouchet, a provincial legal solicitor and minor poet from Poitiers. Concentrating especially on Bouchet’s work, *Les Triumphe de la noble et amoureuse dame et l’art d’honnestement aimer* (1530, with many reprints), the article deals only incidentally with Bouchet’s books or with reading, printing, literacy, or the circulation of ideas; it is rather about Bouchet’s thought as a lay Catholic writer on topics pertaining to religion (and as such, it is informative). Much the same might be said of David Hartley’s contribution on the political views embedded in the poetry of Joachim du Bellay, especially his *Ample Discours*, written shortly before his death in 1560 but not published until 1567. The article is interesting as such but has little to do with religious books or related issues. By contrast, Bernard Roussel’s deeply researched article on the Calvinist minister Jean de l’Espine explores his contributions to published Protestant pastoral literature and printed sermons without losing sight of their distinctiveness as genres or their relationship to oral communication. The result is a penetrating article on this relatively understudied colleague of Calvin and de Bèze that is simultaneously linked to the overarching subject of the volume as a whole.

It is something of a stretch to refer to the remaining eight articles in the collection as “case studies,” since they vary so much in their scope and subject matter. Two of the narrower pieces are rather insubstantial: Francis Higman’s preliminary discussion of the lengthy 1571 inventory of Protestant bookseller Vincent Réal and Roger Kuin’s nine-page story about the library of Duplessis-Mornay

followed by a thirty-page transcription of its inventory that was carried out c.1607-1611. On the other hand, Olivier Christin's article on two discrepant reactions to the Edict of Nantes is a concise gem of an essay in intellectual history, despite its narrow focus. The *Rencontre des trois pacifications* (1598) envisioned the Edict as a foundation for the reunification of France and rejuvenation of the church under king and pope, whereas the *Trois discours* (1599) imagined a religiously neutral sovereign implementing the Edict as a condition for citizenship regardless of confessional allegiance. Hence the Edict did not resolve religio-political disputes by appealing to a shared notion of "civil religion." Like the articles by Britnell and Hartley, however, Christin's piece is only incidentally concerned with books or printing.

Censorship and intra-confessional, Calvinist criticism of François Voysin de la Popelinière's *Histoire de France* (1581) in the Huguenot stronghold of La Rochelle is the subject of Kevin Robbins's article. He admirably analyzes the cuts and emendations to La Popelinière's text made by the city's Calvinist leaders, led by pastor Odet de Nort, but it seems too simplistic to claim that this censorship "illuminates durable antagonisms between reformed clergy and laity" (p. 241)—in part because some prominent laymen were members of the Rochelais consistory responsible for the criticisms (p. 245). Another contribution devoted to censorship is Ingeborg Jostock's impressive, well-documented analysis of book censorship in Geneva from 1560 to 1600, which traces the tussle between the city's political and ecclesiastical leaders over the control of printing. By the 1570s and 80s, members of the Company of Pastors were unable to prevent the publication of editions to which they objected; the city council was effectively in control of printing and sought both to protect the city's publishing industry for economic reasons, and to censure works considered too politically incendiary. Yet Geneva's piecemeal censorship never possessed the determined, centralized character of a Catholic *Index*; the fifty-eight titles prohibited or suppressed between 1560 and 1600 represent less than 3 percent of the city's published titles during this period (p. 229).

In his analysis of the propaganda campaign against Henry III in the late 1580s, Keith Cameron shows what could happen in the absence of effective censorship amid the superheated political context stoked by the Catholic League. He pays particular attention to the text and images of *La Vie et faits notables de Henry de Valois* (1589; three editions plus at least five reprints), although the criteria for distinguishing plausible sixteenth-century interpretations of a suspect king (see pp. 167, 176) from "a propaganda campaign" waged against a royal "character of fiction" (pp. 175, 176) are not clear. Michael Wolfe analyzes printed material in the years just before and during the reign of Henry IV, in the contribution to the volume that stands most squarely in the tradition of French *histoire du livre*. After discussing the production of printed matter, the character of presses, and the circulation of ideas at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries, he traces four major shifts in books and pamphlets pertaining to Henry IV from the conflicting, confessional depictions of 1574-1589 to the debates revolving around domestic reforms and foreign policy of 1598-1610. Finally, Philip Conner's terrific study of Protestant print culture in southern France shows persuasively why this region, well-known as the geographical core of Huguenot strength, failed to develop a vibrant publishing industry of its own during the decades when French Calvinists attained their greatest influence. Because southern French towns were so well supplied with books from Geneva (and secondarily, up to 1567 or so, from Lyon), there was little need or incentive for indigenous publishers to set up shop: "the international market functioned so well that there was no margin for local printing" (p. 296). Consequently, even Protestant centers such as Montauban and Nîmes got their first printing presses only in 1577 and 1579, respectively; Montpellier's first press would not come until nearly two decades later.

It is difficult to evaluate as a whole what Pettegree aptly refers to as "the very varied papers that make up this collection" (p. 1). There is much worthwhile here, and several of the articles are first-rate, original contributions. One might have wished for greater engagement with questions of literacy, particularly as related to notions of the audiences for religious books. Despite scholarly refinements in recent years, it still seems clear that the large majority of French men and (even more) women were wholly or largely illiterate peasants in the sixteenth century, a fact which must have enormous

implications for any claims about the appeal of certain sorts of works “across the social spectrum” or to that ultimate category of historical lumping, “the laity.” At the same time, in a world still dominated by oral communication, all it took for villagers to apprise themselves of a hot pamphlet about a miracle or a massacre was access to one person who could read.

As should be clear, the contributions are so diverse in their subject matter, emphases, and scope that they resist the identification of shared patterns or themes. Some of the articles are not even about sixteenth-century French books or printing, except insofar as they discuss ideas that appeared in sixteenth-century French printed books. The absence of an introduction to the collection exacerbates the problem, but perhaps also witnesses to it. On the other hand, it could be that the variety of the articles fittingly parallels the unfinished, ongoing St. Andrews Sixteenth-Century French Religious Book Project itself, and the fact that we still know too little about this massive body of sources, considered as a whole or even in large chunks, to expect at this point a coherent collection of articles with strong themes and shared questions. In this sense, this collection mirrors in its eclecticism the published French religious sources of the sixteenth century.

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