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Arlette Jouanna, *The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre: The Mysteries of a Crime of State*. Trans. Joseph Bergin. Manchester, U.K. and New York, N.Y.: Manchester University Press, 2013. xiv + 271 pp. Glossary, appendix, bibliography, and index. \$100.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-0719088315.

Review Essay by Elizabeth C. Tingle, University of Plymouth

“The Western notion of massacre first appeared in France during the Wars of Religion” states the on-line *Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*, and the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre “represented the ultimate model of an outburst of extreme violence against defenseless civilians.”^[1] From 1572 onwards, contemporaries and historians have tried to make sense of this barbarity. Arlette Jouanna's study—in Joseph Bergin's crisp translation—takes us through these deliberations and unravels some of the “mysteries” surrounding the massacre.

Jouanna's book is a masterful study of the events leading up to and beyond St. Bartholomew's feast day, 24 August 1572, the motives of the perpetrators and the significance of the affair in wider French history. The work was originally published in 2007 as part of the series, “Thirty Days that Made France,” focusing on “turning points” in French history. It is accessible to an informed, general audience, and it also presents new reflections for academic debate. Jouanna argues that three issues make St. Bartholomew's Day “an exceptional historical subject” (p. 11): the contrast between the marriage celebrations and the killings of August 1572; the contradiction between the execution of the Protestant leadership present in Paris and the royal desire to maintain peace; and the scale and duration of the massacre, which spread out into the French provinces over a six-week period. The study is immersed in a thorough examination of historiography—although Jouanna privileges Barbara Diefendorf's interpretation of events in Paris—as well as an impressively wide range of primary sources from Paris and Simancas and a large number of contemporary printed works and pamphlets.^[2]

Jouanna introduces St. Bartholomew's Day as a murder mystery, where suspects are presented and their intentions discussed. In the introduction, Jouanna surveys the historiography of the whodunit. The traditional villains, Catherine de' Medici and the Guise family, favored by pre-Second World War historians and more recently by Janine Garrison, are exonerated for lack of evidence.^[3] Jean-Louis Bourgeon's “international Catholic conspiracy” of Spain and the papacy, executed by the Guises, is questioned.^[4] Denis Crouzet's “crime of love,” whereby the king and Queen Mother, influenced by neo-platonic ideas, aimed to protect the cohesion of the kingdom but were thwarted by the violence of the crowd, is difficult to prove.^[5] So who was it? The problem lies in paradox. On 18 August 1572, the royal family and the court nobility, Catholic and Protestant, combined in Paris to celebrate a marriage; six days later, festivities turned to carnage. The central “mystery” is why did it occur at all?

The first part of the book, “The Fragility of Concord,” is a detailed survey of the short-term background causes of the events of 24 August. Jouanna begins her “investigation” with the Edict of Saint-Germain of 8 August 1570, the fourth edict to give Protestants limited legal religious toleration. She argues that the edict of 1570 was innovative in several of its provisions; here, some discussion of previous edicts would have allowed better differentiation to be drawn. The first article of the edict was particularly novel, as it called for the memory of the past wars to be forgotten, “as if they had never happened” (p. 19). The problem was that this was nigh on impossible. For Protestants, forgetting meant abandoning their mission to convert the whole of France to the Gospel; for Catholics, it meant recognizing the continued contamination of heresy. For members of both confessions, it was particularly difficult to forget the atrocities of the recent war. The post-edict restoration of lands, houses, and offices confiscated from Protestants caused tensions. Catholics were bitter that the vanquished Protestants were again allowed to negotiate terms. In Blaise de Monluc's words, “we defeated them over and over ... but they triumphed via these diabolic documents” (p. 23).

Rather than forgetting, therefore, each side was immensely resentful of the other. The Protestants were deeply distrustful, insisting on fortified towns for refuge, fearful that the peace was a trap to disarm and destroy them. Catholics were the most militant, their passions sparking sectarian disturbances, such as in Orange and Rouen in 1571, which were harshly punished, causing further grievance. The most serious and the best known trouble occurred in Paris during the winter of 1571-1572, over the Cross of the Gastines, a Catholic monument to a local defeat of heresy. This simmering, lingering hostility was a central cause of St. Bartholomew's Day.

A second novelty of the 1570 edict, according to Jouanna, was the strenuous effort made by the crown to create peace. The 1563 peace was followed by the energetic work of commissioners to ensure pacification, but that of 1570 was even more robustly enforced and was declared "perpetual and irrevocable," which was new (p. 25). The wars had diminished the reputation and effectiveness of the monarchy, something Charles IX felt keenly. Peace was necessary to restore authority. But the means by which concord could be achieved were limited. Threats from radicals on both sides at home and the attitude of foreign powers limited the monarchy's freedom of action. Financial weakness meant that soldiers could not be paid. Noble feuds, such as that between the Guise family and Gaspard de Coligny, whom they accused of having Duke François assassinated in 1563, were potentially destabilizing, since *grandees* could martial large clienteles to make private wars.

The means by which the crown tried to enhance peace and augment its authority led unwittingly but directly to the massacre. The traditional tactics of marriages and foreign alliances were seen as the solution to the kingdom's ills. The union of one of the royal princes to Elizabeth of England, and of the king's sister, Marguerite, to Henri of Navarre, would integrate Protestants into the royal family and create harmony in the kingdom through domestic felicity and kinship. While the English match did not materialize, Navarre and Marguerite were married in Paris on 18 August 1572, despite the hostility of many, Protestant and Catholic alike. The Parisians were particularly averse. To the unwelcome religious settlement, increased taxation and the rising cost of bread, was added the visible presence of thousands of armed Protestants in the city. While optimists saw the possibility of peace in the wedding match, others regarded it with foreboding.

Foreign policy could also destabilize the fragile confessional co-existence. Events in the Low Countries following the Dutch Revolt of 1566 threatened to suck France into war with Spain. Coligny urged Charles IX to help the rebels and create a joint Catholic/Protestant "project" to unite the French nobility. Some traditional historiographies argue that Coligny was murdered in order to prevent the war and end his influence on the king.[6] Jouanna provides an excellent argument against this claim, with a close analysis of the relationship between the Dutch Revolt, Protestant desires to help their co-religionists and the sensitive relations between the French and Spanish monarchs. She argues that while Coligny urged military action, the king would only provide secret supplies to the Calvinist rebels; he was not willing to risk war with Spain, particularly after the victory of Lepanto in October 1571. He was certainly not prepared to put the Admiral at the head of a large army that might be turned on the king himself. Peace, not war, remained the royal policy.

Peace was fragile, however. On 22 August, Coligny survived an attempted assassination by Maurevert, a client of the Guises. Jouanna investigates different "suspects" of the crime, rejecting theories that the Guises, the Queen Mother, the Duke of Savoy, Charles IX or Philip of Spain were the culprits, for they had more to gain from continued peace and reconciliation. Rather, she ascribes the plot to an unidentified group of radical Parisian Catholics, who hoped to implicate the Guises, lure them into action, and restart a war against heresy (pp. 73-83). If this is correct—and the evidence is rather slim—then the *cabale* was successful, for it led quickly to a shattering of harmony.

The second part of the book, "Sword of God, Sword of the King," provides a detailed commentary on the massacres. To understand fully the causation, Jouanna argues that St. Bartholomew's Day has to be seen as two "events," separate but inter-dependent: the execution of Coligny and other Huguenot leaders, followed by the general slaughter in Paris and the provinces. She contends that the first massacre, of the Protestant leaders, was intended to uphold peace and royal authority. Her argument is that Charles IX felt his royal sovereignty challenged by the members of Coligny's party, who threatened to obtain justice themselves for the attempted assassination if the king did not provide it.

Charles IX had for some time resented Coligny's threatening demands for his co-religionists and his championing of war, but until that point had kept himself under control. Now the king and his council feared violence at court as well as threats to royal authority. It was at this point, Jouanna argues, that "the King's distrust and resentment burst out into the open, with a brutality which can be explained by the violence with which he had previously bridled his suspicions of the Protestant leaders" (p. 101). Fearing a conspiracy, the royal council became convinced that the Protestant leadership should be punished by means of the king's "extraordinary justice" in what Jouanna calls a "surgical strike" (p. 97 ff). This is an interesting interpretation, based on reason and unity, but I suspect the council's decision was messier than is presented here. It was certainly ill thought through. Despite some precautions, the noise and confusion sparked a general massacre of Protestants in Paris by Catholics who sought to rid the city of the danger of heresy and sedition. It was a situation over which the crown had no control. During the next few weeks, copy-cat massacres occurred in a dozen or so provincial cities, urban centers with strong traditions of Catholic militancy sharpened by an experience of Protestant occupation, iconoclasm, or encirclement in previous conflicts. The king's attempt to keep the peace and restore his authority had all gone horribly wrong.

The third part of the book, comprised of chapter six and section three "Clarifications and Responses," is in many ways the most interesting part of the work. The focus is on the impact of the massacres on the theory of monarchy in France. Jouanna contends that the arguments used by the crown to rationalize its role on St. Bartholomew's Day, to represent and bolster its authority at home and abroad, "are of major interest for the history of ideas about royal power" (p. 158). Jouanna's detailed and measured analysis of Catholic and royal theories of power, compared to Protestant and particularly "monarchomach" views, is a welcome addition to the literature of political theory available in English.

Winning international opinion was essential for rebuilding royal authority. The first actions of the king and his advisors were attempts to persuade other European powers of the legitimacy of Coligny's execution and to pass responsibility for the general massacre onto the "people" (p. 157). Initially, royal theorists presented the argument that the "surgical strike" was necessary to preserve the toleration edict and the general peace and that it had nothing to do with religion. But no one was convinced. Catholic states initially welcomed the news of the massacres and accepted at least publicly the idea of Huguenot conspiracy. But even zealous Catholic rulers were disturbed by the indiscriminate nature of the killings. Protestant states were horrified. Charles's second stage of justification, that in emergencies the use of extraordinary royal power that superseded the normal rules of justice was permissible, did not convince the English. The king had broken the divine law of the Decalogue and human law. But the diplomatic and print campaign to persuade, in order to prevent the loss of the English alliance and the Polish Crown, was successful even if it did not convince, in that English did not break with France and Henry of Anjou was elected King of Poland. Jouanna also claims that the arguments here constructed were significant in that they invoked, in a distant and still timid way, the notions of a state and reason of state. But peace slipped away as freedom of worship was revoked, Protestant office holders were suspended from their functions, and many people abjured. War broke out again, in the south and around La Rochelle, by the end of the year.

The impact of St. Bartholomew on Protestant political theory in France is well known. Jouanna's skill is to give equal weight to Catholic theorists and to the inter-relationships of ideas across confessions. Catholics and Protestants all interpreted the massacres as divine wrath, for heresy or sin, both groups drawing on the same sacred texts, particularly the Psalms and Revelation. Protestants also turned to the monarchy's actions to explain their misfortunes. They saw in the king's deeds a slide to tyranny that needed to be checked. Debates about the nature of the monarchy ensued, on whether it should be absolute or moderated by representative institutions. Such ideas and publications had appeared before 1572, but the shock of the massacre gave them a new impetus. François Hotman's *Franco Gallia* (1573) saw in the misfortunes of France the weakening of the laws and statutes of the past. In his view, from the reign of Louis XI onwards, monarchy moved towards arbitrary and absolute power (p. 200). Other authors, known collectively as "monarchomachs," proposed remedies that amounted to limiting the power of the king. Theodore de Bèze, the author of

Reveille-matin des François, and Philippe du Plessis-Mornay all argued that subjects' obedience was conditional; that prince and people were bound by a contract; that if the prince did not realize his commitments the people were freed from their duty to him; and that royal power should be shared with the Estates General in some way.

Some Catholic opinion similarly questioned absolute power and sought to prevent a repeat of conditions that had made the massacre possible. This group called themselves the "Malcontents" and gravitated around the Dukes of Alençon and Condé, Navarre and Henry de Montmorency-Damville. Similar to the works of Protestant authors, the tracts produced from this milieu supported the right of nobles to uphold the law and challenged tyranny, to the point of justifying armed rebellion against the crown. The St. Bartholomew's Day massacre and subsequent royal actions were interpreted as anti-noble rather than anti-Protestant. Cross-confessional political opposition to the crown and a demand for reform of the monarchy were constructed in a "defence of the public good" (p. 209). Political tensions at the end of Charles IX's reign and the fifth civil war at the beginning of that of Henri III were the result of an alliance of nobles and moderates. The Edict of Beaulieu that followed in 1576 granted greater concessions to Protestants than hitherto, the public rehabilitation of Coligny and a promise to convene the Estates General within six months, to reform the kingdom. But the moderates failed to pack the Estates, which were captured by intransigent Catholics who wanted an end to heresy and the new edict. War resumed and the more limited and "political" Edict of Poitiers was issued in 1577.

The final chapter examines polemical responses to the death of Charles IX in 1574. Protestant writers saw his pitiful end as proof of his damnation because of the diabolical massacres. Catholics saw in his peaceful passing a sign of his election after a worthy fight against heresy, a sacrificial king who gave his life for his subjects. Jouanna argues that the polemic over the king's deathbed is "hugely important in the history of representations of royal power" (p. 226). Catholics proclaimed that sacrality went beyond lineage to the king in person, not just the royal dignity but the man himself. The affirmation of the king's personal sacrality and the "gradual autonomisation of the political" were the result (p. 229).

In conclusion, then, the significance of the St Bartholomew's Day massacres was threefold. First, it put an end to Protestant hopes of converting the kingdom to the Reform. It reduced their numbers and their political significance, confining them to permanent minority status in France. Second and more important, the massacre had a profound effect on the evolution of the French monarchy. Debates over limitations on royal power, combined with the disorder and carnage of war—especially after 1585—contributed to a desire for strong monarchy and the increasing sacralization of the monarch's person. Third, the edicts and other political solutions that emerged from the war created the possibility of disassociating the religious and the political in public life and "enhanced the notion of citizen rather than believer" (p. 240). Thus was laid the basis for the secularization of the state, presaged in the Edict of Nantes.

This translation is to be greatly welcomed. As Professor Bergin states, there is only a limited number of works available in English on the massacres. The topic is a perennially popular topic for study, and the availability of this translation will be a good addition to the student booklist for most do not have French. Further, it gives a French perspective on the centrality of politics, authority, and the emerging state to contrast with the religious and cultural work of recent times (although it contains discussion of these elements as well). The translation is clear, coherent and good to read. In all, it is an essential volume for all students of early modern European history.

NOTES

[1] David El Kenz, "Massacres during the Wars of Religion," *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*, <http://www.massviolence.org/Massacres-during-the-Wars-of-Religion> (accessed 22 September 2013).

[2] Barbara B. Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* (New York, N.Y. and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[3] Janine Garrisson, *Tocsin pour un massacre. La saison des Saint-Barthélemy* (Paris: Éditions d'aujourd'hui, 1987).

[4] Jean-Louis Bourgeon, *Charles IX devant la Saint-Barthélemy* (Geneva: Droz, 1995).

[5] Denis Crouzet, *La nuit de la Saint-Barthélemy. Un rêve perdu de la Renaissance* (Paris: Fayard, 1994).

[6] Pierre Champion, *Charles IX. La France et le contrôle de l'Espagne*, 2 vols (Paris: B. Grasset, 1939); Ivan Cloulas, *Catherine de Médicis* (Paris: Fayard, 1979); and Jean-Louis Bourgeon, *L'assassinat de Coligny* (Geneva: Droz, 1992).

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