

**Raymond A. Mentzer and Bertrand van Ruymbeke, eds.**

*A Companion to the Huguenots. Leiden: Brill, 2016. Pp. 500. Hb, \$297.*

This new collection of essays on the Huguenots offers a number of important and compelling glimpses into the history of the French Reformed community, both within France and beyond its borders. As the title suggests, the purpose of this collection is to supplement rather than supplant, and it does so in admirable fashion, exploring a variety of topics in a manner that provides new insights and nuances old assumptions.

The collection contains contributions from many of the leading researchers currently studying Huguenot history, not least of whom are the editors themselves, and this has resulted in a poised and well-researched set of essays overall. The collection is divided into two equal sections—"France" and "The Diaspora"—which are divided geographically and chronologically, with the first section focused largely on Huguenots within France before 1685 and the second section following the Huguenot diaspora beyond France's borders in the aftermath of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. That equal division is itself noteworthy, a sign of just how prominent the study of the Huguenot *réfuge* has become for historians.

In their introduction, Mentzer and van Ruymbeke set out a number of principles for their text, along with providing a brief historical and historiographical synopsis of the Huguenots, and describing the main contours of the essays. The framework of the text is thus clearly explained, while the stated principles and aims provide a useful way to read and evaluate the text. In particular, a key impetus is the desire to present the major lines of inquiry that are currently most significant to Huguenot scholars. By and large, this results in exploring well-established topics—ecclesiastical polity and discipline, life as a religious minority in France, processes of assimilation among the diaspora population, and others—but with fresh approaches to the sources. In this regard, all of the essays achieve the goal set out by the editors, but they do so in different ways. Some are organized largely as historiographical surveys, tracing trends and examining debates within the secondary literature; other essays are rooted more so in primary source material, either providing an introduction to new sources, or challenging old readings with new approaches. In either case, the emphasis is to intimate to the reader how Huguenot historiography has developed, with a clear focus on recent insights and innovations. As an extension of this, many of the essays also point to avenues of future research, another stated aim of the editors. This element is somewhat unevenly tackled throughout the collection; however, those that deal with it most explicitly show just

how much there is still to discover about Huguenot experiences in—and contributions to—the early modern world.

In a collection with such a wide historical and geographical scope, the topics covered are naturally very diverse. However, there are some themes that guide the collection as a whole whether intentionally or not, and one of the most valuable among them is the prominent place given to religion as a historical force. Throughout the collection, religious motivations are taken seriously and placed alongside the many other social and political factors acting upon Huguenot communities. As a result, a very robust image of the Huguenots develops over the course of the collection, and one that is sensitive to the concerns of the Huguenots themselves as early modern Europeans.

Turning to the essays themselves, the breadth of topics and themes in the collection becomes apparent. The first four chapters are concerned with Huguenots as a religious minority within France, looking at how they organized and regulated themselves as a community, and how they existed in relation to the French crown and the Catholic majority around them. These essays examine key components that shaped Huguenot lives—such as the consistory, liturgical texts, political assemblies, and royal commissioners enforcing edicts of pacification—and what their study can tell us about the place of Huguenots as a distinct but not altogether separate community in France. The next three chapters look at specific groups within the Huguenot population—women, ministers, and artists respectively—uncovering a diversity of experiences and contributions, and highlighting the different exigencies that each group brought to being a religious minority, whether in relation to their fellow Huguenots or to life in France more broadly. The final chapter of Part One deals with Huguenots in France during the revocation and the *désert* and how they responded to this new and changing legal reality; it also serves as a useful segue into Part Two of the collection: the diaspora.

The first two chapters of the second part examine social networks, relationships to new authorities, and processes of assimilation and integration, issues of universal concern but diverse experience to the diaspora population. The next three chapters address certain cultural concerns, especially in terms of how Huguenots understood and made sense of the *réfuge*. These essays also examine how historians can seek to understand the refugee experiences by reading between the lines of texts such as memoirs and martyrologies, texts which were integral to reconciling experience and expectation. The next two chapters emphasize the Atlantic and imperial context of the diaspora. They look at the relationships that existed for Huguenots within colonial communities and with imperial authorities, relationships which were forged through

negotiation and and which often produced tensions. The final chapter also serves as a conclusion to the collection, surveying how the memory of the *réfuge* has been constructed from the seventeenth century to the modern day, tracing its historiographical development and current state.

While Jesuits do not feature in this collection, their presence can be felt whenever confessional conflict in France is discussed. For, not only did Jesuits have their own complex relationship with the French crown, they were also at the forefront of attempts to win back Huguenots to the Catholic fold. Indeed, this confessional context, in which Jesuits played a prominent part, could potentially have been explored at greater length in Part One, especially since the editors note that the Huguenot relationship to Catholic authorities was of key interest. Nonetheless, the collection can be valuable to Jesuit studies, not only because of its focus on the Jesuits' chief opponents in early modern France, but also because of its insight into early modern religious concerns more generally.

All together, this is an important new collection that should be of great interest to those who study early modern history, not just Huguenot specialists but wider audiences too. Its calls for further research and collaboration make that clear—for instance, to find out what the Huguenot *réfuge* can reveal about other cases of diaspora, and vice versa. The collection contributes both to the demographic big picture and to the perspective of the individual, giving the reader a rich sense of Huguenot history while highlighting the limits of trying to define a single Huguenot experience. Because of that, this text is, indeed, a useful companion to the Huguenots, indicative of current trends and of future research directions.

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