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Jonathan A. Reid, *King's Sister - Queen of Dissent: Marguerite de Navarre (1492-1549) and her Evangelical Network*. 2 vols, Leiden and New York: Brill, 2009. (volume 1) xxii + 377 pp. Tables and notes. (volume 2) viii + 379-800pp. Tables, notes, bibliography, and index. \$281.00 (hb). ISBN 978-90-04-17497-9.

Review by Susan Broomhall, The University of Western Australia.

This is an important book for French Reformation history, fleshing out a domain of evangelical activities which has until now remained poorly articulated. Reid's two-volume monograph brings together a wealth of sources and scholarship in a new and persuasive analysis of early reform activities and writing under Marguerite de Navarre's patronage and leadership. Reid interrogates each issue he covers in great depth, footnotes indicating the full extent of his impressive research, but his arguments are presented in a highly engaging manner, making this a text potentially suitable for classroom use and scholars alike. The text also includes two important appendices covering additions and corrections to Marguerite's known correspondence, and a large bibliography of French and Latin editions related the Navarrian network, produced or by others in debate with them.

In the first chapter Reid sets the scene on the conventional historiographical state of the Reformation in France, and more particularly of analyses of Marguerite's own religious position. This is an important prelude to the rest of his study and it also signals clearly the debates with which Reid has engaged. In the following chapter, Reid establishes the focus of his own study, to explore the coherence, actions, and perceptions of a group of evangelicals more or less loosely connected to Marguerite. Although Reid observes that Marguerite and her networks were recognized as a coherent group by her allies and enemies, he argues that their unity, and thus their extent and intentions, have been largely missed in the historical writing on the Reformation movement in France. Reid sets out to show how central Marguerite was to this network and to create its history through its writings and actions. Reid terms this network the "Navarrian network". While he is the first to admit that this network did not achieve its goals, one of the reasons that it has not featured in the historiography of the Reformation in France, he is right to suggest that this makes it no less worthy to study. Its successes and failures tell us much about the specific contexts in which France's early questioning Catholics, reformers, and heretics, operated and allows us to understand their relationships to wider movements across Europe.

Reid then moves on to establish the religious position of François and Louise, the other members of the Valois trinity, in the context of the crown's centralizing and financial policies, as well as Marguerite's relative weakness among the three. As a widow, Louise was both focused and dependent on her son while Marguerite had demands and ties to a husband which put her at one remove from François. This is important, as Marguerite's relationship to François was clearly critical to the network, providing the context in which she could develop and promote the evangelical movement, but also preventing its ultimate success. In the next chapter, Reid examines the work and activities of Lefèvre d'Étaples in order to understand the Fabrist context on Marguerite's network prior to the Meaux period. Reid concludes that ultimately Lefèvre drew back from direct confrontation with the Sorbonne. Here Marguerite's role is articulated as a patron of such activities, as someone engaged with humanist scholarship, but not as a producer of ideas and works. Further engagement here with the work on the

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gendered nature and uses of patronage which has been recently undertaken might have strengthened the analysis of a key aspect of Marguerite's contribution and leadership of the Navarrian network.[1]

In the following two chapters, the activities of the Meaux reformers, and Marguerite's relationship to them, are analyzed in depth. Reid here advances a thesis for post-Meaux sodality, making an exploration of their doctrinal core critical. Chapter Five investigates the reforms of Briçonnet prior to the arrival of the Fabrists. With the assistance of the crown, he had already commenced a series of reforms to religious institutions such as the Hôtel-Dieu, as well as regular and secular clergy. When the Fabrists arrived, focus shifted however to the teaching of the laity directly, which led to publications commenting on the Bible, and then finally to a vernacular translation of the Bible itself. This was a bold step; the only other such undertaking of the period was Luther's. Lefèvre, Reid argues, was galvanized by his contact with Briçonnet during this period. And Marguerite? Reid suggests that her queries in correspondence with Briçonnet may have highlighted inadequacies of the Vulgate version soon after the translation project was initiated. Certainly Lefèvre attributes 'ladies at court' with interest in this knowledge.

Chapter Six is based almost solely on the correspondence of Briçonnet and Marguerite which Reid divides into three distinct phases, over which the dynamics shifted from Briçonnet as leader, Marguerite as follower, to Marguerite taking a more forceful position of reforming beyond and in the light of Meaux. The Sorbonne condemned Marguerite's position through its persecution of those she supported, such as Louis de Berquin. While Louise accepted the actions of conservatives as a political necessity, Marguerite pushed forward her views through her employment of like-minded evangelicals at Bourges. Reid argues that it was Marguerite's leadership that fostered a separate network independent of the Meaux group led by Briçonnet. By the end of this period, while Briçonnet urged caution, Marguerite had become more convinced of the need to forge ahead with reform for the sake of France. Reid argues convincingly through this analysis that Meaux and Marguerite were not one and the same.

Thus in chapter seven Reid examines the development of Marguerite's separate and broader network of reform-minded individuals under her leadership. His focus here is collaboration on shared goals developed through a set of activities: preaching, teaching, printing and forging links with the German reformers whose ideas and successes inspired them. He debates whether the cells that they developed by aiming their teaching directly to the laity (their "true church") were intended to break away from the institutional Church. Already, Reid argues, one can see their acceptance that God might pass over France, although they remained ever hopeful of inspiring François (through Marguerite) to support religious reform. In Reid's analysis of this preaching campaign, it is difficult to see the hand of Marguerite involved directly: was she patronizing activities and ideas as she found them or orchestrating the network's words and deeds? It seems a pity not to explore Marguerite's early work from this period: how did it fit the doctrinal unity that Reid argues was progressed here? It is unclear whether Marguerite was seen as someone capable of religious thought, or merely sponsoring it. Did they think that she was capable of more than being a patron? Did they take her religious ideas seriously? It is hard to know from the evidence presented here.

In the following chapter, Reid turns to the period in which François and his sons were held captive in the late 1520s. Here, he argues, Louise and Marguerite needed the support of the papacy against the Emperor. It was thus crucial for the political stability of the dynasty not to jeopardize that relationship. This was a period in which Marguerite's activities were necessarily restrained and largely reactive. She protected radicals, negotiated to move their trials before *Parlement*, saw to the release of others from prison, and, more actively, gave them positions of power and influence where she was able. Reid reminds us just how far Briçonnet and Marguerite had now moved apart: the former assisting with prosecutions at Meaux, whilst Marguerite arranged for refuge in Strasbourg for key Fabrists at risk. She did, however, with her patronage of Jean and Guillaume Du Bellay, open unofficial diplomatic channels with Geneva and the Swiss at the end of the decade, preparing France for a potential international

evangelical alignment against the Emperor. This detailed elaboration of her various actions in support of reform at this period is important, but for much of Reid's discussion in this chapter, it is unclear the extent to which Marguerite was setting the direction of those on her network or responding to their initiatives with varying degrees of support. If the latter (which is largely what Reid's picture seems to show), were these responses a result of the limitations of her sex, her position or simply her personal inclination?

Moving to Volume 2, chapter nine explores evangelical hopes in the period 1531-9, which historiographically, Reid argues, has been assumed barren after the Placards affair. However, Reid suggests that a re-reading of the work of Marguerite's networks shows that despite the violence of the response to them, they were still hopeful for a sudden change of direction by François, and thus no less focused on their goals. At the same period, he reminds us, the formation of the Schmalkaldic League and the conversion of Henry VIII in England must have been cause for some hope. In this climate, Reid outlines Marguerite's protection (of the Waldensians), her encouragement (at Toulouse) and her development (in Alençon) of evangelical cultures. Marguerite was able, it seems, to intervene in François's foreign policy with support for invited international scholars and overtures towards the English. Reid demonstrates English strategic recognition of Marguerite's sympathy to their cause and her influence with François. He suggests too that evidence of this link can be found in the English translations of Marguerite's writings by Princess Elizabeth and later, the Seymour sisters, another reasons why it would be pertinent to examine both what Marguerite articulated in the works they chose to translate and also how she and her ideas influenced and were in dialogue with those of other women.

Focusing more closely on the publishing program of the network in chapter ten, Reid argues that opportunities to express views in traditional theological and catechetical genre were limited under the watchful eye of the Sorbonne after the Placards affair, and thus the group turned to literary genres to explore and promote their ideas. Reid traces the wide range of major and minor authors who risked condemnation by support for each other in their works through prefaces and avowed friendships in print, publication with known sympathetic printers and Marguerite's patronage. Although noting the limited means for exposition of their doctrines in such works, Reid argues convincingly that the body of works nonetheless represents a deep and coherent theological intervention and carefully analyses their focus on personal, rather than institutional, transformation. The question of intellectual leadership at this period is not explored - certainly it is not attributed to Marguerite nor any treatment of her own writings at this period provided.

Reid focuses the final chapter on diplomatic and political policies of the 1540s, and Marguerite's attempts, in collaboration with the Duchess d'Etampes, to form a three-way alliance for France with England and the Schmalkaldic League, and to encourage a break from Rome. The analysis here provides material to examine how elite women at court may have been particularly influential and engaged protagonists in diplomatic, political and religious networks, although Reid does not examine the specific opportunities which their gender limited or opened to them. In her last years, Reid shows how Marguerite continued to invest efforts in protecting protégés, encouraging (unsuccessfully) freer religious expression and spreading the network's shared ideas through established institutions such as universities. Disappointingly, her own writings and theatre pieces are not explored as part of her strategy of direct religious engagement. This chapter, as most of those before it, is largely about Marguerite's relationship to men defined as part of the Navarrian network. Yet here and there Reid hints at Marguerite's influence or interaction with ladies of court, her direction of matrons managing the Hôtel-Dieu at Alençon, and support for women whose husbands, fathers and sons had been persecuted by conservatives. In what ways were these women part of the evangelist network? Was Marguerite's leadership, support and expectations of them different from the way she engaged with men?

Finally, Reid explores the program of Roussel's reform in Béarn as a possible reflection of the ideals and goals of the Navarrian network. His ambiguous confessional stance echoes much of the wider network's careful attempts to conduct change from within the Church and focus on personal reform, a stance that by the end of the decade would be condemned as much by Calvin and his followers in Geneva as the conservatives. Calvin's critiques, Reid argues persuasively, 'purified' the evangelical ranks in France: moderates persecuted in France were no more welcome in Geneva. By the end of Henri II's reign, the confessional divide had become significantly more polarized than earlier.

In conclusion then, Reid argues that long before Calvin, Marguerite was leading a reform program, inspired by German reformers working with the opportunities and contexts they were given. Everything depended on the king, who was their hope for change. Throughout her life, Marguerite's ability to promote this cause had been governed by international and internal politics. However, Reid argues that Marguerite did not turn away from reform in her final years, but continued to promote her favored causes in the limited ways that were open to her. This, he argues, was a loss of power, but not of ardor. The network's legacy was ambiguous. There were no heirs to this program because they were not militant, and never rejected obedience to the king. Those who were more radical went to Geneva, and it was this group's view of what came before them as incoherent that came to dominate. Calvin's voice and his historiography, Reid argues, have been privileged.

Marguerite's greatest power was, as Reid's title indicates, her position as the "King's Sister": her proximity to François allowed her to do much. In the traditional role of a queen, Marguerite could personally bestow, or intervene to channel, mercy: protecting allies from prosecution, exile, even death. However she could never quite convince François in favor of reform in her role as an interlocutor in the political and religious fate of France. It is a pity therefore that Reid has not explored the wider literature that would help to make sense of her gendered opportunities for religious interactions, expression, and activities - even as a highly privileged woman.

This leads to the larger question. In what sense was the Navarrian network "hers"? Was she its intellectual leader or the political and financial patron of a large extended clientage network? Reid does not, it seems, demonstrate the former, but it is unclear whether the evidence does not exist to show this, or whether Reid has not considered this possibility. It is disappointing not to have some exploration of Marguerite's own writings, in addition to the important focus Reid gives to her actions in and for her network of evangelicals. This seems a lost opportunity in a work so extensive, especially when the religious messages of her 'fellow' network members' literary texts are so carefully examined. This is not to say, however, that to be a political or financial leader was not a powerful or significant role. Gender limited women in many ways, and this was certainly one way in which women could participate in religious ideas of their era. However one wonders whether other views held by Calvin still remain historiographically powerful: in particular his limited assessment of women's capacity for intellectual engagement with religious ideas. Reid's text has done much, but it also demonstrates just how more there is still to explore in this area.

## NOTES

[1] For Marguerite specifically, see Barbara Stephenson, *The Power and Patronage of Marguerite de Navarre* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004)

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