

H-France Review Vol. 11 (May 2011), No. 100

Didier Boisson and Yves Krumenacker, eds., *La coexistence confessionnelle à l'épreuve: Études sur les relations entre protestants et catholiques dans la France moderne*. *Chrétiens et Sociétés: Documents et Mémoires* No. 9. [Lyon:] Équipe Religions, Sociétés et Acculturation (RESEA) du Laboratoire de Recherche Historique Rhône-Alpes (LARHRA, UMR 5190), 2009. 264 pp. 22€ (pb). ISSN 1761-3043.

Review by Allan A. Tulchin, Shippensburg University.

This collection of essays is notably coherent in focus and the contributions are generally of high quality. Most focus on inter-confessional relations in specific communities, and most examine the period between the Edict of Nantes of 1598 and its revocation in 1685, when Protestantism was officially tolerated in many localities in France. French-speaking scholars interested in issues of religious coexistence in a wide variety of contexts may find this book useful. Its essays offer many examples of the kinds of local evidence that can be brought to bear in order to understand how people get along (or not), despite religious differences.

Many of the contributors emphasize that the people they study were prone to avoid confessional conflict even under quite trying circumstances. For example, even in the middle of the War of the Camisards, mixed groups occasionally petitioned in favor of an unjustly accused Protestant, or of a Catholic unjustly persecuted by the rebels (p. 173). Likewise, some Catholics, whether out of principle or opportunism, chose to join the rebels (p. 177). Obviously, such examples cannot erase the fundamental fact of the vicious inter-confessional fighting taking place, but it is well to remember that there can be forms of coexistence even during periods of extreme intolerance, as Chrystel Bernat suggests. Similarly, Philippe Chareyre quotes a mercenary who was criticized for working for Catholics and who explained that “he was of the Religion, but his sword was Catholic” (p. 86).

A number of the essays examine issues of intermarriage. Levels of intermarriage varied, of course, presumably based on demographic and political, as well as more straightforwardly religious factors. Although religious authorities disapproved, such marriages nonetheless occurred and two local studies, one of Alsace and the other of Languedoc, suggest that ordinary people had a straightforward way of dealing with the inevitable question: How do we raise the children? In both cases, the girls were raised in the religion of their mother, while the boys were raised in the religion of their father (pp. 82, 102).

In many cases, religion was religion, and business was business. Although there were close financial, family, and business connections among the Protestants of Paris, Christian Aubrée points out that the Protestant Solomon Domenchin served two Catholic dukes of Orleans over a nearly fifty-year period in the later seventeenth century. The Duke of La Trémoille retained Protestants in his service even after he converted to Catholicism in 1653. That said, Edwin Bezzina's evidence suggests that in seventeenth-century Loudun, it was rare for Protestants to leave money in their wills to Catholics or vice versa, with very few exceptions, such as Guillemine de Burges, a wealthy Protestant woman, who left a legacy to her Catholic servant woman, to help her learn a trade (p. 165).

The maintenance of fairly strict boundaries in religious questions did not necessarily impede reasonably cordial social relations. When M. Dunoyer became seriously ill in Nimes in 1677, the bishop and a Catholic judge visited and attempted to persuade him to convert to Catholicism, as the law required.

Dunoyer having declared that he intended to live and die in the Protestant religion, the judge said in parting, “Eh bien, if you don’t want to make yourself a good Catholic, get well soon so we can have a drink together” (p. 87).

Olivier Christin, in a thoughtful conclusion notable for its attention to the German historiographical literature, argues that “friendship” (*amitié*) was the key concept that allowed early modern people to conceptualize their benevolent impulses toward members of other religious groups. People may have preferred to work with their own, and usually preferred their children not to “marry out,” but life was complicated and there was no point in being overly stubborn. Just because you might be in general more comfortable among your own kind did not mean that you couldn’t have friends and business partners across confessional lines. Serious political difficulties could attenuate, but never entirely erase, a basic level of civility and human solidarity.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Myriam Yardeni, “Introduction”

Denis Crouzet, “Catherine de Médicis actrice d’une mutation dans l’imaginaire politique (1578-1579)”

Pierre-Jean Souriac, “Une solution armée de coexistence. Les places de sûreté protestantes comme élément de pacification des guerres de Religion”

Philippe Chareyre, “La coexistence d’après les registres de consistoires méridionaux”

Michelle Magdelaine, “La coexistence confessionnelle à Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines au XVIIe siècle”

Yves Krumenacker, “La coexistence confessionnelle aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles: Quelques problèmes de method”

Christian Aubrée, “Les relations entre protestants et catholiques dans le marché du crédit parisien au XVIIe siècle”

Edwin Bezzina, “La mort, l’au-delà et les relations confessionnelles: Les testaments et leurs testateurs dans la ville de Loudun, 1598-1685”

Chrystel Bernat, “De l’alliance improbable à l’union interdite: Coexistence et porosité des frontières confessionnelles entre catholiques et protestants en guerre, Languedoc vers 1685-vers 1715/1730”

Valérie Sottocasa, “Protestants et catholiques en Languedoc: Fragilités d’une coexistence confessionnelle à la fin du XVIIIe siècle”

Olivier Christin, “Conclusion”

Bibliographie

Allan A. Tulchin
Shippensburg University
aatulchin@ship.edu

Copyright © 2011 by the Society for French Historical Studies, all rights reserved. The Society for French Historical Studies permits the electronic distribution of individual reviews for nonprofit educational purposes, provided that full and accurate credit is given to the author, the date of publication, and the location of the review on the H-France website. The Society for French Historical Studies reserves the right to withdraw the license for edistribution/republication of individual reviews at any time and for any specific case. Neither bulk redistribution/ republication in electronic form of more than five percent of the contents of H-France Review nor re-publication of any amount in print form will be permitted without permission. For any other proposed uses, contact the Editor-in-Chief of H-France. The views posted on H-France Review are not necessarily the views of the Society for French Historical Studies.

ISSN 1553-9172