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Philip Benedict, *The Faith and Fortunes of France's Huguenots, 1600-8*. St Andrews Studies in Reformation History. Aldershot, U.K. and Burlington, Ver.: Ashgate, 2001, xiv + 336 pp. Maps, tables, notes and index. \$99.95 U.S. ISBN 0 7546 0225 7.

Review by Daniel Hickey, Université de Moncton.

As a distinguished professor of early modern European history, Philip Benedict has contributed enormously to our understanding of urban networks, cultural patterns, and especially Reformation history. This volume is made up of nine of his major studies in Huguenot history, along with a new essay. There is a new introduction and the individual contributions have been reworked to form a coherent whole. The volume is interesting for two reasons. First, it regroups many hard-to-find articles by Benedict on the history of the Huguenot movement. Second, it demonstrates the evolution of the conceptual framework of this distinguished historian over the last fifteen years.

In his introduction, Benedict explains that his initial work in the field of Huguenot history attempted to understand the growing “mercantilization” of that confessional group over the course of the seventeenth century. Toward that goal, he concentrated on the affinities between Calvinism and capitalism as analyzed by the German sociologist Max Weber. Benedict sought to revise the traditional theory that Protestants had been drawn to trade and commerce as a result of “their unjust suffering” and the discrimination they faced when trying to obtain royal offices or in pursuing the learned professions (p. 2). Weber’s theories concerning this attraction did not always produce the results expected, but Benedict considers them as bulwarks against the traditionalist interpretations and the more recent tendencies to seek resemblances in the Catholic and Protestant Reformations, thereby watering down confessional differences. For him, Weber’s questions force the researcher to consider the potential psychological and behavioural implications of a particular theological system. But Benedict also notes that in pursuing that Protestant specificity, he has gone beyond economic determinism to look at cultural influences—demography, *mentalités* and the history of the book. He argues that his evolution as a historian has constantly been shaped by “moving back and forth between quantitative investigations and case studies, between social history and cultural history” (p. 4). It is this evolution that can be found in the three sections of the book.

In the first section, “Social and Demographic Fortunes,” Benedict begins with the study that directed him toward the links between the demographic evolution of the Huguenot community and the Weber thesis. An occupational analysis of the Norman town of Alençon from 1620 to 1685 revealed that the Protestant community was under-represented in the trades, yet “substantially over-rated in the corridors of the Palais de Justice” (p. 15). Benedict characterized the Alençon Reformed church as “aristocratic” from the very beginning of the community. That elite character persisted even as the community shrank under pressure from the Crown and the Roman church, but as it shrank, the number of merchants increased even as the lawyers and royal officials became less numerous. According to Benedict, this increased “mercantilization” of the community shows the Weberian affinity between Calvinism and capitalism. Farther, arguing against the traditional Protestant theory, he contends that it

was not the Huguenots excluded from offices and professions that swelled the ranks of the merchant community. These men continued moving up toward the status of bourgeois, *sieurs*, *écuyers* or *rentiers*. Rather, the increasing number of merchants in the sample were new men, Protestants attracted—as Weber argued—toward the mercantile community. That attraction seemed to show the accuracy of Weber's analysis. However, after a long article on an overview of the demographic fortunes of the different Huguenot communities in France, Benedict returns to the Weber thesis in a case study of Montpellier. There, as he notes, economic and occupational results do not bear out the Weber theory. According to Weber, the characteristic beliefs of Calvinists led them to pursue a work ethic that resulted in their accumulation of personal wealth and sizable contributions to economic development in their regions. In Montpellier, which prospered during the seventeenth century, both Catholics and Protestants seemed to have shared the increases in wealth. Benedict found in his study of marriage contracts and dowries there that the gap narrowed between Catholic and Huguenot wealth over the course of the century, with Catholics catching up and even doubling their Huguenot neighbours. Protestants did hold their own among the growing ranks of the city's merchants, but if a Protestant's behaviour inclined him to business success, as Weber argued, one would expect the group to have prospered and increased its wealth in relation to Catholics. Benedict shows that there are no indications that this happened.

The second section of the book, "Religious Faith, Cultural Capital and Historical Consciousness," goes beyond the Weber thesis to explore the relation between culture and the social history of the Huguenot community. Benedict's fascinating examination of book ownership and private art collections in the city of Metz allows him to begin penetrating the Huguenot consciousness. Using the very complete inventories of personal possessions drawn up by the notaries in Metz, he compares the book and art purchasing of the Huguenot and Catholic elites of the city. In each case samples of the inventories were analyzed for specific periods. In the case of books, the results showed that Protestant merchants, artisans, and bourgeois were more likely to own books since they came from the more well-to-do sections of the population, but that there was a surprising similarity between Catholic and Huguenot libraries as to the number of books held and as to the type of books (primarily religious) favoured by each community. When looking more closely at the type of books, however, Benedict was able to identify a fundamental difference. The Catholic religious books in the inventories tended to teach prayers or songs that might be used in devotions or might help to explain the officially sanctioned meaning of these practices, but as Benedict notes, "they did not displace the experience of the ritual act as the central element of the devotion... Catholicism was a religion that used books" (p. 177). Protestant doctrines, by contrast, demanded that reading and absorbing the Bible be far more central to religious practice. For Benedict, "Protestantism was indeed a religion of the book" (p. 177). And he argues from an examination of secular books in the libraries of the two groups that Protestants seem to have had more familiarity with complex texts, asking hypothetically if this familiarity with books might not have enabled the Protestants to gain greater knowledge of the world about them and to learn new craft or business techniques through the printed word. As for the art collections of the two groups in Metz, the study of similar inventory samples shows the flip side of the book study with a slightly greater tendency for Catholics to acquire art. But despite the traditional association of Huguenots with iconoclasm, rejecting images as representations of idolatry, Protestant elites in Metz did collect art almost as frequently as Catholics. As with books, there were significant differences in the type of art collected, with Catholics being far more interested in religious art and portraits, while Protestants favoured Old Testament religious art, and historical, mythological, and encyclopaedic paintings.

Going beyond these case studies, Benedict delves deeper into the Huguenot consciousness in an essay on the "Two Calvinisms," the early and later movement. This article comes back to the Weber thesis, but only as a means of introducing the problem of identifying Protestant characteristics within a continually evolving set of religious beliefs. In other words, the Weber thesis is no longer the central focus of Benedict's research. Treating the differences between early and later Calvinism as well as the distinctions between the evolution of the church in England and France, Benedict shows certain

divergences within the evolving beliefs. For example, he argues that it was only after Calvin that Theodore Beza and Girolamo Zanchi made predestination the central organizing principle of Calvinism at the same time that they imposed supralapsarianism. The latter doctrine taught that the efficiency of Christ's atonement extends only to the elect. In other words, less accent was to be placed on Christ's intercession and more on individual introspection. According to Benedict, these changes reoriented Calvinism, producing a greater anxiety around the question of salvation. They were adopted by the English and were reflected in the treatment of signs of election listed in Puritan meditation manuals and eventually in the diaries in which individual Puritans in both England and in New England listed and reflected daily upon their good works and failures. In France, where the individual tensions resulting from predestination and supralapsarianism were far less evident, there were fewer works of personal spirituality and the division of the faithful into the elect and the reprobate is not so evident. More apparent on the French side is the Huguenot struggle with the Roman church. Much of the French literature sought to rebut their Catholic opponents, not to develop a personal preoccupation with whether or not they were saved. In this case Benedict uses the Weber thesis essentially as a straw man to lead into a discussion of differences within the Calvinist movement, differences between early and later doctrine and national differences derived from divergent political contexts.

Having shown how books and art reinforced the beliefs and social structures of the two confessional communities in France, in the last section of the book, "Coexistence and Confessionalization", Benedict looks at relations between these two communities. It is in this section that he takes a strong stand against what he sees as exaggerated attempts to accentuate the similarities between the Catholic and Protestant Reformations, thereby glossing over the differences that continued to separate the two confessional groups. His essay "*Un roi, une loi, deux fois*" shows that the theories of toleration and freedom of conscience were opposed by the ideologues of both groups and eventually only grudgingly accepted out of the necessity of the moment. Benedict went on to study coexistence in practice, arguing that if the extremely violent manifestations of confessional hatred studied by Natalie Davis and Denis Crouzet had abated by the beginning of the seventeenth century, the coherence of the two groups remained intact.[1] For Benedict, attempts by historians such as Jean Delumeau, Louis Chatellier, John Bossy and H.O. Evennet to reduce the differences between the two confessions lack proof.[2] In attempting to show this, Benedict comes full circle, returning to his work on Montpellier. Looking back at the sample of marriage contracts for that city, he demonstrates that both communities continued to be characterised by a high rate of endogamy. He finds that the number of mixed marriages in the city represented something in the area of 5-10 percent, a figure similar to what Gregory Hanlon found for Layrac and well above the findings of Gabriel Audisio in the Luberon.[3] While these data do show that some couples chose spouses over and above confessional lines, Benedict argues that it was still relatively rare and that if anything this tendency declined in the course of the seventeenth century.

Going from articles on the social and professional structures of Huguenot society to introspective case studies on the formation of the *mentalité* of early modern Catholics and Huguenots to the persisting tendency of the members of each of these groups to see themselves as integral parts of a confessional whole, the evolution of Benedict's work shows a series of changes of direction within a long-term enquiry. If he reduces his emphasis on the Weber thesis as a central issue and embraces the newer social science themes to reveal hidden cultural practices and behavior, he uses these new tools of analysis to bring out the cohesion of the Huguenot community and to argue against its easy assimilation into the wave of "new Catholicism" that took root in seventeenth-century France.

NOTES:

[1] Denis Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu. La violence au temps des troubles de religion, vers 1525-vers 1610* (Seyssel: Champs Vallon, 1990); and Natalie Davis, "The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth Century France," *Past and Present* 59 (1973): 51-91.

[2] Jean Delumeau, *Le Catholicism de Luther à Voltaire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971); Louis Chatellier, *L'Europe des dévots* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987); John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); and H. O. Evenett, *The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

[3] Gregory Hanlon, *Confession and Community in Seventeenth-Century France: Catholic and Protestant Coexistence in Aquitaine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993); and Gabriel Audisio, "Se marier en Luberon: catholiques et protestants vers 1630," in *Mélanges Robert Mandrou: Histoire sociale, sensibilités collectives et mentalités* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985).

Daniel Hickey
Université de Moncton (Canada)
Hickeyd@umoncton.ca

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