

Owen Stanwood, *The Global Refuge: Huguenots in an Age of Empire*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. xii + 295p. Maps, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$36.95 U. S. (hb). ISBN 0-19-026474-8

Review Essay by Ellen McClure, University of Illinois at Chicago

Owen Stanwood's *The Global Refuge* is the first in-depth exploration of the Huguenot diaspora through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As the Huguenots established communities and networks stretching from South Carolina to South Africa, including the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean, he has quite a lot of ground to cover, and he does it thoroughly, deftly supplementing existing scholarship with extensive and impressive archival research. The result is a complex picture of early modern European expansion that skillfully addresses the overarching tension between, as he puts it, Eden and empire that characterized the aspirations and experience of the displaced French Protestant population.

The Huguenots were reluctant colonizers. Stanwood begins by outlining the first years of the refuge following Louis XIV's 1685 Edict of Fontainebleau which, revoking Henri IV's 1598 Edict of Nantes, prohibited the practice of Protestantism on French soil. Those who refused to convert to Catholicism and fled France initially found sympathetic hosts in England, the Netherlands, and the Protestant states of the Empire, who prided themselves on protecting these heroic victims of the Sun King's intolerant Catholicism. As Stanwood takes care to note, many of the first refugees, bolstered by Pierre Jurieu's conviction that a triumphant return to France was not only imminent but foreordained, initially viewed their exile as temporary. Those who did settle elsewhere were motivated by utopian dreams, fueled by texts such as the Protestant author Denis Veiras's *Histoire des Sévarambes* (1675), of establishing communities where they would be free to practice their faith. This dream of Eden found concrete expression in Henri Duquesne's *Recueil de quelques mémoires servant d'instruction pour l'île d'Eden* (1689), which inspired the project of establishing the Ile Bourbon (now La Réunion) in the early eighteenth century. In a testament to the timeliness of Stanwood's work, Duquesne's text has just been reedited, along with François Leguat's *Voyage et aventures en deux îles désertes des Indes orientales* (1707) by Classiques Garnier.

Although Duquesne took care to distinguish Huguenot settlement from existing European colonization efforts undertaken with the more worldly goals of riches and glory, Stanwood's study demonstrates that the implementation of the Huguenots' ideals required complicated and ongoing negotiation with the political interests of the major European Protestant powers who supplied the financing and support necessary for these endeavors. While England and Holland might have been deeply sympathetic to the French Protestants' plight, their material support was rooted in a desire to establish profitable colonies that could enhance their empire. Stanwood extensively documents how the Huguenots savvily exploited this desire, marketing themselves—even in the case of a refugee from Normandy, where such industries were nonexistent—as experts in the cultivation of

wine and silk, luxuries that both nations had been importing from France at great cost and which they therefore dreamed of producing themselves.

As tensions between France and England intensified, the Huguenots' position grew increasingly valuable as well as increasingly precarious. Were the Huguenots French first, or Protestants? Stanwood demonstrates that the answer to this question was not obvious, even to the refugees themselves; the persistence of family or business relations in France along with the ease of conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism (and back again) led the imperial powers underwriting their settlements to view them with suspicion. Discussing the layout of Manakintown in South Carolina, Stanwood notes that its naming of the central square and main street after local dignitaries who barely tolerated the refugees symbolized the Huguenots' position worldwide: "They were pawns in a great geopolitical game more than allies or even objects of charity" (p. 135). Indeed, Huguenots settling in colonies controlled by England, such as the Caribbean island of St. Kitts, faced the necessity of assimilating, at least outwardly, to preserve their own faith. Here again, Stanwood's impressive archival research allows him to track the subtleties of such accommodations, documenting how the Huguenots were able to exploit the need for their expertise and labor to create a space for themselves.

The presence of Huguenots and their descendants in prominent positions in the military, commerce, and the church testifies to their successful self-promotion; as the colonies took hold, the Huguenot community assisted the Anglicans in the purpose of, as the title of the sixth chapter puts it, "making the empire Protestant," participating in the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and assisting, with some success, in missionary efforts among Native Americans and the enslaved. As Stanwood notes, the presence of Huguenots in these efforts helped promote the image of Protestantism as a global, cosmopolitan entity expanding beyond an Anglicanism identified with the English state. Despite their increasing ties to the Anglican community, and even to the rival Catholics, Huguenots managed to maintain their identity and networks, quietly assisting their coreligionists worldwide. Stanwood's history ends with the eighteenth century, which saw revolutions in France and the Anglophone world that finally provided official endorsement of religious toleration and thereby removed the main motivating factor for Huguenot resettlement and even oppositional identity. As the book's epilogue demonstrates, however, Huguenot refugees and their descendants had a lasting effect on the places where they settled, from Boston—where Faneuil Hall was named for Peter Faneuil, one of the more successful members of the community—to South Africa.

These examples of Huguenot success, however, inadvertently point to one of the book's shortcomings, perhaps attributable, at least in part, to the extensive archival research that constitutes one of its strengths.[1] Stanwood's tight focus on the fascinating and complex relationships between the Huguenots and their imperial protectors prevents him from examining what must have been equally complicated relationships between the Huguenots and the indigenous inhabitants of the lands they settled. These inhabitants are nearly invisible in the story that Stanwood tells, appearing briefly to conduct raids or, at a bit more length in the sixth chapter, to be converted. This absence is particularly glaring given the attention Stanwood gives to the difficulties that the Huguenots experienced settling in densely populated European communities where resources were scarce, noting, for example, that their experience in the colonies established for them in Germany led the refugees to conclude that "True peace could not come in someone

else's land, but only by creating new lands" (p. 41). This jarring sentence, it should be noted, occurs in the context of Stanwood's astute reading linking Huguenot settlements to utopian fiction and could therefore be read as an implicitly problematic application of utopian fantasies of both novelty and creation on the part of the settlers themselves. Yet this blurring of the author's voice with the purported viewpoint of the settlers recurs elsewhere; we are told that the Huguenots establishing what would become Stellenbosch were "buoyed" by the defeat of the seminomadic pastoral Khoekhoe and San (p. 89) and that the vulnerable community of Oxford, Massachusetts, had been "ravaged by native warriors" (p. 117). A more explicit engagement with indigeneity studies might have mitigated such phrasing and further contextualized the specificity (or lack thereof) of Huguenot settlement in early modern colonial expansion as well as its troubling legacy.

A similar reticence occurs around the issue of slavery. Stanwood acknowledges near the beginning of his study that efforts to enforce the religious orthodoxy demanded by the Code Noir (issued in 1685) were tempered by French fears that persecuting Protestants in the islands would lead them to take their wealth and slaves to colonies controlled by the English; after this point, the relationship between the Huguenots and enslavement drops from view until the description of efforts to educate and convert the enslaved in the sixth chapter, including those of Francis Le Jau in South Carolina, who, as Stanwood notes, was "no opponent of slavery," but "saw masters' resistance to Christianizing slaves and their brutal treatment of them as moral failures" (p. 176). While this phrasing certainly captures Le Jau's ambivalence about slavery, it also demonstrates Stanwood's investment in maintaining a narrative of the Huguenot diaspora not as colonizers but rather as, as he puts it in the final lines of the book, "boundary crossers" whose experience serves as a "tale of how individuals often get swept up in the current of history and taken to unusual places" (p. 238). It is worth noting that current efforts to document Peter Faneuil's complicity in the transatlantic slave trade, not to mention the troubling legacy of Huguenot settlement in South Africa, go unmentioned.

Stanwood's reluctance to examine Huguenot settlement critically against the context of the displacement of natives or the expansion of the slave trade stands in stark contrast to his approach to religion. Readers seeking a sense of why French Protestants preferred exile to conversion will be disappointed.[2] Stanwood's overarching narrative, which recounts how the Huguenots navigated the tension between an Edenic freedom of religious practice and the worldly demands and concerns of empire, involves repeatedly demonstrating how the Protestants' ideals were compromised or instrumentalized; the result is the unfortunate impression that their religion was not deeply felt or lived, but instead a useful tool that could be used to obtain support from the major European states which sponsored them. To cite just a few examples, Stanwood points out that the elector of Brandenburg's support of the Huguenots in the early years of the refuge "reflected self-interest as well as charity" (p. 21); elsewhere, we are told that "the Huguenots used a religious message to gain adherents to their cause" (p. 30), or that there was more to the English protection of the Huguenots in St. Kitts than "just charity" (p. 164). Implicit in such formulations, which lead to Stanwood's conclusion that "the story of the Huguenots is not a parable about religious freedom" (p. 238) is a suspicion that religious discourse is instrumental rather than sincere, and that the historian's task consists in revealing the less noble aims and motives that it disguises. This stance, not uncommon among historians, ignores the many ways that religion is interwoven with, and informs, politics and economics, especially in the early modern world.[3]

The Global Refuge accomplishes the valuable task of providing an overview of the Huguenot diaspora in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Stanwood's truly impressive archival research allows him to set relatively unknown figures, stories, and settlements alongside better-known events, texts, and personalities. The complex relationship between the Protestant refugees and their various European supporters, as well as the often non-idealistic bases for that support, are described with skill and nuance. Stanwood's considerable work will no doubt provide the grounds and inspiration for further scholarship, informed by indigeneity studies, religious studies, global history, and Black studies, that will deepen our understanding of the relatively understudied Huguenot community and the complicated contexts in which they lived and which they helped to create.

NOTES

[1] For the ways in which relying on archives uncritically can reproduce structures of domination or render certain populations invisible, see, of course, Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[2] For an account of the deep and visceral division between French Protestants and Catholics, see Frank Lestringant's *La sainte horreur, ou le voyage en Eucharistie XVIe-XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996).

[3] Dipesh Chakrabarty provides a sharp critique of this stance in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). For a recent, if flawed, examination of the ties between religion, especially Protestantism, and economic thought, see Benjamin M. Friedman's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (New York: Vintage, 2021).

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