

Jean-François Gilmont. *Le livre réformé au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle.*

Conférences Léopold Delisle. Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2005. 152 pp. index. append. illus. tpls. chron. bibl. €22. ISBN: 2-7177-2333-1.

Jean-François Gilmont offers us a survey of the relationship between the printed book and the Reformation in sixteenth-century France. The volume's content is divided into three major sections: the evangelical book before Calvin, religious printing in French-speaking Europe during Calvin's ascendancy in Geneva, and the printed book after the death of the reformer.

Those familiar with Gilmont's work will note that this study revisits and synthesizes more than twenty-five years of his own research and engages more recent developments in the field. Of particular interest are findings on Pierre de Vingle, which go a long way in emphasizing the diversity and dissonance of the earliest expressions of the spirit of church reform, and recent research on censure in Geneva, which adds nuance to his discussion of the latter part of the sixteenth century.

Gilmont situates his findings within a rather conventional narrative of the

Reformation by charting a trajectory of relative chaos, creativity, and emerging factions in an initial phase, followed by Calvin's consolidation of the movement despite its internal opponents and outliers, and, finally, the effort to hold ground during the Wars of Religion. This narrative adds cohesion to Gilmont's account of the activities of the printers and major authors at work during the sixteenth century, but detracts from the dynamism of print culture by deemphasizing its most intriguing and pertinent anomalies. The latter could have been used to better effect through more interpretation and analysis and, furthermore, provided interesting, more developed transitions between the three major sections (heterogeneity in printer's catalogues and personal libraries; the intensity of Calvin's dominance over Genevan production and content, which, upon the reformer's death, deteriorated into a system of protracted negotiation between printers and town authorities; the difficulties of matching historical periodization with printing activities when attempting to square the effect of an energetic push of the French reformers to organize in 1559 with the surge in pamphlet literature around the *Colloque de Poissy* in 1561, the beginning of religious hostilities in 1562, and Calvin's death in 1564; the shift from aggressive religious evangelizing to historical, political, and devotional content as the Wars of Religion raged on). Indeed, the disorderly reality on the ground, over which Gilmont retains an uncanny encyclopedic knowledge, is rarely so tidy. Gilmont moves with relative ease between the events of the Reformation and the details of the print and printers that created or reacted to them, but at times the relevance of the particulars becomes murky when allusions to minor players and a quick-paced narration collide.

That tension between the larger narrative and the details of the data never really disappears, and Gilmont's empirical findings put the lie to our assumptions of the smooth, continuous arc of the relationship between print culture and the Reformation. In this respect, it provides some of the most illuminating findings in *Le livre réformé*, in large measure due to the questions of method for which Gilmont has been lobbying for years. His insistence that historians of the book count *feuilles d'impression*, or folio printed sheets, in tandem with the number of titles produced leads to brilliant graphic representations that use a ratio of titles-printed sheets to highlight shifts between periods of fewer, more voluminous titles, to periods of numerous, briefer works. When he juxtaposes this data for Geneva with a measure of total production, a distinction between vernacular and Latin and Greek texts, a comparison of religious works to other printed content, and a modified graph line that accounts for the time needed to complete titles, Gilmont provides the type of in-depth and multifaceted look at production and the sensitivity to the material realities of printing that have become his trademark. If anyone still required proof of the utility and sheer possibilities of his working methods, here it is.

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