

Experiencing Exile: Huguenot Refugees in the Dutch Republic, 1680–1700.

David van der Linden.

Politics and Culture in Europe, 1650–1750. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015. xx + 290 pp. \$134.95.

At the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, at least 150,000 French Calvinists (i.e., about one-fifth of their total number) went, mostly voluntarily, into exile into different Protestant countries of Europe and the North American colonies. Because Protestantism remained formally forbidden in the French monarchy (though continuing underground) until the 1789 Revolution, the refugees have been much victimized in the memory of their communities in France itself and abroad. Many refugees settled in the Dutch Republic, where a French-speaking Reformed church existed ever since the late sixteenth-century exodus from the Southern Netherlands, and that was then the center of the European book trade. Though definitive numbers still are difficult to assess, the Dutch Republic finally hosted at least one-quarter of the refugees (about 35,000 Huguenots), and more than half of their over 600 exiled ministers. From the start, the preachers, intellectuals, and journalists who pertained to the first wave of refugees, such as Elie Benoist, Pierre Jurieu, Pierre Bayle, or Jean Rou, cultivated their historical memory in an apologetic or hagiographic vein, as a quest for freedom, a triumphant version of identity in exile, or a story of martyrdom.

Around the tercentennial of the Revocation, in 1985, a considerable amount of historical studies and memorial literature was published, and imported sources edited. Innovating the approach of Huguenot history and procuring the first reliable assessment of the streams of refugees, these publications turned mostly around the problems of assimilation and integration, characteristic of any refugee community, and of the conservation of a sense of group identity, rather different from one host country to another, but always embedded in a confessional perspective. However, except for some learned articles, no global assessment of the Dutch Huguenot experience existed. Thirty

years later, David van der Linden's book has taken up this challenge by proposing to the postconfessional reader an interpretation of the post-Revocation history centered upon the experience of their exile by the Huguenots themselves. Benefiting from the huge body of existing literature on local Huguenot communities and individual refugees, but also from the awareness, rapidly growing since the tercentennial, of the economic, social, cultural, and moral difficulties that the Huguenot refugees experienced abroad, and the often far from warmhearted reception they received in the host countries, this book focuses on three different aspects of the Huguenot exile. However, it intends to remain closer to everyday experience than most studies have before.

In the book's first part, two chapters examine the social and economic condition of the Huguenots in a town of departure, Dieppe, and a town of arrival, Rotterdam. This approach includes two key professions for confessional refugees, the book market and the pulpit, but also the assistance of the many poor, often much less generous than former historians tried to make us believe. The second part is concerned with the maintenance of faith in exile: preaching as a moral aid for comforting the faithful in their claims to justice, its successes among the refugees, and also its limits. Chapter 5 is perhaps the most novel of the book: taking seriously the despair of many refugees, it examines, next to the expectations expressed in politics and prophecies, those who for economic, moral, or religious reasons (re)converted to Catholicism and after some years returned home as *nouveaux convertis*, again taking Dieppe as an example. The third part, "Memories in Exile," answers most to new trends in history writing. Turning around the long-term memory of the exile experience among the Huguenots themselves, Van der Linden shows convincingly how Huguenot memory and history have been largely shaped by the accounts, memoirs, and correspondence written in exile by Louis XIV's victims, sometimes rather different from the experiences jotted down in the letters of individual refugees.

Though not really set up as a global story of the Huguenots, this book is an excellent survey of the key dimensions of the Huguenot experience: survival, legitimization, memory, and identity. Besides throwing new light on the experiential aspect of exile, it also shows convincingly that the Huguenot experience was strongly embedded in transnational links through the networks of commerce, church, and correspondence, which will provide an excellent approach for the next stage of the research.

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