

Alain Joblin. *Les protestants de la Côte au XVII^e siècle (Boulonnais, Calaisis)*. Vie des Huguenots 62. Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2012. 250 pp. €60. ISBN: 978-2-7453-2278-4.

When writing the history of early modern French Protestantism, scholars usually focus on the prominent communities in the Midi, Normandy, or Paris. Yet Protestant life in what may seem an obscure corner of northern France, around the towns of Calais and Boulogne-sur-Mer, has received scant attention. Joblin's aim is

to fill this gap: he has written a chronological history of Protestantism in the Calaisis and Boulonnais, from the foundation of the first Huguenot churches in the 1560s until the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. In addition, the book contains several appendices, including a useful map of the region, as well as a list of Huguenot refugees who settled in England and the towns of Cadzand and Groede, in the Dutch province of Zeeland.

Not without reason the present volume appears in the series *Vie des huguenots*. Since it was launched in 1997, several important studies on local Protestant communities have appeared, most notably on the Poitou, the Berry, Provence, and Normandy. As a result, one of the benefits of this series is that it maps the fates and fortunes of the Huguenots under the Ancien Régime, and thus allows scholars a more nuanced understanding of the similarities and divergences between different communities. Joblin's volume on Calais and Boulogne adds to this picture, as he demonstrates that the history of Protestantism in this region shows some striking particularities when compared to other regions in France.

To begin with, the implantation of Calvinism owed more to migration than to the success of preaching. It was the stream of refugees escaping religious persecution in the Southern Netherlands that swelled the ranks of the churches, especially around Calais. Protestant migrants were also tempted by the economic privileges handed out by King Henry II, who sought to repopulate the area after he had wrestled Calais from the English in 1558. Another remarkable feature of Protestantism in this region was its rural character: Huguenots were forbidden to erect churches in the towns of Calais and Boulogne, but they also tended to live and worship in the many countryside villages, or on the estates of noblemen. In the town of Guînes for instance, almost seventy percent of all Huguenots were farmers. This was certainly unusual for French Protestantism, which generally drew its members from the elites, merchants, and artisans, and which was mostly an urban phenomenon.

These findings also shed new light on the Refuge, although Joblin does not explicitly make this case. On the basis of the registers of confiscated Protestant property, drawn up by local French magistrates after the Revocation, he demonstrates that on average refugees owned fifteen percent of all arable land in the Calaisis, while in some parishes this figure could be as high as twenty-five or even forty percent. Landowners were not necessarily poor farmers, however, as much farmland was rented out by the Protestant landed elite or merchants living in the towns. Indeed, it appears that it was mostly these people who fled abroad after 1685, not the poorer lot working the fields.

The wealth of data presented by Joblin varies considerably throughout the book, however, in large part because archival sources have been lost over time. Although Joblin does a good job of piecing together the remaining evidence, in some places the book relies heavily on anecdotes. For instance, the French Wars of Religion are covered in less than three pages by mentioning a few haphazard events. The refugee movement to England and Zeeland after 1685 receives far more attention, but again one gets the impression that Joblin relies on a few well-chosen

anecdotes. He hardly draws upon the rich English or Dutch archives to explore the Refuge in greater detail, and entirely omits the refugees settling in the province of Holland. Yet despite these shortcomings, this book remains a useful source of information for scholars interested in the history of Protestantism on the local level.

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