

**David van der Linden, *Experiencing Exile: Huguenot Refugees in the Dutch Republic, 1680-1700* [Politics and Culture in Europe, 1650-1750], Ashgate 2015, 291 p., ISBN 978-1-4724-2927-8**

This book by David van der Linden, a Dutch young scholar with solid expertise on French immigration in Early Modern Europe, deals with Huguenot exiles in the Dutch Republic. Albeit the topic is not new within the European or even American scholarly debates, the approach it employs stands out, indeed. The author aims to analyze the experience of ordinary refugees and not only that of the elites, “rather than covering the process of integration or fortunes of elite Huguenots, it re-inserts the vast masses of refugees into the history of exile” (p.8). In my view, this may represent an intended collective biography of a Protestant group, which includes both a social and a cultural perspective that may be integrated into a broader history of the Huguenot Church. The investigated period is 1680-1700 which witnessed high levels of tension across the European continent, as well as an intensification of religious exile. The approach is both chronological and analytical, while the presentation is structured into three main parts, namely “The economy of exile”, “Faith in exile” and “Memories in Exile.”

The analysis is empirical and largely relies on unpublished and edited source material, such as journals, correspondence and, obviously, sermons; additionally, the author compiles an appendix with tables, that reflects the quantitative data used. This can be considered a very fruitful methodological approach as it avoids an overwhelming supply of information to the reader and, at the same time, makes the text more “digestible” and certainly very concise: Van Linden gets to the point. Nonetheless, a more detailed methodological presentation and terminology, including the analysis of key concepts such as “Counter-Reformation” or “confessionalization”, even by rejecting them, i.e. not only refugee and exile, would have helped the author to better position his research within current research trends and to integrate the phenomenon into the broader history of Early Modern Europe in a more detailed comparative perspective.

The first chapter discusses the circumstances in Normandy, notably Dieppe, after the famous edict of Fontainebleau which revoked the Edict of Nantes. It analyses the possible reasons that prompted Huguenots to leave the French Kingdom and attempts to identify which of them took the path of exile. His main assessment is that “socio-economic opportunities played a crucial role” (p. 38). His arguments rely on several cases and the table with the social categories of refugees is very persuasive in this sense (Dieppe, p. 27). In fact, the author convinced me more than other historians did, that we should consider religious exile as a planned action rather than an ad-hoc

decision, refugees considering several factors before leaving France. Thus, he does not resume to confession as a mere pretext. The second chapter examines how successful or rather unsuccessful refugees were in their new home. In the analysis, he places great emphasis on cities such as Rotterdam and Amsterdam, and professions such as entrepreneurs in the textile industry, booksellers, publishers, and ministers, without however, neglecting the poor. The main point made by the author is that religious concerns, which had existed in France, were replaced by struggles for self-sustaining in a very competitive market, such as the Dutch Republic. It is a phenomenon which may be confirmed in other parts of Europe, including remote Transylvania, and it confirms my view that massive emigration disrupted denominational solidarity in Early Modern Europe due to economic reasons and difficulties encountered in the new home. Thus, we find out that entrepreneurs faced financial issues and, contrary to the hitherto findings in the historiography, the author claims that although booksellers encountered a competitive market, they strove to "gain a foothold", even in the Dutch Republic where the book market was very developed (p. 51). They took the risk of emigrating, indeed due the freedom of worship, as censorship and controls in France were very strict. Success was nevertheless limited, not all booksellers and printers thrived. Unlike the others, ministers who were forced to make use of *ius emigrandi* faced the challenge of finding a parish, building a reputation and network of connections. The number of poor Huguenots was very high, as the reader may expect it, but Van Linden argues that the phenomenon was indeed widespread. In the third chapter, which addresses the "comforts of preaching", Van der Linden analyses sermons by stressing the topic of exile, how ministers tried to comfort people spiritually. The chosen sermons were quite known and the author maintains that the discourse was intended to provide answers to the anxieties of the refugees: Divine interference and punishment for human sins (the Revocation) with the subsequent, I would call it "happy end", return to France. Considering this, the author shows that sermons criticizing those who remained in France were circulated widely. The fourth chapter discusses both the topics and the recipients' reaction to the message, what Van der Linden notes as being the dialogue between the minister and his audience, the art of preaching with certain criticism and positive reactions from the listeners. Important from this point of view, are the pages devoted to printed sermons which were smuggled into the Kingdom. Thus, we find out that preachers were both admonished and asked to return, i.e. there was disappointment in France, an issues empirically addressed by the author. The fifth chapter examines the end of exile, the return of certain refugees, which is a less researched topic in historiography: the hope for restoration, as it happened in England after the Glorious Revolution. The author

considers the peace of Rijswijk a disappointment for the Huguenots as it was followed by the return and conversion of part of the refugees. Because converts were viewed by Huguenot preachers as *neoconvertis* who sold themselves, show us that refugees did not make up an homogenous group, rather the opposite being true as even during the exile people reacted differently. Memoirs are approached in the sixth chapter, as a matter of identity, "recounting their own past, in other words, gave Huguenots a new sense of purpose and belonging: it defined who they were" (p. 163). Here the author chose several examples which led to contrasting memories of the past: persecution on the one hand, and cross denominational friendships on the other. It is exactly what we expect, subjective perceptions which the author skillfully integrated into the text. The last chapter addresses the writing of the Huguenot past and collective memory, arguing that "...by examining the various ways in which they did, we may better grasp the formation of group identities in this period" (p. 177). Thus, Van der Linden claims that these memories "transformed specific individual stories to create an unashamedly heroic past" (p. 178). Nevertheless, the argument is built on writings such as those of Pierre Jurieu or Elie Benoist. For this reason, this may reflect only "part" of the collective identity, as memoirs were usually produced at that time by what we call in German "gelehrten Bürger". The self-image of the lower strata is less visible in this kind of memories and more visible in everyday social behaviors, as the author highlighted when describing different reactions: exile, fight for food, return and conversion.

Is this book filling a gap in our understanding of the Huguenot settlement in the Dutch Republic, as Professor Bertand Van Ruymbeke (Paris) is claiming on the back cover? In my view it certainly does, as the author brings significant nuances to the overstated positive impact of French refugees on Dutch society. It puts forward new questions which may enable us to look beyond the official pretext of the refugee (at that time, but not only (*sic!*)), to contextualize the local social situation and to widen the spectrum of analysis by taking into account a variety of motivations. Nonetheless, the multitude of cases may lead to as many reasons as refugees; however, given the lack of so many testimonies, there might always be a risk of omission. Certainly, this may be answered through a more minute research of social categories, my own curiosity in this regard concerns the ministers: did they flee just for the sake of preaching the "true religion" according to their clerical conscience and identity?

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