



BOOK REVIEW

## Robin Gwynn. *The Huguenots in Later Stuart Britain. Volume III: The Huguenots and the Defeat of Louis XIV's France*

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Tim Harris 

Brown University

Email: [tim\\_harris@brown.edu](mailto:tim_harris@brown.edu)

Robin Gwynn will be familiar to readers of this journal as the leading expert of the Huguenot diaspora in early modern Britain. He may be less well-known for his crucial role in transcribing the Roger Morrice Entering Book; he passed on his transcripts to Mark Goldie and myself in 1990 and they became the basis for the team-edited, multivolume edition of *The Entering Book of Roger Morrice, 1677–1691* published by The Boydell Press in 2007. Our debt to Gwynn's scholarship is thus profound. He has now brought together his wealth of knowledge accumulated over a lengthy career to produce a trilogy of books on *The Huguenots in Later Stuart Britain*; volume three, under review here, focuses on the 1680s and early 1690s, and draws on Morrice as well as numerous other archival and printed materials.

Gwynn's basic contention is that many more Huguenots came to Britain than previously thought, and that these refugees had a far greater impact on the course of British history than hitherto appreciated. Britain, not the Netherlands, Gwynn shows, emerged as the most populous Huguenot center outside of France. His main historiographical target is Warren Scoville's *The Persecution of Huguenots and French Economic Development 1680–1720*, first published in 1960, which seriously underestimated the negative impact the persecution had for Louis XIV's France. Scoville counted the exodus only from the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, but in fact Huguenots started fleeing to Britain in 1681 in response to the dragonnades, with migration peaking in 1687 and continuing into the 1690s. Although French Protestants had settled in Britain before, now some 50,000 new Huguenot refugees arrived, founding forty-three new churches.

This large influx, Gwynn maintains, had significant consequences for both Britain and France. He focuses on three areas: the political revolution that overthrew the Catholic James II; the Irish wars of 1689–92; and the financial revolution of the 1690s. To understand why the revolution of 1688–89 happened, Gwynn insists, we need to answer why Tories chose to put loyalty to the Church of England before loyalty to their monarch and why so many English Dissenters were unwilling to grasp the olive branch of toleration offered by James II in 1687; “a key component of the answers to both questions,” Gwynn believes, is “Louis's treatment of the Huguenots in France” (61). The persecution had a deep influence on public opinion in England, causing people to fear for the security of the Protestant religion in the face of the threat of Catholic absolutism. James II's initial response to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes made many doubt whether his subsequent professions of belief in liberty of conscience were sincere: James delayed the issuing of the brief in support of the Huguenot refugees; he wanted to confine relief to conformist refugees; he ordered the public burning of a book published abroad in 1686 by the Huguenot minister

Jean Claude, detailing the sufferings of the Protestants in France (James believed kings should stick together, quoting the English proverb that dogs defended each other when attacked); and he even contemplated issuing *Quo Warranto* proceedings against the French Huguenot Church in London (though the project was abandoned because the Church shared its charter with the Dutch Church of London). Gwynn concludes part one by endorsing the earlier opinions of Jules Michelet and E. S. de Beer that the Glorious Revolution “was in many respects the English answer to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes” (62).

Part two documents the significant contribution made by Huguenots to William III’s victory over Jacobite forces in Ireland. Gwynn offers a compelling reassessment of the military leadership of the Duke of Schomberg—himself an exile from France following the Revocation—who far from being the “tired old man” of recent historical accounts was an energetic professional who made many sensible decisions in challenging circumstances, and who for Huguenots was “a great man” and “hero” (94). In all, some 500 Huguenot officers took part in the reduction of Ireland, together with numerous more ordinary Huguenot soldiers (precise numbers are impossible to determine); well trained and professional, they were among the most reliable of the Williamite forces. In part three, Gwynn explores the part Huguenots played in the setting up of the Bank of England. Descendants of earlier Protestant refugees and the new arrivals between them subscribed to over 15.5% of the Bank’s initial funds, with the recent refugees comprising 11% of the contributors. But perhaps more important than the money they contributed, Gwynn suggests, was their unwavering support for the venture, and the leadership provided by the Houblons and their associates, without which the Bank might not have succeeded. The volume concludes with three lengthy appendices listing Huguenot army offices in the service of the crown in the later Stuart period, some of the rank-and-file Huguenot soldiers, and elders and deacons of the French Church in Threadneedle Street, London, 1640–1713.

There is much of value here. I am not totally convinced that previous historians have been as blind to the importance of the Huguenot factor as Gwynn alleges; and if they have not undertaken more research themselves on the Huguenots in Britain, it has been in deference to Gwynn and his ongoing scholarship, which few would feel comfortable competing with. I am also inclined to think the Glorious Revolution would have happened without the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, though at the same time I feel such counterfactual speculation is pointless, since the Revocation did happen and thus inevitably was a factor. Gwynn makes enough references to his findings in volumes one and two that volume three can be read on its own, though many will want to revisit the rest of the trilogy in the light of what is uncovered here.