



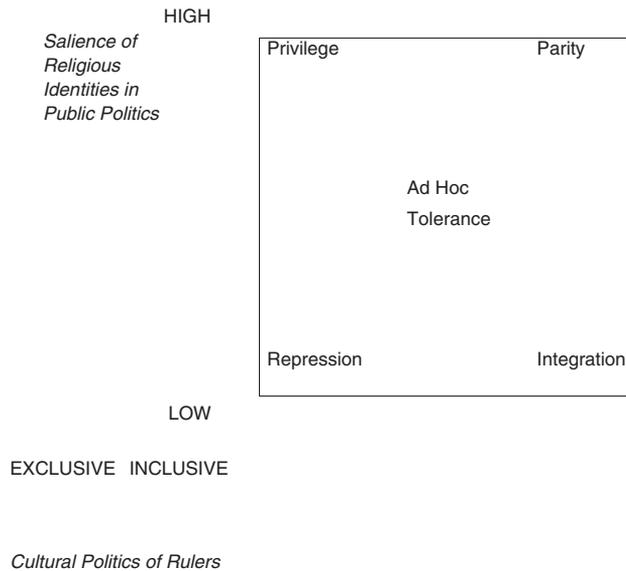
Wayne P. te Brake, *Religious War and Religious Peace in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, 396 pp., ISBN 978 1107 08843 6).

Among the many books on Reformation history which appeared in the Luther year 2017, *Religious War and Religious Peace in Early Modern Europe* must be one of the most important ones. This ambitious and wide-ranging study does not just analyze the outbreak of religiously-motivated warfare in early modern Europe, but also the peace settlements – some still-born, others remarkably long-lasting – that followed periods of vicious conflict. This may seem a remote topic to those fortunate enough to live in the modern, increasingly secular Western world, where religious war would appear to be ‘a thing of the past’. But are we sure we have slain the multi-headed hydra? What about the civil wars in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s and Islamic terrorism in the twenty-first century? To his credit, Wayne te Brake does not shy away from these difficult questions in his conclusion, which discusses religious conflict and possible peace settlements in the here and now. Since he sees himself as a social scientist as well as a historian, he examines the mechanisms for starting and ending large-scale religious violence, which are essentially modular and therefore applicable across time and space.

Te Brake successfully combines a thematic and chronological approach in his research. The outbreak of armed conflict, the search for lasting peace and the various peace settlements are discussed for three periods of European history, i.e. phase 1: the religious wars in Germany and Switzerland, ending in the Peace of Augsburg (1555), phase 2: the religious wars in France and the Low Countries, ending in, respectively, the Edict of Nantes (1598) and the Twelve Years Truce (1609) and phase 3: the religious wars on the Continent and in the British Isles, ending in, respectively, the Peace of Westphalia (1648) and the Glorious Revolution (1689).

Te Brake sees the outbreak of religious war as a recurrent process, by which a) ‘innovation, disputation, politicization, [and] mobilization’ result in the emergence of b) ‘politically salient religious identities/boundaries’ which, when combined with c) “activation, polarization, brokerage and escalation” give rise to armed conflict’ (17). A good example of a) and b) are the posting of Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses in 1517 and the Reichstag in Worms four years later. When brokers of violence such as the German territorial princes and Charles v, Holy Roman Emperor, became champions of Lutheranism and Catholicism, respectively, the result was the Schmalkaldic Wars (1545-1555).

While Te Brake considers the mechanisms causing religiously-motivated violence to be fairly simple and straightforward, he emphasizes that peace settlements in early modern Europe were invariably ‘complex and messy’, often subject to change over time, ‘but not simply random’ (354). In his view, retrospective authoritarian characterizations such as *cuius regio eius religio* (‘whose the rule, his the religion’) do not describe the broad variety of historical experiences. To illustrate his argument, he provides diagrams of the patterns of religious coexistence in early modern Europe (19, 89, 213, 308, 345). These diagrams take account of ‘both the variable claims of rulers and the variable visibility of religious dissidents [...] in public life’ (19). This is the basic model, which gets more complicated as the story progresses:



As Te Brake explains, when the salience of religious identities in public politics remains high, the peace settlement endorses one of two models: a) a situation of *parity*, involving shared religious buildings, shared urban spaces and/or carefully balanced political institutions OR b) a situation of *privilege*, i.e. political regimes that formally elevate one religious group over all others and formally discriminate against ‘dissidents’, but refrain from active repression. Peace settlements which seek to reduce the salience of religious identities in public politics do so in two ways: a) through *repression*, i.e. political/religious authorities exclude ‘dissidents’ and actively seek to eliminate religious diversity, OR b) through *integration*, i.e. political regimes are formally inclusive of multiple religious identities – no groups or individuals enjoy formal preference over others in public life. In Te Brake’s view, *ad hoc tolerance* describes the experience of specific groups of Christians and Jews in various parts of early modern Europe, ‘but not Muslims’. Certain groups of Christians and Jews were ‘neither fully included nor fully

excluded', but granted clearly delimited spaces for self-regulation by a ruler (20).

Te Brake does a wonderful job comparing and contrasting the different scenarios and the way they played out in early modern Europe. What happened when one kind of peace settlement transformed into another, for example? As *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* readers may have guessed, the Dutch Republic belongs in the upper left-hand corner of the diagram. Its political establishment supported the Dutch Reformed Church as the only public church, and formally discriminated against other Christian denominations, while granting 'ad hoc tolerance' to Jews. The outcome of the religious wars in sixteenth-century France – with which the Dutch Revolt has often been compared – was very different. Te Brake argues that, bouts of horrific violence notwithstanding, the Valois and Bourbon kings of France consistently sought to integrate Protestants into public politics – until the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1686), that is. Louis XIV changed a royal policy of integration that had lasted well over a century into one of repression, arguably one of his biggest policy mistakes.

Thankfully, Te Brake does not limit himself to high politics. Indeed, one of the great strengths of this monograph is the felicitous marriage of structural analysis and careful documentation of lived experiences in early modern Europe. Te Brake's search for the material and visual evidence of religious diversity has taken him to, for instance, the Hinter-Hütten farm in the Emmental in Switzerland, which sheltered Anabaptist leaders in a hidden space; to the *Simultankirchen/églises simultanées* in Bautzen in Germany and Detwiller in the Lower Alsace in France, shared between evangelicals and Catholics for almost five hundred years now; to Anabaptist, Calvinist and Catholic *schuilkerken* ('hidden churches') in Belgium and the Netherlands, i.e. buildings used for religious worship, but not recognizable as such from the outside; to the Walpole Old Chapel in East Anglia in the UK, a barn which served an 'Independent' congregation from 1649 until 1970; and to the improvised altar, or 'mass rock', hidden along a hedge row on the Devereaux farm in County Wexford in Ireland. These and many other examples serve to show that religious diversity was a fact of life in early modern Europe. Far from eliminating dissent, most rulers made peace settlements that explicitly *acknowledged* and *validated* a very messy situation on the ground. The Peace of Westphalia's claim to fame is *not* – as international lawyers would have it – the supposed creation of a Europe of sovereign nation states, but the institutionalization of religious diversity and the parity of religious groups in the Holy Roman Empire. This was a political solution that lasted until the Empire's dissolution in the nineteenth century.

The French Revolution swept away these variable patterns of religious coexistence in early modern Europe, and replaced them with the radical equality of all citizens. Should we, at one level, interpret this as a return to the policy of integration espoused by the Sun King's predecessors? At

another level, we may ask ourselves the question how successful the 'modern' approach has been. The French revolutionary regime quickly reverted from the integration of different (Christian) religions to their wholesale repression, all in the name of the Republic-which-had-become-God. The extermination of people perceived as 'dissidents' by communist regimes or 'Untermenschen' by fascist regimes in twentieth-century Europe also suggests that the equality of all citizens has failed to safeguard a diversity of beliefs (religious or otherwise) at crucial junctures. Are integration and repression two sides of the same coin? A book that raises these kinds of uncomfortable, yet pertinent questions deserves a wide readership, both among academics and the general public.

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