

Diefendorf, Barbara B. *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. 272 pp. \$16.95.

In her previous book, *Paris City Councillors in the Sixteenth Century* (1983), Diefendorf, Associate Professor of History at Boston University, showed some naïveté in assuming that religious conflicts in Paris had relatively little effect on the social strategies of the nobility. A decade later, after examining 270 primary sources (many previously unknown) and 300 secondary works in the archives of Geneva, Paris, and London, she found that her "'solidly Catholic' elite was in fact sorely tainted by heresy," with fully one-third of Parisian councillors having Huguenot relatives (3).

In *Beneath the Cross*, therefore, she reexamines the religious quarrels in Paris from 1557 to the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre (1572) and the larger role these conflicts played in France's Wars of Religion. Unlike traditional historiography, which has blamed Charles IX, Catherine de Medici, or the Guise faction for religious violence, Diefendorf—like revisionists Natalie Davis, Denis Richet, and Philip Benedict—sees a more complex picture. Instead of personalizing guilt or assuming underlying political motivation, she focuses on religious factors (Catholic sermons, public ceremonies, polemical tracts) which aroused popular opinion to force authorities to "purge" the city of heresy by the 1570s. She suggests that the king, the queen mother, and city councillors became *victimes des circonstances*, forced to countenance violence they had not premeditated. Had it not been for "the fierce Catholicism of the people of Paris," she asserts, "perhaps [the Wars of Religion] would not have taken place at all" (180).

While some scholars will disagree with this conclusion, most will applaud both Diefendorf's methodology and the evidence she offers in its support. Skillfully she analyzes the social, economic, religious, and political tensions in Paris (chaps. 1-2); offers a gripping narrative personalizing the deepening religious hatred against the Huguenots (chaps. 3-6); and analyzes quantitative data concerning Protestant occupations, neighborhoods, and arrest statistics (chaps. 7-8). Using literary analysis (chap. 9), she contrasts the message of Huguenot sermons (emphasizing submission amidst persecution) with the vitriolic homilies of many priests (calling Protestants "wild boars," "ravishing wolves," and "libertines" who threatened the social order). But Diefendorf also demonstrates (chap. 10) that even at the height of violence in 1572, a moderate Catholic faction in Parlement and the Hôtel de Ville—the *Politiques*—sought to stem the bloodshed and reconcile the two sides.

Despite often abrupt transitions from third to first person and a couple of minor misprints, both Diefendorf and Oxford University Press are to be commended for this thoroughly researched and elegantly written monograph. Maps, graphs, and sketches help the reader grasp complex realities about Paris, while the author's clear, good-humored prose makes

for pleasant reading. Diefendorf asks the right questions and cautiously analyzes her data. She also evokes the sights, sounds, smells, and the *mentalité* of sixteenth-century Paris, using vivid imagery, gripping narrative, and a sensitive portrayal of the feelings of both Catholics and Huguenots.

Specialists in sixteenth-century France and the Reformation will find much to ponder in this slim volume, while researchers will benefit from its extensive endnotes (55 pp.) and bibliography (27 pp.) containing nearly 600 sources. For graduate and undergraduate students alike, *Beneath the Cross* will enhance their understanding of the Protestant Reformation and socio-religious conflicts in Early Modern France.

Andrews University

BRIAN E. STRAYER

Droge, Arthur J., and James D. Tabor. *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992. xii + 203 pp. \$25.00.

May a person ever voluntarily terminate his or her own life? The dissolution of familial responsibility for the aged and infirm and medical technology's ability to maintain basic biological functions, often at high cost economically and emotionally have brought this issue into the consciousness of the American populace. The exploits of Jack Kevorkian have recently focused the gaze of America via the media and the courts, and promise continued attention in the years ahead. This provides the backdrop of this book by Arthur Droge and James Tabor. They attempt to reconfigure the current debate concerning voluntary death through an historical investigation of Judaism and Christianity in antiquity: "Ours is not an attempt to find ancient answers to modern questions; rather, by interrogating the ways in which self-killing was understood in the ancient world, we ourselves may choose to conceptualize suicide differently" (14). In sum, they argue that "voluntary death", "the act resulting from an individual's intentional decision to die, either by his own agency, by another's, or by contriving the circumstances in which death is the known, ineluctable result" (4) was readily accepted, even honored, by Greco-Roman society, Jews, and Christians until Augustine reversed the ethic in his polemic against the North African Donatists. As a result, according to the authors, we may draw no definitional distinction between martyrdom and suicide: the distinction rests strictly on personal commitments (187-88).

Tabor and Droge work through a mass of material on "voluntary death, spanning the roots of western culture in Israelite and Greek antiquities. In Greek philosophical schools, only the Pythagoreans and the neo-Platonists, opposed voluntary death. Instead, the debate centered upon the proper grounds for self-destruction. The Hebrew Bible never censors voluntary death, but merely records such instances as an acceptable