

those of the local clergy. Viewed from the perspective of the ruling class or even of ordinary citizens, the Reformation in Strasbourg takes on a brighter aspect, seems much more of a success than clerical censors would ever have admitted. Abrey's work does not necessarily invalidate the conclusions of Strauss, but it does raise significant new questions. Additional local studies, focused on the experience of the people as well as on the complaints of the clergy, should help to advance the discussion of this central issue of Reformation history.

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A.L. Beier — *Masterless Men, the Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560-1640*. London and New York: Methuen, 1985. Pp. xxii, 233.

In *Masterless Men, the Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560-1640*, A.L. Beier presents a comprehensive survey of one of the more serious and familiar social issues of the post-Reformation England. Having worked in and around that issue for over a decade — in a doctoral thesis, several articles and an earlier, if brief, monograph [*The Problem of the Poor in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Methuen, 1983)] — Beier promises consummate authority in undertaking the task before him. His use of thousands of arrest and examination records especially in the towns of Leicester, Chester, Reading and Warwick, and in the counties of Somerset and Wiltshire, and also of punishment records from Essex, London and Norwich, provide the substantial foundation for his study and command our respect for his authority.

As an expert tour guide, Beier takes us through 'all the old familiar places, one by one. Though the vagrancy legislation of his chosen era "reflected a new [?] kind of poverty after 1300, that of masterless men" (p. 12) he sees the emergence of vagrancy as a major problem following the social and economic dislocations of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Here he links vagrancy closely to the increase of population as a whole and (following Margaret Spufford's work on Cambridgeshire villages) to the shift in agrarian tenancy patterns. Rising food prices, a diminishing supply of available land through enclosure, sale and subdivision were also responsible for the large numbers of landless wage seekers in the countryside. They often undertook subsistence migration toward the towns and cities, and this effort often resulted in a reverse flow of statutorily defined vagrants when the object of migration — servants' positions, apprenticeships or simple wage — failed to materialize.

Against the picture painted by at least some earlier historians and often by contemporaries themselves, Beier casts a critical eye to the structure of vagrant "society". He finds that most vagrants were single males engaged in a near nomadic search for work or, barring that, subsistence through begging or any other means available. Such women as were involved were usually prostitutes, or searching for deserting husbands, or pregnant and single. Save for transient Irish paupers and Gypsies, both sketched briefly for us, almost none of the vagrants travelled in large groups or even in family units. Beier sorts through and summarizes his findings on the travelling patterns of the vagrant population, and describes some of the quasi-occupational sub-groups of the whole.

Of the presumed "vagrant underground" popularized in contemporary mythology as well as in some purportedly serious scholarship since that time, Beier is equally sceptical. While not denying some degree of criminal behaviour amongst individual vagrants, he dismisses the frequent assumption of a well developed or even hierarchical organization in support of such activities, and feels that such alleged evidence as the use of a secret "language" is also highly exaggerated.

Finally, Beier turns to the government reaction to vagrancy, not merely to rehearse the familiar litany of legislation, but to survey some of its philosophical underpinnings. In one of his more decisive conclusions, Beier tells us that government was not only far from helpless in its effort to cope, but

that the degree of its response caused it to extend administrative authority a goodly way down the path toward authoritarian government. In the end, the problem subsided with the effectiveness of statute — both the Elizabethan Poor Laws and the Restoration Settlement Laws — and also of course with the diminution of those economic and social factors which had brought it into being to begin with.

Though there is little which is sufficiently objectionable here to prevent one from assigning Beier's work even to the most innocent of undergraduates, one leaves it with a lingering sense of disappointment. While there is also little here which could not be found with slightly different emphasis in other modern authorities (John Pound, Paul Slack, Margaret Spufford and even some of Beier's earlier work) there is much which should be nailed down definitively and is not. The Medieval background for an issue described as new since the fourteenth century is largely omitted or found wanting despite the extensive literature on problems of tenure and mobility of the Raftis Group and its critics. The philosophical underpinnings of Tudor policy should surely warrant more than the treatment relegated to pp. 149-52, and again a large literature both contemporary and modern remains to be evaluated. The relation of vagrancy patterns to the agrarian or urban environment is certainly broached, but never resolved by the sort of detailed studies of particular communities which Paul Slack has so effectively employed in his study of the analogous scourge of plague. And even the attempt to investigate quasi-occupational sub-groups covered under the statutory rubric of "vagrancy" lacks the intellectual rigor resolution of, for example, Margaret Spufford's recent work on the petty chapmen in virtually the same period.

Overall the work at hand provides fine tuning and affirmation for much of the latest scholarship on the subject, but does little to take us much further. Let us hope the blandness of this serving will not diminish the appetite of others for what remains to be done.

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Edward Berenson — *Populist Religion and Left-Wing Politics in France 1830-1852*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. Pp. xxiii, 308.

Although you cannot tell from the title, Edward Berenson's book focuses sharply on dramatic political change during the Second Republic. Throughout, he argues an answer to a good question: how did urban-based *démocrates-socialistes* win over many rural artisans and peasants, particularly in the Center and the South, in the period between the June Days 1848 and Louis Napoleon's coup d'état in December 1851?

Berenson's central argument is that democratic-socialist ideology not only offered rural working people an answer to their economic difficulties, but also appealed to their religiosity. The book opens with a clear and succinct survey of those economic problems through the period of the July Monarchy. Hard-pressed peasants and artisans, it is suggested, would readily respond to a democratic-socialist program calling for cheap credit and producers' cooperatives. Furthermore, Berenson contends, people in the countryside were more prepared for the new ideology than has generally been thought. In some important ways, their "populist religion" corresponded to the political and religious ideas of urban critics of the July Monarchy. Rejecting the official Church's "Christianity of fear," country people focused on Jesus as a humble worker and favored festivals and magical practices believed to alleviate hardship. The people's Christianity was centered on the practical and the moral. Their concern for material well-being and fervor for justice and fraternity were shared by the *démocrates-socialistes*.

The heart of the book is an illuminating discussion of the propagandist activities of the Montagnards at the local level. To politicize peasants and artisans, the Left skillfully used songs,