

**Teissier, Germain.** *La Confrérie des Penitens Blancs de Montpellier 1697–1880. Manuscrit de G. Teissier, faisant suite à celui de P. Serres. Présenté et annoté par Jean Nougaret et Louis Secondy.* [Montpellier]: Confrérie des Pénitents blancs de Montpellier, 2011. Pp. 274 + ill. ISBN 978-2-9172-1219-6 (paperback) € 20.

As the introduction makes clear right away, this is not the work of a historian, but of an archivist. That is to say, this is not a study of the Confraternity of the White Penitents of Montpellier, but a ensemble of notes *towards* the study of the confraternity and, just as importantly, towards a fuller understanding of the *Historie des Pénitens de Montpellier* composed by confraternity's secretary, Pierre Serres, in the seventeenth century and recently edited and published (except for the second volume, now lost) by Jean Nougaret and Louis Secondy (Montpellier, 2003; see the review above). The "notes" are by Germain Teissier, an early twentieth-century archivist of the confraternity, who drafted them in March–April 1933 at the request of the confraternity's prior, Pierre Roussel. They have now been edited by the same two scholars who previously edited Serres's manuscript.

The notes consists of brief explanations of events in the confraternity's history and the responses, or attitudes, of members towards such events. For example, under the rubric "Processions for the many conversions" Teissier explains that "The Company was growing every day in numbers on account of the conversions that were taking place in town. There were so many conversions that Monsignor Bishop, wanting to thank God for such a wonder, ordered that a general Procession be held on 20 October and that the Penitents should take part in it." (22) In compiling such notes, Teissier drew upon the confraternity's own rich archive and then, at times, added his own commentary to them. He also cited directly from Serres's manuscript, which allows us to catch a glimpse of the information in the missing second volume. Though by nature a random collection, these are nonetheless important notes for the added information they provide on the confraternity's life, rituals, and history. They also help to illustrate the understanding that early twentieth-century confraternity members had of their own rich history.

Teissier's notes are, in turn, enriched by the careful annotations, corrections, and comments provided by their two modern editors, Nougaret and Secondy. For the note cited above, for example, Nougaret and Secondy explain that the conversions mentioned by Teissier took place between Thursday 27 and Sunday 30 October 1685 in the aftermath of the arrival in town of the *intendant* Basville on 26 September of that year. They then explains that, of the seven thousand Protestants in Montpellier, six thousand had converted on 1 October and the remaining one thousand in the four days between 27–30 October (234).

While the manuscript notes by Teissier cover the years 1602–1874, their two editors opted to publish only those from 1676 onward for two reasons: first, so as to coordinate this volume with Serres's *Histoire* and, second, in

order to let them coincide with the start of Charles de Pradel's term as bishop of Montpellier (r. 1675–96). As Teissier's notes for two centuries roll by, the reader catches important glimpses into the confraternity's reaction to, or of its adaptation to events and movements of the times, such as the spread of Jansenism, the outbreak of the French Revolution, or the Restoration. While on one page we read that on Tuesday, 6 November 1781, the confraternity was "rejoicing in honour of the birth of the Dauphin" (105), a few pages later we read that on 14 July 1790, following the edicts of the National Assembly ordering the suppression of titles of nobility such as Prince, Duke, Marquis, and so forth all the way down to "Chevalier", the confraternity prior proposed "that it might be wise to conform to this decree to suppress all these titles that smack of feudalism" (112). In a later entry titled "Clandestine meetings in the form of Masonic lodges" Teissier's own views on the confraternity's life in the years 1792–1801 come to the fore when he points out that "The period from 1792 to 1801 was very troubled. These troubles were so great that Confraternities looked for nothing but a better day when they could be reborn from these ashes. Our Penitents, however, could not live without seeing each other to carry out their piety and charity. If they could no longer carry it out publicly, on account of the unhappy days France was suffering at this time, they saw each other and gathered clandestinely, no longer able to gather in their chapel as before. They did so by renting the church of the Cordeliers, which had been sold, like our chapel, because it had been decreed a national good. Several Confraternities of penitents rented it and formed a Society that went by the name of brothers and friends. And so as to be able to pray together, their society took the form of a Masonic lodge and, as a result, they could not be disturbed during their meetings." (119).

Though simply produced and adorned with simple black and white images, this rich collection of notes and explanations is a precious resource for the study not only of a French confraternity over three centuries of intense and epochal transformations, but also of religious devotion, charity, and faith over the *longue-durée*.

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