

**Renaissance and Reformation**  
**Renaissance et Réforme**



**La cour pontificale au XVIe siècle d'Alexandre VI à Clement VIII (1492–1605)**

James Nelson Novoa

Volume 42, Number 2, Spring 2019

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1065145ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1065145ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Novoa, J. (2019). Review of [La cour pontificale au XVIe siècle d'Alexandre VI à Clement VIII (1492–1605)]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 42 (2), 221–223. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1065145ar>

**Hurtubise, Pierre.**

*La cour pontificale au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle d'Alexandre VI à Clement VIII (1492–1605).* Studi e testi 501. Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2017. Pp. 749. ISBN 978-88-210-0967-9 (paperback) €80.

Pierre Hurtubise, a veteran scholar of Rome—of the ins and outs of the Roman Curia, the making of a curial career in the early modern period, the workings of curial bureaucracy and Roman aristocratic circles—has provided readers with a unique and all-encompassing *vue d'ensemble* of the pontifical court in all of its complexity during the sixteenth century. His book was years in the making; it draws upon a lifetime of rigorous and painstaking archival scholarship in addition to a thorough command of the relevant bibliography. It is a delight to read and fits into a niche of its own, literally laying bare the social, ceremonial, and political life of the papal court in the important period of transition from the High Renaissance to the beginnings of the baroque, in its multiple facets of an Italian elected monarchy and the seat of the Roman Catholic Church. Hurtubise's book joins an important bibliography which has been studying the papal court in its many aspects, yet the sheer breadth of the different strands he considers sets it apart and makes of it a work that is sure to be a lasting contribution to scholarship.

His previous book, *Tous les Chemins mènent à Rome. Arts de vivre et de réussir à la cour pontificale au XVI<sup>ème</sup> siècle* (Ottawa 2009), already successfully tackled the subject of clerical careers and social mobility in the sinewy papal court in the sixteenth century. This book goes much further, fleshing out the profiles of some of the most important figures in the papal court, a context that was subject to constant change based on the pontiff who occupied the throne of Saint Peter. Hurtubise leaves no aspect of this complex court unstudied, from the increasing complexity of clerical bureaucracy to the fiscal management of the church's affairs the world over, which required greater professional skills as the century progressed. The church's response to the threat of Protestantism, and how life in the court responded in turn, is especially present in the book. The watershed moment, the Council of Trent, altered so much in Rome's day-to-day management of the faith the world over.

The book is divided into eight chapters in which Hurtubise evinces his clear command of the topic. The first chapter ("Tels papes, telles cours?" 23–46) shows the papal court as ephemeral, existing only as long as the occupier of

the throne, and subject to radical change from incumbent to incumbent. The second (“Une galerie de portraits,” 47–118) provides readers with a Who’s Who of the various pontiffs who reigned from Alexander VI to Clement VIII—their personalities, the major innovations of their pontificates, and the mark they left on the city and the court—drawing on a series of published and manuscript sources for these portraits. Chapter 3 (“Les lieux de la cour,” 119–80) considers the various geographical spaces the papal court occupied in Rome, be it in the form of official residences, which the popes occupied, or of the villas of different pontiffs both in the city and outside of it. Chapter 4 (“Les effectifs de la cour,” 181–302) takes into account the subtle distinction between pontifical court and Roman Curia to present the myriad of professions and occupations which the papal court required, from the most skilled to the most humble. Here Hurtubise provides an exhaustive picture of the categories of service, backed by vital statistics and analysis culled from archival research. Chapter 5 (“La vie de la cour: Rites et rituels des grands jours,” 303–400) provides readers with a description of some of the solemn moments of rituals, processions, and liturgy that characterized the court and its life. Chapter 6 (“La vie de la cour: Rites et rituels de tous les jours,” 401–534), on the other hand, deals with the day-to-day exigencies of ritual and protocol that were part of the life of the court. Chapter 7 (“Le financement de la cour,” 535–612) deals with the financing of the court and its reliance on a series of officials linked to institutions such as the Datarary and the Apostolic Chamber to sustain the costs of its daily life. The final chapter (“Le rayonnement de la cour,” 613–60) takes into account how the court left its indelible stamp on the Eternal City, in its configuration and social life.

Hurtubise has given readers a vivid portrait of the papal court and its key players over a century: popes, contenders for the papacy, cardinals, bureaucrats, courtiers, and officials of various kinds in their diverse contexts and functions, from the most lofty to the most humble. This vast fresco of the life of the court shows just how much the papal court has left its mark on Rome, its geography, places, and life. The tone throughout is erudite and it is extraordinarily well documented, while it does not shy away from delicious bits of information that make it a delightful read. The book is an important contribution to the existing literature and will be of interest to scholars of Rome and of European courtly life in the early modern period. It is surely to take its place as an important portrait

of a court and indeed a city—of the sixteenth century and the specificity of that court—which so continue to occupy scholars to this day.

JAMES NELSON NOVOA

University of Ottawa

**Hutten, Ulrich von.**

***Sommation, suivie de Érasme, Éponge à laver les éclaboussures de Hutten [et de Othon Brunfels, Réponses à Érasme].***

Le miroir des humanistes 19. Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 2019. 688 p. ISBN 978-2-251-44877-0 (broché) 55 €.

Après l'édition de *La Vérole et du remède du gaiac* d'Ulrich von Hutten (1488–1523) et, plus récemment, de *L'Éducation du prince chrétien* et de *l'Éloge de la Folie* d'Érasme (1467–1536), la collection « Le Miroir des humanistes », dirigée par Jean-Christophe Saladin, offre un magnifique nouvel ouvrage qui regroupe deux textes témoins de l'exaspération des polémiques entre humanistes au temps des Réformes. Composé de la *Sommation* de Hutten, publiée en 1523 et adressée à Érasme de Rotterdam, et de la réponse de ce dernier qui réplique la même année avec son *Éponge à laver les éclaboussures de Hutten*, ce livre est un vrai régal humaniste. Traduits et présentés par Danielle Sonnier, les deux textes sont proposés en miroir, le texte latin systématiquement offert avec sa traduction française et accompagné, lorsque cela est nécessaire, de quelques notes de bas de page.

Pour apprécier cet ouvrage et bien comprendre l'intérêt de cette publication, il est nécessaire de maîtriser soigneusement le contexte du temps et la complexion des deux protagonistes : l'introduction, longue et nourrie (16–118), du présent ouvrage y aide amplement. Avec nuance et précision, l'auteur présente en effet, au fil de dix-huit entrées, toute la complexité de la relation entre Hutten et Érasme. Si ces deux hommes se révèlent fort différents dans leur affrontement, ils comptent aussi de nombreux points communs. Le premier est chevalier d'Empire, humaniste et grand propagandiste de la Réforme, mais aussi figure majeure, avec Luther, du premier nationalisme allemand. Le second est le « prince des humanistes », celui dont la postérité n'a jamais oublié le nom, et qui s'est battu toute son existence contre le