

La Ligue et ses frontières: Engagements catholiques à distance du radicalisme à fin des guerres de Religion. Sylvie Daubresse and Bertrand Haan, eds.
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La Ligue et ses frontières reexamines the Catholic League during the French Wars of Religion (1562–1629). This collective volume traces the varieties of political and religious engagement in Catholic radicalism in France in the 1580s and 1590s, challenging the “black legend” of the Catholic League as a unified bloc of ultra-Catholics led by the Guise family and backed by Spain. The essays examine a range of “politico-religious postures” within Catholicism, along a spectrum from radicals to moderates (9).

A series of local and regional leagues sprang up across France in the 1570s and then grew as Henri III’s childless marriage and the duc d’Anjou’s death in 1584 intensified anxieties about the royal succession. In the aftermath of the assassinations of Blois in 1588, many Catholic nobles mobilized Leaguer forces using their clienteles. Yet, as Nicolas Le Roux demonstrates, royalist nobles countermobilized and formed their own *partis*, seeking to discredit the Leaguers. Fabien Salesse focuses on one local league in Auvergne in the 1590s, stressing the near-constant negotiations and the failure of truces. The situation was more confusing in Provence, where Leaguers backed military intervention by the duc de Savoie. Fabrice Micallef shows that the Marseillais adopted complex religio-political positioning to protect their interests and distinguish themselves from the Savoyards.

The authors problematize the notion of a clear division between Leaguers and *politiques*, a contemporary pejorative term employed against moderate Catholics. Leaguer clergy such as Jean Boucher charged moderate bishops with hypocrisy, referring to them as *prélats politiques* (233). Luc Racaut reconsiders these charges in the case of René Benoist, a moderate cleric who seems to have sincerely sought reconciliation between God and king. A number of essays consider whether or not politico-religious neutrality was possible during the religious wars, drawing on Thierry Wanegffelen’s landmark work on religious moderation in the Reformation. Stéphane Gal delves into the *moyenneurs* (moderates) in Grenoble who attempted to uphold royal justice in wartime. Olivier Poncet investigates the Cour des monnaies, evaluating the subtle political choices of the magistrates, who claimed to uphold monarchy and order even in Leaguer Paris.

The authors examine a broad range of French Catholics from different social groups: bishops, other clergy, nobles, judges, administrators, municipal elites, and peasants. They show that the radical Catholic movement had numerous divisions within it and had fluid boundaries. Thierry Amalou explores the politicization of the French clergy, and especially the bishops, in 1588. He finds that bishops adopted varying responses to controversial and potentially seditious sermons preached in Blois during the meeting of the Estates General in 1588. Sylvie Daubresse charts the political divisions within the Parlement de Paris, as numerous royalist judges fled from Leaguer-dominated Paris to join Henri III at Tours.

French Catholics displayed varying intensities of politico-religious engagement over time, allowing individuals to shift between radical and moderate positions at different moments. Greg Bereiter examines Catholic clergy who questioned Leaguer motivations or actively opposed their political agenda. Philippe Hamon probes Leaguer combat motivations and their commitment to the Leaguer cause, finding that defense of religion and community galvanized many peasant villagers. Peasants repeatedly deplored rampant brigandage and called for peace, order, and security from the devastation of civil warfare.

The Edict of Nantes and the Peace of Vervins in 1598 did not end Leaguer influence in France. Yann Rodier examines the writings of the “children of war” who expressed the trauma of the fratricidal religious wars and related personal memories of the league in the early seventeenth century. The prolonged lack of religious unity in confessionally divided France seems to have deeply troubled many French people. The moderate Catholic writer Guy Coquille sought to explain the origins of the religious troubles in France through corruption of the Roman Church, rather than through French religious divisions. Nicolas Warembourg argues that Coquille thus constructed a historical memory that was both anti-Leaguer and Gallican.

La Ligue et ses frontières offers a fresh perspective on the much-maligned Catholic Leaguers, revealing them as members of an amorphous movement of radical Catholicism at the height of the religious wars. Several of the authors provide useful transcriptions of manuscript documents, but they all contribute new findings that complicate the history of the Leaguers and their opponents in France.

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Social Relations, Politics, and Power in Early Modern France: Robert Descimon and the Historian's Craft. Barbara B. Diefendorf, ed.

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Robert Descimon was, from 1977, researcher at the Paris Centre national de la recherche scientifique and then, from 1991, director of studies at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales until his formal retirement in 2014. He published his first major monograph in 1983, *Qui étaient les Seize? Mythes et réalités de la Ligue parisienne (1585–94)*, and followed it by a study of President Brisson's murder in *La Saint Ligue, le juge et la potence* in 1985, and then *Les Ligueurs de l'exil: Le refuge catholique français après 1594* in 2005. However, this brief outline hardly does justice to his main scholarly achievement, which is to be found in the enormous number of articles and editions of documents he has published since the 1970s, drawing on his profound knowledge of the sources for the social elites of Paris in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries,