

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,

in particular of the notarial archives. His field of research concentrates on the life and afterlife of the Catholic League; it spans the relationship of material ambitions to religious faith in the era of various forms of Catholic activism, and the intersections between bourgeois ambitions and the growth of the state, alongside the evolving role of the nobility of the robe. Descimon moved away from the notion of a thwarted bourgeoisie in his analysis of the 225 leaders of the “Paris Sixteen” toward a view that took account of their attachment to ancient civic traditions. Running as a thread through his work is the argument that the Ligueurs cannot be dismissed as mad fanatics or reactionaries in contrast to the progressive and rational Politique protagonists of Bourbon monarchy. Descimon’s career witnessed a significant shift in the long-understood perspectives of the Annales school toward a view that sought to integrate politics and ideas into social and economic structures. For instance, in Descimon’s intellectual autobiography, published here, we learn how the publication of Ralph Giesey’s “ceremonialist” work had the effect of a “bomb” in his circle.

This book brings together a broad range of studies mainly by North American historians assembled by Barbara Diefendorf, responding in varied ways to the research initiatives of Descimon. It broadly covers themes emerging from the social and religious history of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. A number of studies in this book pay tribute directly to Descimon’s methodology. Michael Breen considers the pivotal role of law and lawyers in the period, shifting the focus away from formal institutions and imposition of royal authority toward a more fluid interpretation, following Descimon’s perception of the importance of family strategies, economic interests, and cultural values. For Sara Bean, the use of torture in the municipal jurisdiction of Bordeaux—the decline in the role of judicial torture being a salient feature of judicial practice in this period—reveals not so much a centrally determined move but the instinct of the local legal establishment that maintained careful standards in the use of torture as one way to protect Bordeaux’s rather usual legal privilege of administering high justice. Mack Holt shows how what he learned from Descimon’s use of notarial records in the study of the Paris Sixteen alerted him to the value of such records for the relations between the city elite of Dijon and its vigneron. A detailed and intensively documented example is deployed by James Collins, in his examination of notarial contracts and their implications for kinship and clientage ties in the Burgundian parish of Alligny-en-Morvan.

Other approaches are to be found in Philip Benedict’s study of what he argues is an earlier example of religious activism in his social analysis of the representatives of the Reformed synods at court in the crucial years 1561–62. Mark Greengrass and his colleagues give a taster of their project to edit and identify the author of the important *History of the League*, only partially published by Charles Valois in 1914. This promises to be a fascinating insight into the afterlife of the league in the seventeenth century. The book is both a tribute to Descimon and a pointer to the research that is going on now under the inspiration of his pioneering work.

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