

Sébastien Le Pelletier. *Histoire de Sébastien le Pelletier: Prêtre liguer et Maître de grammaire des enfants de chœur de la cathédrale de Chartres pendant les guerres de la Ligue (1579–1592)*.

Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance 407. Ed. Xavier Le Person. Geneva: Librairie Droz S. A., 2006. 336 pp. index. append. illus. map. bibl. CHF 132. ISBN: 2–600–01064–5.

This critical edition of the history of the Holy League in Chartres by Sébastien Le Pelletier, a Leaguer priest attached to the city's cathedral, is a welcome addition to the growing list of recently published source materials dealing with France's Wars of Religion. Unlike the editions that have recently appeared of works by Claude Haton (*Mémoires* [2001–07]) and Jean de La Fosse (*Mémoires d'un curé de Paris* [2004]), moreover, this is a previously unpublished source. Where the others are more complete and accurate editions of established sources, this (like Le Person's earlier edition of Nicolas Brulart's *Journal d'un ligueur parisien* [1999]), makes a rare manuscript source broadly available for the first time.

Le Pelletier's history warrants publication both because of the intrinsic interest of Chartres's reduction from a proud bastion of the Catholic League to a reluctant outpost of royal authority following a seven-week siege in 1591 and because the author gives valuable insights into the thinking of religiously motivated supporters of the League. Brulart, Haton, and La Fosse were also clerics and viewed France's religious conflicts through the same lens of orthodox Catholic conviction. What is interesting in Le Pelletier's views, then, is not their originality but rather the consistency with which he passes events through this same ideological filter. He accepts without question not just that Henri de Bourbon, King of Navarre, was a heretic who should never have been allowed to sully France's throne, but also that Henri's whole purpose in seeking this throne was to destroy the Catholic Church and turn the kingdom over to the godless heretics. Any attempt to suggest otherwise, he dismisses as trickery and lies. Equally fundamental is Le Pelletier's conviction that Catholics who aided or supported Navarre in any way were worse

than the heretics, because they were betraying a truth that they knew and lacked even the excuse of ignorance. The list of such betrayers begins with Henri III and eventually encompasses anyone who consented to Chartres's surrender to Navarre's army following the siege.

Le Pelletier only began to keep a day-to-day account of events after the Duke of Guise's murder in December 1588, but later added a retrospective narrative that begins in 1579. The addition helps establish the city's sacred character by recounting royal pilgrimages and processions, but also serves to justify the author's indictment of Henri III for covertly supporting Navarre and plotting to eliminate Guise. Le Pelletier's account of Chartres's adherence to the League is closely interwoven with narratives of elaborate funeral services for Guise and processions appealing for divine favor. Clearly, Chartres experienced the same wave of apocalyptic and penitential spirituality that Paris did at this time.

Although a cleric, Le Pelletier is as interested in the administrative and military affairs of the League as its displays of piety. He describes at length military preparations for the siege, frequently condemning those responsible for doing too little too late, and gives a fine account of how the siege was experienced within the walls. By comparison with the 1590 siege of Paris, Chartres's deprivations were mild. People had time to fill their storage areas with grain and even wine from surrounding areas and, if there was a shortage of fish in Lent, survived quite well on stored peas and beans. There was never a danger of starvation, nor were communications entirely cut off for lengthy periods. And although Le Pelletier complains bitterly of the abuses committed by the royal officials installed by Navarre, the suffering experienced after the city's surrender was also relatively mild and consisted more of extra taxes than of outright pillaging. Le Pelletier insists at one point that all Navarre needed to do to become France's legitimate king was to convert to Catholicism, and yet he never seemed to envisage this as a real possibility. Unfortunately, the manuscript ends before Henri's announcement that he will take instruction in the Catholic faith. It would be interesting to know Le Pelletier's response. His stubborn persistence in his views nevertheless makes it clear just why Henri agreed to convert.

Xavier Le Person's introduction illuminates both the provenance and the contributions of the history, and he scrupulously identifies virtually every person and place mentioned therein. There are a few places where more explication of events alluded to in the manuscript would be useful. On the whole, however, this is a model critical edition.

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