

Michel de Waele. *Réconcilier les Français: Henri IV et la fin des troubles de religion (1589–1598)*.

Les collections de la République des Lettres. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2010. x + 286 pp. bibl. \$32.95. ISBN: 978–2–923859–08–8.

Michel de Waele's comprehensive analysis of the causes and events that led to Henri IV's reign of reconciliation and peace is concise, insightful, and informative. Targeted for the history major or graduate student seminar in European history, French Renaissance history or history of Bourbon France, this study captures the full essence of Henri IV's triumph and vision for France. In fact, this book explains the very process that required the *politique* position of reconciliation that the king engineered, something any serious student of history could come to understand by reading this work.

The book is well organized. In the first four chapters, De Waele describes the nature of the conflicts as Huguenot revolts that led progressively to a civil war after the assassination of the Duke de Guise in December of 1588. Conflicts, including revolts, revolution, and civil war, are delineated. The next four chapters examine Henri IV's efforts to come to terms with his enemies through the use of force, his conversion to Catholicism, and negotiations. Chapters 9 and 10 discuss the diplomatic and economic contracts that Henri made with his subjects in municipalities throughout his realm, while, finally, in the conclusive chapter we see how Henri was able to establish peace and order in the realm by adhering to *une foi, une loi, un roi*.

De Waele shows masterfully how Henri dealt with these crises as a great king who rose above his contemporaries in that he was not cruel, intolerant, sanguine, or impotent. Rather, his conscience and outlook not only contrasted sharply with his predecessors' but heralded a new era that saved France and triumphed over what the Catholic League failed to provide: unity and continuity in a dynamic and consensual process. Henri faced many roadblocks before he succeeded in establishing different facets of reconciliation. These challenges facing the king are covered and described in detail here and include his conversion and relationship with the papacy, the fragmentation of the League, the recognition of Spain as an enemy and interloper and, ultimately, the recognition of the Huguenots as a religious minority that maintained a separate identity within the realm without being expelled from it.

The nuts and bolts of the peace process are detailed well in this work. Especially interesting to the historian is the way Henri integrated local magistrates and nobility to his advantage by awarding them payments from the royal treasury and, at the same time, granting them privileges which made them part of the pillars of royal enforcement and peace. Gallivanting all over the kingdom, Henri met these magistrates and his subjects in person, acting as the paternal figure and Christian Hercules. From 1594 to 1598, he promulgated more than seventy official edicts recognizing the return of his former enemies to the royal camp. De Waele diligently describes the nature of these edicts as first and foremost recognizing Henri as the

legitimate King of France. Yet also in these acts were financial and economic considerations and the safeguard and defense of Catholicism as the *sine qua non* for many ancient towns.

Using a full range of sources, the author included municipal and departmental archival papers as well as printed letters and declarations that illuminate the reconciliation process. A full compendium of secondary sources as well as studies and symposia given on this topic until 2010 are also listed and provide the most recent consideration of scholarship. Certainly this work is a significant contribution to the library of work which highlights Henri IV's perspicacity in bringing about communion within France.

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