Review Article

Church and State in the French Reformation*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Although national boundaries dividing European historians from each other are tenacious, divisions by period are sometimes more so. The history of France in the sixteenth century is sometimes treated quite separately from that of subsequent centuries. Indeed, sixteenth-century European historians frequently pay greater attention to France than French historians pay to the sixteenth century. Sixteenth-century European historians care about France because the French Wars of Religion occupy a central position in sixteenth-century international relations and political history, as well as because Calvin, France's leading reformer, was extraordinarily influential internationally.¹ Great historians whose work has

*The books discussed in this essay are Thierry Amalou, *Une concorde urbaine: Senlis au temps des réformes (vers 1520–vers 1580)* (Limoges: Presses Universitaires de Limoges, 2007), pp. 437, €28.00; Stuart Carroll, *Martyrs and Murderers: The Guise Family and the Making of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. xiv+345, \$45.00 (cloth), \$19.95 (paper); Barbara B. Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. ix+340, \$65.00 (cloth), \$40.00 (paper); Jill Fehleison, *Boundaries of Faith: Catholics and Protestants in the Diocese of Geneva* (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2010), pp. viii+269, \$48.00; Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. xiii+398, \$25.00; Mark Greengrass, *Governing Passions: Peace and Reform in the French Kingdom, 1576–1585* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. xiii+423, \$165.00; Jonathan A. Reid, *King's Sister—Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1549) and Her Evangelical Network*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. xxii+795, \$277.00; and Jason Zuidema and Theodore Van Raalte, *Early French Reform: The Theology and Spirituality of Guillaume Farel* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 262, \$119.95. Many thanks to Katie Crawford for her reading of this essay.

¹ These barriers have also discouraged scholarship; Americans in particular have generally studied more recent periods of French history. I have not seen up-to-date statistics on this, but for the 1980s and earlier, see T. J. Schaeper, "French History as Written on Both Sides of the Atlantic—a Comparative Analysis," *French Historical Studies* 17 (Spring 1991): 233–48, and J. Rothney, "Trends in French Historical Studies, 1976–1985," *French Historical Studies* 14 (Fall 1986): 595–603. Note that at least some British

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been read by others regardless of subspecialty—including Natalie Zemon Davis, Lucien Febvre, and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie—have worked on the period. However, as Robin Briggs has remarked, “the sixteenth century has only partly lost its position as the poor relation of French historical writing in the modern era.”² *Seiziémistes* (scholars of sixteenth-century France) have sometimes exacerbated the problem by conducting their debates in isolation from French history as a whole. Some of the studies reviewed here, although important and interesting, are constructed in such a way as to unnecessarily exclude nonspecialists.

My purpose in this essay is therefore to build some scholarly bridges by explaining the importance of recent scholarship to non-*seiziémistes*, whether they are historians of France in other centuries or historians who study other places. I intend to give an overview of the religious history of the period 1520–1648 and its significance for European history by discussing the books reviewed here in chronological order while highlighting two major issues. The first issue is why the French Reformation ultimately failed to persuade the majority of French people to convert, despite the astonishing successes of the Protestant movement in the late 1550s and early 1560s. The central argument of the most persuasive recent work, it seems to me, is that although religious motivations were the spark, the political context was crucial to both the movement’s initial success and its eventual failure. This is admittedly the latest round in a debate that has been around for a long time.³ But there have also been significant scholarly advances. Rather than just redebating which is more important, religious zeal or political calculation, this new research allows us to start making more precise statements about what motives were most salient in which cases. One of the great achievements of Philip Benedict’s *Rouen and the Wars of Religion* (1981) was that it inspired a raft of local studies that have added immensely to our knowledge, and some general patterns can now be discerned.⁴ However, religion

historians see America as the font of French Reformation scholarship: see, e.g., Geoffrey Treasure, *The Huguenots* (New Haven, CT, 2013), xii.

² Robin Briggs, *Early Modern France, 1560–1715*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1998), 2.

³ For some previous rounds in the debate, see Susan Rosa and Dale Van Kley, “Religion and the Historical Discipline: A Reply to Mack Holt and Henry Heller,” *French Historical Studies* 21 (Autumn 1998): 611–29; Mack P. Holt, “Religion, Historical Method, and Historical Forces: A Rejoinder,” *French Historical Studies* 19 (Spring 1996): 863–73; Henry Heller, “Putting History Back into the Religious Wars: A Reply to Mack P. Holt,” *French Historical Studies* 19 (Spring 1996): 853–61; Mack P. Holt, “Putting Religion Back into the Wars of Religion,” *French Historical Studies* 18 (Autumn 1993): 524–51. The older literature can be sampled in J. H. M. Salmon, *The French Wars of Religion: How Important Were Religious Factors?* (Boston, 1967).

⁴ Some of the more important local studies are Michel Cassan, *Le temps des guerres de religion: Le cas du Limousin (vers 1530–vers 1630)* (Paris, 1996); Stéphane Gal, *Grenoble au temps de la Ligue* (Grenoble, 2000); Wolfgang Kaiser, *Marseille au temps des troubles, 1559–1596: Morphologie sociale et luttes de factions*, trans. Florence Chaix (Paris, 1992); Nicole Lemaître, *Le Rouergue flamboyant: Le clergé et les fidèles*

affected politics too—which leads to the second issue. As Arlette Jouanna has recently argued in her excellent study of the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, the results of the Wars of Religion marked an important turning point in the history of the French state, leading to a decisive shift in power toward the crown and away from both the localities and representative institutions.⁵ After Henri IV (r. 1589–1610), France was likely neither to develop parliamentary institutions on the English model nor to devolve into something akin to the Holy Roman Empire, as had seemed plausible at times both before and during the wars. Paradoxically, while the Wars of Religion temporarily threatened the monarchy, in the long run they reinforced its centrality. After Henri IV's restoration of royal control, the way was open for Richelieu, Mazarin, and Louis XIV. At the same time, the failures of the period—particularly in the realm of royal finance—made some of the crown's serious weaknesses more intractable and contributed to the coming of the Revolution.

II. CREATING A COMMUNITY

French evangelical reform begins with the “Circle of Meaux,” whose evangelical bishop Guillaume Briçonnet began a series of reforms beginning in 1516, employing a number of like-minded priests in his efforts. The group eventually split up under pressure from the authorities; some of the members remained within the Catholic fold, while others took the more dangerous path of affirming their adherence to new forms of Christianity that came to be known as Protestantism. Among the most important of these early Protestants was Guillaume Farel (1489–1565), who fled France to become the leading preacher of Geneva. Farel was an important theologian in his own right, as well as an important mentor for John Calvin. Thanks to Jason Zuidema and Theodore Van Raalte's *Early French Reform: The Theology and Spirituality of Guillaume Farel*, a collection of texts with an extensive introduction, students and scholars of the French Reformation now have good access to an important figure who was a key member of the early French Reformed milieu.⁶ For Zuidema and Van Raalte, Farel's key goal was to strengthen Christians' connection to God by teaching that there was

du diocèse de Rodez, 1417–1563 (Paris, 1988); Kevin C. Robbins, *City on the Ocean Sea: La Rochelle, 1530–1650; Urban Society, Religion, and Politics on the French Atlantic Frontier* (Leiden, 1997); and Penny Roberts, *A City in Conflict: Troyes during the French Wars of Religion* (Manchester, 1996). I have also contributed to this genre: Allan A. Tulchin, *That Men Would Praise the Lord: The Triumph of Protestantism in Nîmes, 1530–1570* (New York, 2010); see the conclusion, 181–200, for my analysis of the patterns of success and failure of the French Reformation.

⁵ Arlette Jouanna, *The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre: The Mysteries of a Crime of State*, trans. Joseph Bergin (Manchester, 2013), esp. 202–6.

⁶ Farel is not otherwise well served in English. The standard sources on him are Pierre Barthel, Rémy Scheurer, and Richard Stauffer, eds., *Actes du colloque Guillaume Farel*, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1983), and *Guillaume Farel, 1489–1565* (Neuchâtel, 1930).

only one road to Him—through Jesus. Many French Christians found the promise of a closer connection to God immensely appealing, although others found Farel's single-minded approach positively frightening. The nascent French Protestant movement used Farel's prayers to create a sense of community.

Students today are commonly introduced to Luther via his pamphlets and to Calvin via his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), but Van Raalte argues, acutely, that most sixteenth-century people probably encountered Protestant theology by listening to preachers and—especially—hearing prayers. After all, a major point of Reformation theology was to help Christians connect more directly to God, and praying was the primary way of doing so (31–33, 93).⁷ Van Raalte begins by noting that Farel was opposed to the mantra-like repetition of prayers, or “muttering” (72), because it was “against the command of Christ” (40–42). Arguably, Farel objected to such practices because he wanted Christians to focus on the meaning of the prayers, not on the act of praying. Farel's *Le Pater Noster et le Credo* (1524) is noteworthy because it is a work about prayer that is itself written in the form of a prayer (50). The text is heavily indebted to Luther, but it is not merely a translation: Van Raalte calculates that 111 of its 397 lines were Farel's independent composition (56). Lengthy written prayers (Farel's were not short) were more than acceptable, but the point was to move the heart, not to empty the mind (60). Above all, Farel was reacting against later medieval “devotionalism,” the “emotionalism, superstition, individualism, affectivism, sentimentality, and pietism” (36–38) that he thought distracted people from directing their prayers where it counted—to Jesus. That does not mean that Farel's own prayers were inimical to Catholics—in fact, some of his prayers (lightly edited) were published in Catholic editions (68). Farel also appears to have introduced psalm-singing to French-speaking audiences (85). This would prove probably the most significant factor in creating a sense of community and spirituality among French Protestants.⁸

Zuidema and Van Raalte conclude that Farel aimed chiefly “to move hearts—to prayer, to confession, to reformation, to request the very things God has promised, in particular his word” (89). Farel particularly favored as a means of achieving this the image of the *sursum corda*, the lifting up of the heart to God. Farel's liturgy for the Lord's Supper states, right before distributing the Bread, “Therefore lift up your hearts on high, seeking the things which are above in heaven where Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father. Do not let

⁷ To be sure, Luther's pamphlets had an enormous circulation: see Miriam Usher Chrisman, *Lay Culture, Learned Culture: Books and Social Change in Strasbourg, 1480–1599* (New Haven, CT, 1982), and her *Bibliography of Strasbourg Imprints, 1480–1599* (New Haven, CT, 1982). On preaching, see Larissa Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ: Preaching in Late Medieval and Reformation France* (Oxford, 1992).

⁸ Barbara B. Diefendorf, “The Huguenot Psalter and the Faith of French Protestants in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)*, ed. Diefendorf and Carla Hesse (Ann Arbor, MI, 1993), 41–63.

yourself be held back by visible things which become corrupt through use" (215). The Christian heart must be elevated through prayer so that it cannot idolize material things (27). Farel's liturgy, and his explanation of it, also emphasize that the breaking of the Bread signifies that "those who take and break the one bread are one body" (208). This emphasizes—following a line of interpretation highlighted most recently by Christopher Elwood—that the sacrament of the Bread created the Christian community and separated the nascent Protestant churches from their neighbors.⁹

The strength and the weakness of Farel's approach was that it created a clear path—but only one path—to salvation, following Matt. 7:13–14 (NRSV): "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it." Farel drew sharp contrasts between right and wrong, salvation and damnation, Protestants and Catholics. This can be seen most clearly in the major work included in this volume, Farel's *Summary and Brief Exposition* (117–80). It gives a fair summary of Reformed theology as it was understood in the early 1530s before Calvin published his *Institutes*, which proposed a new and important explanation of the meaning of the Eucharist (discussed below). As the editors note (18–20), the *Summary* starts off, following earlier commentators, with a series of chapters that propose a series of contrasting definitions—chapter 1 discusses God, chapter 2 Man, and so forth—with the aim of indicating to readers exactly what they should and should not do. God is good and omnipotent, Man is wicked and weak; the flesh (chap. 8) is the old man, the spirit (chap. 9) is the new one, by which God "renews man and gives him his grace" (126). For those who still associate Calvin with making predestination part of Protestant doctrine, it is worth emphasizing that before Calvin Farel already preached predestination quite clearly: "Before the world was created, God foresaw and elected his own" (176). He cited as his proof text Matt. 25:34 (NRSV): "Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" The effect is to create a sharp sense of distinction between Farel's Protestant followers and their neighbors who chose to remain within the Catholic Church.

Zuidema and Van Raalte's analysis here conforms to the standard historical understanding of the reformers' theology, but focusing on Farel's liturgy allows us to get a sense of the deep emotional connections he could create for his listeners if they were prepared to make the effort. In particular, by insisting that Farel was most passionate about prayer and the liturgy, Zuidema and Van Raalte alter the stereotypical view of Farel as "a fiery-tempered and long-winded

⁹ As Zuidema and Van Raalte note, their approach builds on that of Christopher Elwood, *The Body Broken* (Oxford, 1999), 43.

reforming preacher" (3).¹⁰ Farel could indeed put off his contemporaries: Calvin broke with him when Farel married a teenager at the age of sixty-five.¹¹ Nonetheless, contemporaries also found Farel tremendously appealing, and Zuidema and Van Raalte correctly insist that he contributed more to theology, liturgy, and the formation of the Protestant community than scholars have generally given him credit for. In the end, however, communities chose whether or not to follow Farel and the other reformers based on whether they found this stripped-down, focused path compelling and practical or arid and constraining, as well as on other, more mundane considerations. Not every audience will react well to a high moral tone. Calls for closing monastic houses and using the proceeds to benefit the poor, for example, were more likely to be well received when people felt that the poor were desperately underserved.

Through liturgy and preaching, Farel and the other reformers tried to spread the Gospel. As they did so, they necessarily had to make their way through the complicated world they inhabited. Jonathan Reid reconsiders the early spread of the French Reformation by studying Marguerite d'Angoulême (1492–1549), Queen of Navarre (after her marriage to Henri d'Albret in 1527), and her evangelical network. Marguerite is most well known today as a writer, in particular as the author of the *Heptameron* (first published, posthumously, in 1558). However, she also had a strong interest in theological issues and an evangelical bent, as can be seen in her best-known theological work, *The Mirror of the Sinful Soul* (1531). Almost equally important for Reid's story, she was also a major player at the court of her brother, King François I (r. 1515–47), particularly in the first half of his reign. Reid shows how political support at court was crucial to the survival of the early Protestant movement, as well as how Marguerite's personal situation affected her personal theology, which gradually diverged from the rest of the Protestant movement.

Reid's study makes two main contributions. First, he shows just how central Marguerite was to the early French Reformation. Although Marguerite's importance as a patron of evangelicals has long been known in a general way, the web of connections Reid documents is simply astonishing. (The book does not use social network analysis formally, but I hope it will demonstrate to the scholarly community the importance of studying networks.)¹² Marguerite corre-

¹⁰ Indeed, in G. N. Clark et al., *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 2, *The Reformation*, ed. G. R. Elton (Cambridge, 1968), 113, Farel is described as a man of "moderate learning, little practical sense, but fiery and fearless eloquence."

¹¹ John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (Oxford, 1954), 189, and Heiko Oberman, "Calvin and Farel: the Dynamics of Legitimation in Early Calvinism," *Journal of Early Modern History* 2 (1998): 32–60, at 43–44. Oberman's article is listed in Zuidema and Van Raalte's bibliography.

¹² Scholars wishing to get a sense of social network analysis (SNA) applied to early modern Europe should consult John Frederick Padgett and Walter W. Powell, eds., *The*

sponded with and protected Guillaume Briçonnet, the bishop of Meaux, who in turn lodged and supported Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples. Clément Marot, whose translations of Psalms were used by French Protestants for their services, served at her court beginning in 1518. Marguerite selected Guillaume du Bellay to accompany her when she visited her brother the king during his captivity in Spain in 1525 (1:372). Guillaume (a general) and his brother Jean du Bellay (who became a cardinal, due at least in part to Marguerite's sponsorship) decisively influenced the Sorbonne to recommend Henry VIII's divorce in 1530. François Rabelais served as Jean du Bellay's private secretary and physician. Marguerite also corresponded with foreign reformers, including Jean Sturm and Martin Bucer. She offered Guillaume Farel a post (which he refused). In 1525–26, three presses strongly linked to the Navarrian network published three-quarters of the twenty-nine known evangelical works in French (1:286).

In short, from an early date the Protestant movement benefited greatly from high-powered political support. Marguerite not only frequently saved heretics from the flames, which could obviously be crucial, but also used her patronage to name evangelicals to important positions. Her patronage of preachers and teachers surely helped win converts to the evangelical cause, although that does not mean that the Navarrian network created the Protestant movement in France. Reid discusses the case of Claude Baduel (2:516–519), a French humanist and the author of orations, educational works, annotated editions, and a Greek dictionary. Marguerite recommended Baduel to be the first head of the University and College of Arts in Nîmes, his birthplace, and he became an important leader of the Protestant movement there. While the movement existed before he arrived (there are good reports of Protestants in town as early as 1537) and grew dramatically after he left—he was forced to flee to Geneva in 1551—he was undoubtedly influential. Charles and Pierre Rozel, who later became the political spokesmen for the Protestant movement in Nîmes, were his brothers-in-law.¹³

Second, Reid shows that Marguerite favored a consistent ideological position, namely, a conservative, “magisterial” (elite-led) Reformation. Her views were thus quite similar to those of many of her contemporaries among the German princes and King Henry VIII of England. Over time, that position became more and more difficult to maintain, however. The French crown did have substantial political inducements favoring religious reform. Charles V's inheritance essentially gave him control of Italy and therefore of the papacy,

Emergence of Organizations and Markets (Princeton, NJ, 2012), as well as Padgett's other articles on the Medici. The standard textbook for SNA is Stanley Wasserman and Katherine Faust, *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications* (Cambridge, 1994).

¹³ Some of the details of Baduel's career come from my own research: see Tulchin, *That Men Would Praise the Lord*, esp. 36–39. The standard biography, still very much worth reading, is Mathieu-Jules Gaufrès, *Claude Baduel et la réforme des études au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1880).

and it threatened to give him European hegemony. Charles promoted himself as the standard-bearer of Catholic orthodoxy, but he posed a danger both to the pope and to France, and he thwarted François's attempts to gain what he saw as his Italian inheritance. François tried to gain alliances, primarily with the pope but also with the Protestant German princes, in support of his quest. The papacy often wished to aid François, but given Charles's immense influence in Italy it was frequently unable to do so. From that point of view the Protestant princes were much stauncher, if more demanding, allies, and turning Protestant could have cemented François's relationship with them. However, despite François's frequent frustration with papal policies, he lacked some of the incentives Henry VIII had to break with Rome: he had no pressing personal issues with the pope, and he already appointed French bishops and abbots as a result of the Concordat of Bologna (1516). Heretics were tried in the *parlements*—that is, in royal courts, not ecclesiastical ones. He already had nearly as much control over the French Church as he would have gained by enacting a magisterial Reformation, and the Parlement of Paris was prepared to allow him to legislate in extraordinary fashion—above and beyond the law—if he used his powers to enforce orthodoxy.¹⁴

In the end, François made the decision to remain a Catholic, but for many years he tried to fudge his position and have it both ways, attempting to maintain his relationships with the German Protestant princes as well as with Rome. It is reasonable to conclude that at least one of the reasons why François promoted the study of biblical languages and acceded to Marguerite's requests to protect evangelicals facing persecution from the royal courts was that he wished to placate, or at least to avoid antagonizing, his German Protestant allies. But it was hard to temporize forever: the space for compromise was vanishing as Europe's Protestants and Catholics became increasingly frustrated with one another. In the 1530s, French Protestants became more interested in radical Zwinglian theological ideas, distancing themselves from Marguerite's position. It became clear that François was unwilling to break with Rome, and Marguerite lost influence with him. She also became less popular with her erstwhile evangelical supporters. In the 1520s, Marguerite was central to French theological debates, but by the late 1530s she was left alone in the center as battle lines began to form on either side. Calvin, safe in Geneva, began to criticize her and members of her network for being "Nicodemites" (hypocrites) (2:554). To give just one example, Calvin could not understand how Gérard Roussel, who had fled France in 1525 after the Parlement of Paris condemned him for heresy, could accept positions that Marguerite procured for him within the Church, first as her almoner and then, in 1536, as Bishop of Oloron. (Oloron was located in Béarn, Marguerite's lands near the Spanish border.) At the same time, Roussel's strenuous reform efforts met with

¹⁴ Tyler Lange, *The First French Reformation: Church Reform and the Origins of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, 2014).

severe criticism from local Catholics (2:520–50). Furthermore, Marguerite became isolated at least in part because she was simultaneously a Protestant and an establishment figure. By the time the Wars of Religion broke out, only Catholics could be royalists; Protestants were rebels.

It is hard not to conclude from Reid's account that political considerations deeply influenced religious decisions, at least at the French court. This does not mean that theology was unimportant or uninteresting, but in this exalted social sphere political concerns encouraged everyone to have a certain degree of theological moderation and flexibility. King François I was a sincere, if broad-minded, Catholic, but his broad-mindedness was also to some extent tactical. Similarly, although Reid plausibly argues that Marguerite's position was consistent, that does not lead ineluctably to the conclusion that it was entirely based on principle. After all, it is convenient for a queen to desire a magisterial Reformation. It also permitted her to push her religious views at court without forcing her to go into exile when it became clear that François would not pursue her preferred religious policies. Marguerite's decision to go largely silent is particularly striking given her passion for theology. She never came close to being a martyr. Even Henri II (r. 1547–59), who on the whole followed a more anti-Protestant line than his father, was not averse to using religion for political purposes. He too allied with German Protestants, and in 1551, in the midst of a bitter dispute with the pope, briefly considered creating an independent French Church. Such threats eventually brought the pope to heel, and Henri II called off his threat.¹⁵ As the head of one of Europe's most powerful states, Henri was able to get the pope's attention much more readily than the rulers of minor German principalities and hence had a much greater incentive than they did to stay within the Catholic fold.

III. FROM EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT TO PROTESTANT CHURCH

In recent years there has been a flood of books focusing on Calvin, no doubt in part because 2009 marked 500 years since his birth.¹⁶ One of the things that makes Calvin remarkable is that he was so influential in so many spheres: he was the supreme theological writer, preacher, and institution builder for the international Reformed movement. Probably the most important book published to coincide with this anniversary was Bruce Gordon's biography, intended for a nonspecialized audience. It is the best available biography of Calvin in English.

¹⁵ For Henri II's quarrel with Pope Julius III, see Lucien Romier, *Les origines politiques des guerres de religion*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1913–14), 1:220–313, esp. 257–59.

¹⁶ In May of that year, there were two back-to-back conferences in Geneva to commemorate the event. The plenary papers from the second, organized by the Université de Genève, can be found in Irena Backus and Philip Benedict, *Calvin and His Influence, 1509–2009* (Oxford, 2011).

Writing a biography of Calvin should terrify any sane scholar. The published primary sources are immense, and the secondary literature is even larger. Further, there is a mass of unpublished primary sources—hundreds of transcribed sermons, for a start—much of it in appalling handwriting.¹⁷ Despite the immense mass of material, in print Calvin tended, like many of his contemporaries, to be personally reticent: finding key, revealing lines is extremely difficult. A final quandary when writing on Calvin for a modern lay audience is that insofar as he is still remembered today, he generates passionate, divergent opinions. Some think they know just how awful he was although they have never read a line of his work. Others treat him as the font of theological Truth. Gordon has produced a smoothly written, balanced biography that, despite some wobbles (he occasionally contradicts himself), avoids hagiography or demonizing. I finished it unsure as to whether Gordon had conveyed the visceral essence of the man, but he has clearly read deeply in the classic printed sources (although he cites no manuscripts), and the result is generally impressive.

Gordon's account makes clear that Calvin was immersed in evangelical circles long before he converted in any precise sense to Protestantism. Unfortunately, Calvin's early life is poorly documented, and his own descriptions are short, vague, and conflicting, so there is little evidence of the process of spiritual development that led to his becoming a Protestant. Still, as Gordon makes clear, one of Calvin's first teachers in Paris, Maturin Cordier, was a Protestant. (Calvin learned his excellent Latin from him.) Gordon notes that in Calvin's letter to Cardinal Sadoletto (1539) "there is no Road to Damascus moment" but that in another account from 1557 Calvin does describe himself as having a "sudden conversion." He insists that "the two accounts are not antithetical . . . but rather two different ways of expressing the same reality" (34). To me that formulation is unnecessarily confusing. It does not appear that any unusual crisis in Calvin's life led to his conversion; it was simply part of his maturation. Calvin may have suddenly realized that he could no longer consider himself a member of the same church as the pope, but his theological views never shifted radically. One telling sign is that there is no evidence that Calvin was ever officially ordained; he gradually slid into a preaching and teaching role (71). This is consistent with a gradual style of conversion that has been identified by contemporary psychologists¹⁸ and helps to explain why Calvin was more a theological conciliator than

¹⁷ Several hundred sermons were inadvertently thrown out in the late nineteenth century, but the rest are now being published by Librairie Droz, of Geneva. Calvin College has several projects that aid scholarship on Calvin: an online bibliography, the Calvinism Resources Database (<http://www.calvin.edu/library/database/card/>), and two e-collections that include much of his writing: the Christian Classics Ethereal Library (<http://www.ccel.org/>) and the Post-Reformation Digital Library (<http://www.prdl.org/>).

¹⁸ Bernard Spilka et al., *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach* (New York, 2003), 348–51.

a radical, divisive innovator. Calvin's *Institutes*, his first published theological work, was important because it suggested a way to reunify the Protestant world, which was riven with disputes. It created a movement for which Calvin then proceeded to create institutions.

Calvin was a minor figure prior to the publication of the *Institutes*. Its limp summary of Reformed doctrine made his name. His only previous work, a commentary on Seneca's *De clementia* (1532), was known to only a few scholars. He also had some prominent friends in the scholarly world, most notably Nicolas Cop, who became Rector of the University of Paris in 1533. It is likely, although not absolutely certain, that Calvin wrote Cop's inaugural address, which was full of Protestant rhetoric. After the resulting scandal, Cop fled to Basel (38), where, after various detours, Calvin went too, and where he finished the first edition of the *Institutes*. It was an astonishing debut—in essence a catechism, a summary of Protestant doctrine. As Gordon correctly points out, in the *Institutes* Calvin boldly entered the dispute between Luther and Zwingli on the definition and meaning of the Eucharist (which some Protestant denominations call Communion or the Lord's Supper), the most important theological question then facing the international Protestant movement. In doing so “he subtly navigat[e] through the treacherous waters of Reformation thought to present a distinctive position that was more than mere compromise” (60–61). The question dividing the Protestant world centered on the meaning of the word “is”—shades of the Clinton era! When Jesus said, “This is my body,” did he mean that (in some sense) the bread became his body, as Luther insisted, or that it symbolized his body, which was Zwingli's view? Are the bread and the body the same or different? Calvin argued that, like a pair of wheels attached by an axle, the bread and the body should be understood as separate but firmly linked—the power of the symbol is such that it automatically calls forth the thing it signifies. This theological compromise was particularly attractive because it offered a theological reason—not just political expediency—to persuade other Protestants to unite behind Calvin's views. Calvin's Eucharistic theology, like Farel's Eucharistic prayers, was important because the Eucharist defined Christian communities: it determined their membership and also the relationship between the celebrant and the faithful.

The success of the *Institutes* led to a brief period of travel for Calvin, which ended when he came to Geneva at Farel's urging in 1536. Except for three years in Strasbourg (1538–41) he stayed there the rest of his life. After he had settled in Geneva, it became apparent that his ability as a theologian was only exceeded by his talent for organization. His presence in Geneva—and the city's convenience for French refugees, because of its language and its location near the border—led to a dramatic increase in the city's population and turned it into the center of the Reformed movement, which grew dramatically in France beginning in the mid-1550s. Calvin created the Genevan Academy, whose graduates

staffed many of France's nascent Protestant churches, and his immense correspondence also knit together the movement.¹⁹ (This correspondence is probably Gordon's single most important source.) The gibe that in Geneva Calvin created a new Rome is apt.

Protestant growth was originally slow, but in the later 1550s conversions increased dramatically, especially among townspeople, in tandem with Henri II's fumbling policies and harsh tax increases during poor economic times. Gordon puts too much emphasis on the early conversion of nobles (306): some such conversions (especially of noblewomen such as Marguerite) were useful to the movement, but nobles really became prominent in the movement beginning in the 1560s during the Wars of Religion. Noblemen were also apt to resist Calvin's authority, as for example in 1560 when a group of noblemen attempted to seize the king to force a pro-Protestant change in policy—an event known as the conspiracy of Amboise (311). Calvin opposed the conspiracy, which failed spectacularly.

Where I would most have liked more insight from this biography would have been in the discussion of Calvin's magnetic effect on his contemporaries. Negative stereotypes of Calvin frequently portray him as a parody of a Scots Presbyterian preacher circa 1890—icy, taciturn, moralistic. Gordon does a nice job of dispelling some of these negative impressions of Calvin, pointing out, for instance, that Calvin enjoyed wine (especially), food, and conversation with friends (147). In fact, Calvin insisted on the importance of expressing emotion, and he denounced Stoicism because “the faithful are not logs of wood, untouched by grief, unafraid of danger, unhurt by poverty, untroubled by persecution.” Although Calvin shared the age's suspicious attitudes toward women, he also talked about the “extremely tender love that a youth feels for a maiden in the flower of her age” and concluded that “he who shall be induced to choose a wife because of the elegance of her shape will not necessarily sin.”²⁰ He also enjoyed various games, including quoits, and played *boules* with John Knox.²¹ In an interview, Gordon emphasizes Calvin's “flexibility”²²—a quality he touches on in the book as well, writing that Calvin “wanted the Protestant world to speak with one voice and was perfectly willing to tolerate a degree of theological flexibility to achieve this” (248).

Passionate rather than icy, warm rather than mild-mannered, Calvin was beloved but no Mr. Rogers. Gordon calls the reformer “ruthless, and an outstanding

¹⁹ It would be interesting to see an analysis of the reformers' relative status using their letters, along the lines of Giora Sternberg's “Epistolary Ceremonial: Corresponding Status at the Time of Louis XIV,” *Past and Present* 204 (2009): 33–88.

²⁰ Both quotations are cited in William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (Oxford, 1988), 137.

²¹ John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (Oxford, 1954), 233.

²² See <http://www.yale.edu/divinity/notes/110207/gordon.shtml>.

hater" (vii). This was an unbuttoned age: as Febvre expressed it, somewhat condescendingly, "They were simple people who gave in to their feelings. We repress ours."²³ Calvin was undoubtedly intimidating—how could someone whose works fill fifty-nine closely printed volumes not be?—but perhaps the keynote of his character was intensity. As Gordon remarks, it was Calvin's "ability to express in words the emotional responses of the Christian to the Word of God that made him the most powerful of commentators" (286). He was also able to evoke passionate loyalty, and in his sermons there are occasional glimpses of his deep attentiveness and concern for his students and his flock. As with Farel, Calvin offered a high-cost, high-reward path of Christian spirituality.

Calvin directed much of his energy to training ministers at the Genevan Academy; they would then be sent to evangelize the cities and towns of France. Particularly in the later 1550s and early 1560s his efforts were rewarded with astonishing success, especially in the south of the kingdom. But there were also many French towns that were resistant to the Protestant message, and explaining why has been a major focus of scholarly debate. Thierry Amalou's study of Senlis, *Une concorde urbaine*, addresses this important question, aided by the fortuitous survival of particularly good records, including extensive theological writings by the town's Catholic leadership.

The French monarchy's generally lenient policies toward Senlis were governed by strategic considerations and helped to slow the growth of Protestantism there. Senlis is only thirty miles north-northeast of Paris and close to the most plausible invasion route from the north. The crown always worried that the capital could be threatened or captured by hostile forces from this direction because Paris was no more than an easy few days' march from the frontier. Thus, on the one hand, Senlis's municipal independence was distinctly constricted, and the crown watched carefully to make sure that its château and defenses were in good repair. On the other hand, its taxes were kept deliberately low to discourage rebellion. Senlis's constitution completely excluded artisans from power (41), but (like many other French towns and cities) almost all of its early Protestants came from the artisanate (63). The movement grew slowly because it lacked elite patronage—there was no local Marguerite de Navarre. Still, by 1562 the movement had managed to spread farther up the social scale to include members of the political, judicial, and economic elite (136), although by no means the majority. Even the elite converts tended to be outsiders. One of the principal Calvinists in Senlis, Jean Greffin, had a persistently antagonistic,

²³ Lucien Febvre, *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais*, trans. Beatrice Gottlieb (Cambridge, MA, 1982), 100. Zuidema and Van Raalte also mention a nice example of this, recounting (10 and fn.) the epithets Erasmus and Farel used about each other. Farel called Erasmus "Balaam," after the celebrated prophet in Numbers whose ass could see an angel before he could and who proclaimed the Truth despite himself. More simply and less elegantly, Erasmus called Farel "Phallicus."

oppositional relationship with the town's notables despite the fact that he held an important office (150–52). The Protestant movement in Senlis remained on the defensive: we know about the new elite recruits because they were arrested, and several were eventually executed.

Senlis was never in real danger of becoming a Calvinist city. For example, finances were one of the classic areas of conflict between town officials and the church, but this rule did not apply in Senlis. The inhabitants received some help from the church, could expect little more, and in any case were not subject to heavy royal demands. In 1553 the crown endorsed a local proposal that Senlis's clergy pay one-third of the cost of maintaining the city's fortifications (33). Furthermore, the bishopric, although one of the oldest in France, was also among the smallest and poorest of them. With no history of fighting between town and church officials, it is not surprising that Protestants were few (77). The Protestants' cause was also hurt when their preacher, Constantin Bedeau, was forced to flee to Geneva in 1556 and then, upon his return in 1563, captured along with others; he was sent to the galleys (86). His arrest reassured the Catholic leadership. Senlis was firmly under Catholic control (175), and precisely for that reason there were no massacres there during the Wars of Religion (342). Amalou notes that after Senlis's form of government was revamped in 1564 and lawyers and officials returned to power, the town's policies toward Protestants became less aggressive (271). In 1577 Senlis rejected the Catholic League, probably owing to the influence of the Montmorencys, the leading noble family in the town (330–38). The Protestant leader Philippe Duplessis-Mornay was even elected to the Estates General of 1576 from the *bailliage* of Senlis (329); admittedly the electorate of the *bailliage* included far more people than just townsmen.

In Senlis, as elsewhere, a central ideological debate between Catholics and Protestants concerned how to define community. Amalou has the benefit of excellent documentation, including a manuscript recording the responses of a clutch of Protestants under interrogation in 1532. The accused heretics admitted to attending conventicles, and they particularly criticized the clergy and attacked the principal source of their sacral power, the Eucharist, denying the Real Presence (68). Amalou suggests, plausibly, that the Protestants of Senlis read of such doctrines in an anonymous pamphlet of 1532, probably written by Farel. Despite this comparatively early beginning, it appears that a proper Protestant church with a minister and the administration of the sacraments was not set up until comparatively late, in 1562.

The Church, in its struggle to retain the affection of the people, also stressed community. To fight heresy, the Catholic Church revived the cult of the town's first bishop and patron, St. Rieul, regularly bringing out his reliquary for public devotion. This rite underlined that Catholicism was the unique, historic religion of the community of Senlis (101–7, 248–69). Over the period 1522–84 Church

officials pursued a policy of “Gallican reformism” (178): wanton priests were disciplined (182), ignorant ones educated (206). Amalou was also able to consult printed works by local Catholic clergy, and even the interrogation of an important Senlis clerical figure who attempted to find a middle path between the two confessions (118).

The case of Senlis suggests that if Farel came to Protestantism via contempt for the excessive devotional ritualism of late medieval Catholicism, what really resonated with his listeners was the attack on the sacral authority of the Catholic clergy. It is not surprising that outsiders found this rejection of authority particularly seductive. Of course, for a movement of outsiders to succeed, they had to accumulate sufficient social, economic, intellectual, and political power. The French Protestant movement also needed to have breathing space, which is probably why it was particularly successful in the south of the country, far from Paris. Even within the south Protestantism tended to do best in the smaller towns, where there were fewer royal institutions. In Toulouse, for example, civil war broke out between the the parlement, which stood for King and Faith, against the town council, which supported the new religion. The judges of the parlement were the richest, most prestigious people in town, and they had the closest connections to the crown. In the end, God was with the big battalions, and the Protestants were slaughtered.²⁴

The case of Senlis helps explain why the Catholic Church remained the religion of the majority of French people; it is less helpful in explaining why the Wars of Religion broke out, why they lasted so long, and why they had such dreadful consequences. In the 1550s, Henri II raised taxes throughout the kingdom to support his unsuccessful foreign policy, and his subjects grew increasingly angry. But in Senlis and elsewhere in the immediate environs of Paris, royal power remained strong, as did royal patronage. Protestants in Senlis latched onto the available local discontent, but their message did not resonate with the majority.²⁵ In the traditionally rebellious Midi, most notably the famous “Protestant crescent” (reaching from the middle Rhône to the Loire via the valley of the Garonne), and in Normandy, Protestants became either a majority or something very close to it.

²⁴ Mark Greengrass, “The Anatomy of a Religious Riot in Toulouse in May 1562,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 34 (July 1983): 367–91, and Joan Davies, “Persecution and Protestantism: Toulouse, 1562–1575,” *Historical Journal* 22 (1979): 31–51.

²⁵ Similar conclusions emerge from another recent local study, Olivier Cabayé, *Albi au XVI^e siècle: Gens de bien et autres “apparens”* (Albi, 2008), an impressive reconstruction of a town’s elite using notarial records. He reports that, as in Senlis and elsewhere, early converts came from the artisanate (387–90), and conversion only spread to “second-rate” elites. He also provides a remarkable graphic (396) showing the close family ties among Albi’s Protestant families.

IV. THE WARS OF RELIGION

Although Protestantism was initially strongest in the towns, it also appealed to noblewomen.²⁶ Noblemen adopted the faith more slowly, although by the 1560s many had done so—a fortunate development for the Protestant movement, since noblemen provided crucial military leadership when civil war broke out in 1562. Such exalted people, while they could be moved by ideology, commonly had to consider the political implications of their religious choices. The Guises have traditionally been seen as more consistently and zealously Catholic than any other noble family in sixteenth-century France. Stuart Carroll, however, in his *Martyrs and Murderers: The Guise and the Making of Europe* (winner of the J. Russell Major Prize), goes so far as to question even the Guises' commitment to Catholicism when it went against their political interests. Although I have emphasized above that leading figures like Marguerite de Navarre and François I chose their religious policies consistent with their political interests, Carroll goes even farther than I would. He sets the stage for his argument by noting that at the outbreak of the Wars of Religion, leaders had unusual freedom: "In the years immediately preceding the outbreak of civil war in 1562, politics was in a state of flux and uncertainty" (144). Certainly Charles de Guise, Cardinal of Lorraine, although demonized in some Protestant accounts, has long been known for relatively moderate policies.²⁷ As the cardinal wrote to the Bishop of Verdun in 1558, "you must look on it [heresy] in the gentlest and most prudent way that you can, until we are out of the troubles and wars that occupy us, when we will have the means to deal with it carefully and more according to its merits" (94). On August 24, 1561, the cardinal actually believed he had reached agreement with Calvin's chief lieutenant, Theodore de Bèze, on the significance of the Eucharist (150). Although that agreement fell apart, many observers felt that when the cardinal expounded his own position, on September 16, he came close to Lutheranism, using language derived from the Augsburg Confession.²⁸

If the cardinal's moderation has long been known, historians have traditionally concluded that his brother, François, Duke of Guise, held more sectarian views. But Carroll points out a number of holes in this interpretation. He sees the two brothers as working in tandem: "There is good reason to believe that François, Duke of Guise, too, was behind his brother's efforts to find a middle way in the summer and autumn of 1561" (144). In a letter to the Duke of

²⁶ Nancy L Roelker, "The Appeal of Calvinism to French Noblewomen in the Sixteenth Century," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2, no. 4 (1972): 391–418, and "The Role of Noblewomen in the French Reformation," *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte* 63 (1972): 168–95.

²⁷ H. Outram Evennett, *The Cardinal of Lorraine and the Council of Trent* (Cambridge, 1930).

²⁸ Donald Nugent, *Ecumenism in the Age of the Reformation: The Colloquy of Poissy* (Cambridge, MA, 1974), esp. 210–18.

Württemberg, the Duke of Guise condemned the “blindness and idolatry” of the Catholic Church (146). Guise did not support religious toleration—“an idea abhorrent to the vast majority of Europeans” (147), according to Carroll—but rather advocated a compromise that would allow all French people to come together again as one church. Although religious toleration may have been undesirable, people in the sixteenth century could consider it—there were worse alternatives. Catherine de’Medici and her chancellor Michel de l’Hospital both felt that toleration was better than pointless bloodshed. Similarly, Nîmes’s *cahier de doléances* (list of grievances) prepared for the Estates General meeting at Pontoise in 1561 argued that “those who believe they cannot take part in the ceremonies of the Roman Church should be given means to be instructed and taught in the Word of God, for fear lest they fall into atheism.”²⁹ The *cahier*’s authors clearly expected France’s leaders to fear atheism more than heresy. As Carroll notes, even the Guises argued at times that civil war was much worse than toleration.

Carroll stresses Guise family solidarity rather than religious zeal as key to their political strategy, but he downplays occasions when the Guises were at least happy to let it appear that they were Catholic champions. It is true that the Duke’s own wife, Anne d’Este, was a Protestant (61). Similarly, Carroll emphasizes that when Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots and daughter of Marie de Guise, married François, King Henri II’s heir, about one-third of the Guises’ guests at the head table were Protestants, or soon to become so. By contrast, the Montmorencys, the Guises’ main rivals at court, were banned (84). Anne, Duke of Montmorency and Constable of France, was a zealous Catholic, although his sister and nephews were Protestants. When the Duke of Guise reconciled with the constable, in April 1561, he promptly broke off the betrothal of his daughter with the Protestant Duke of Longueville (144). He thus acted primarily to benefit his family, and his behavior toward Protestants varied depending on whether or not he was getting along with the more rigidly Catholic Montmorencys. The traditional view that the Guise family were fervent Catholics is underpinned by the notion that they were in large part responsible for two of the most important massacres during the Wars of Religion: the Massacre of Wassy and the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre. Consistent with his emphasis on the Guises’ political canniness rather than religious zeal, Carroll minimizes their independent role in both massacres.

Historians have usually seen the massacre at Wassy (1562), where the Duke of Guise’s men slaughtered dozens of men, women, and children during a church service, as the opening salvo of the Wars of Religion. But Carroll argues that to the degree Guise was involved, his motives were not primarily religious. He wished to repress heresy, but he was not a zealot. In Carroll’s account, the Duke

²⁹ Tulchin, *That Men Would Praise the Lord*, 108.

of Guise was angered by the temerity of his vassals and certainly wished to prevent Protestant worship if he could, but Carroll quotes without contradiction the duke's statement that he "despised cruelty and [preferred] to leave the sword and arms to the magistrate" (19). There is really no reason for us to believe the duke's self-exculpation. Moreover, Carroll does not mention that Catholics saw him as their champion: when the duke arrived in Paris days after the massacre, he was acclaimed as a hero.³⁰ And, as Carroll does admit, Protestants hated the duke after Wassy: he was assassinated in 1563. In short, there is good evidence that Guise repeatedly took an ultra-Catholic stance to further his family's position.

Nor does Carroll view Duke François's successor, his son Henri, Duke of Guise, as a zealous Catholic, comparing him to Henri of Navarre, the future King Henri IV: "To them religion was subordinate to politics: neither man was especially devout; there was something of the libertine about both" (222). Carroll endorses the report of the great historian Jacques-Auguste de Thou, who wrote that Montaigne had told him Guise had admitted that, like Navarre, he only used religion as a device to get the members of his party to follow him and that his personal theology was Lutheran (255). (De Thou was a *politique*—that is, a moderate, royalist Catholic who believed that national unity required some concessions to the Protestant movement.) In support of his view that Guise had a limited taste for religious extremism, Carroll argues that Guise played little role in initiating the events surrounding the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre in Paris. In this Carroll's interpretation agrees with several other recent accounts.³¹

There were many links between the Duke of Guise and the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, which shocked Europe in part because it took place at a time when it seemed that religious tensions were waning. Only days earlier in Paris a great ceremony of reconciliation had been enacted: on August 18, 1572, Marguerite de Valois, sister of King Charles IX (r. 1560–74), married the Protestant leader Henri de Navarre (later Henri IV of France). However, four days later, another leading French Protestant leader, the Admiral de Coligny, was shot. Coligny and Guise were old enemies. Carroll also shows that there were many ties between the admiral's attacker, Charles de Louviers, seigneur of Maurevert, and his confederates and the Guise family. Maurevert had been a page to Guise's father François, the previous duke. Maurevert fled from the house of Canon Pierre de Pilles de Villemur, Guise's former tutor. After the assassination, Maurevert fled to the château of Chailly, which belonged to Jean de la Boissière, a master of Duke François's household and one of Duke Henri's chief advisors. A year

³⁰ Arlette Jouanna, *Histoire et dictionnaire des guerres de religion* (Paris, 1998), 110

³¹ Including, most recently, Jouanna, *The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre*. Jouanna's excellent notes will guide interested readers to the literature on this controversial topic. I have reviewed Jouanna's book in *H-France Forum* 8 (Summer 2013): 57–61 (<http://www.h-france.net/forum/h-franceforumvol8.html>).

and a day after Coligny's death, Duke Henri agreed to pay de Louviers an annual pension of 2,000 *livres*, and the canon also received significant advancement in the aftermath of the massacre (208–12). Since many members of Guise's entourage also had quarrels with Coligny, Carroll argues that "ultimate responsibility" cannot be determined: "[Guise's] retinue was full of retainers who had a motive, thought the risks acceptable, and were willing to do the dirty work themselves. No orders were necessary" (212).

The attack reopened the confessional divide. Angry Protestants immediately demanded that the King arrest, try, and execute Guise, believing him responsible for the attempted murder. But the king and his councillors, as good Catholics, were unwilling to act so dramatically in the Protestant cause. In any case they would have found it extremely difficult to arrest France's leading Catholic champion, although they believed him guilty.³² Instead, as a later memoir put it, "it was better to win a battle in Paris, where all the leaders were, than to risk it in the field and fall into a dangerous and uncertain war."³³ On August 23 the royal council ordered the execution of Coligny and other leading Protestants (excepting Henri de Navarre). The council sent Guise himself to command a detachment of his men who killed Coligny on August 24. Thus he was the council's agent and not in charge himself. However, Guise shouted to his men as they departed the Admiral's house after the murder, "Let us go to the others, for the king commands it. . . . The king commands it; it is his will; it is his express commandment" (215). Carroll, adopting an interpretation of Barbara Diefendorf's, suggests that with this remark Guise "inadvertently" set off the third phase of the events that day, the large-scale massacre.³⁴ In my view, it is more likely that the Paris militia launched its attack immediately afterward because Guise and the militia leaders had arranged it in advance. This was a uniquely tempting opportunity to wipe out the Protestant leadership gathered in the city for the wedding—and at the same time to destroy his long-standing personal enemy, Coligny.

Carroll's wonderfully lively account is thus not just a great read, but it also advances a very pointed thesis: while the Montmorencys may have been motivated by religion, political considerations were far more important to understanding the actions of the Guises in the Wars of Religion. Although I disagree with Carroll on the issue of Guise's role in the massacre, it is certain that this is a matter that will never be proved either way. I raise the issue here only to explain the interpretative stakes behind the two hypotheses. If, like Carroll, you do not believe that Guise was motivated by a deep hatred of heresy, then it becomes

³² Jouanna, *Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre*, 90.

³³ Cited in R. J. Knecht, *The French Wars of Religion, 1559–1598*, 3rd ed. (Harlow, 2010), 49.

³⁴ Barbara B. Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford, 1991), 99.

less likely, although not impossible, that Guise would try to unleash a wholesale massacre of Protestants. It would make more sense to attack Protestant leaders only, as in the initial phases of the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, rather than to extend the killing to women and children. Carroll rightly points out that Duke Henri hid a number of noble Huguenots (217–18), but that (to my mind) does not prove that he was indifferent to religion; it proves only that his respect for noble blood sometimes trumped his distaste for heresy. Carroll does note that at least one Protestant family hastily reclaimed their daughter after she had sheltered at the Hôtel de Guise for a week when they learned that the Guise family planned to rebaptize her and her siblings (217). In short, here I would impute somewhat more religious zeal than Carroll (or Diefendorf) does to Guise's actions—or, at least, I would suggest that if Guise was motivated in part by self-interest, he may have concluded that he was most likely to increase his power by standing at the head of the Catholic party. It seems to me that Guise felt scorn and hatred for heretics—and frustration that they would not disappear. He had to crush the Protestants to demonstrate his leadership. That made him prepared to attempt a drastic solution to the Protestant problem.

Guise was not unique in his propensity for drastic solutions. Historians have long considered the French Wars of Religion to be a prime example of one of the most noteworthy features of early modern Europe, namely, the poor negotiating skills of the leaders of early modern states, which made it hard for them to compromise and make peace with each other. As a result, Europe endured endless wars (the Thirty Years' War, the Eighty Years' War), and one might conclude that historians should seek an explanation for this phenomenon in structural features of early modern European societies and state institutions. While there is much truth to this, it is also true that there were periods after the outbreak of civil war in 1562 but before the Edict of Nantes in 1598 when the French Wars of Religion might have ended. Mark Greengrass's *Governing Passions: Peace and Reform in the French Kingdom, 1576–1585* is a well-written and marvelously well-researched study of one such period. The wars had severely weakened the nation's institutions (4), and one of the major reasons to hope for peace was that it would provide King Henri III (r. 1574–89) an opportunity for political reform. This was a unique opportunity because there was widespread agreement that basic reforms were needed. Greengrass focuses on what reforms were attempted, what degree of success was achieved, and why. Although his emphasis on reform in this period is not entirely new,³⁵ Greengrass enormously enriches our knowledge. He concludes that, despite the destructiveness of the wars, the weakness of the state, differing reform agendas, and continuing confessional animosity, the crown nonetheless successfully implemented a number of

³⁵ See Jouanna, *Histoire et dictionnaire des guerres de religion*, "L'œuvre réformatrice," 279–84.

reforms. The state's institutional apparatus was made relevant again: royal legislation "provided a framework in which royal justice was the purveyor of peace" (372). At the end of the Wars of Religion, the French crown was able to resuscitate itself because most subjects recognized its crucial role in providing peace.

If the reform program helped underpin the growth of the absolute monarchy, its failures help explain 1789. The sixteenth-century reform program attacked inflation (373) and the deficiencies in the law via the 1579 Ordinances of Blois, "the largest single legislative enterprise of the sixteenth-century French state" (265). The crown began to implement financial reforms, and it also solemnly promised to eliminate the sale of offices by buying out the officeholders, but these redemptions did not occur because reform was painfully slow and in the meantime unforeseeable circumstances led to the renewed outbreak of war. Although most observers saw venality as the principal obstacle to putting the French monarchy on a sounder footing, no more serious attempt to eliminate venality was ever undertaken.

Greengrass's book begins in the mid-1570s because the stalemate in the aftermath of the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre compelled the parties to rethink their strategies. In the early years of the wars, the Catholics were usually responsible for the breakdown of peace. The crown, under the influence of Catherine de' Medici, was generally Catholic but prepared to allow Protestant worship. Other Catholics were less tolerant: Catholics in Sens (Yonne) reacted to measures like the liberal Edict of January of 1561 by massacring Protestants. If any good can be said to have come of the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, it is that in its aftermath—particularly after the failure of the siege of La Rochelle in 1573 (15)—even many militant Catholics concluded that the Protestant movement could not be eliminated militarily. Some, including the important Catholic military leader and memoirist Blaise de Monluc, were even willing to admit it.³⁶ Peace became possible. Greengrass's account, logically, begins immediately after the failed siege, since King Henri III's younger brother, the Duke of Anjou, who commanded the royal forces, reacted to the defeat by commissioning a report on how to improve the state to prevent the recurrence of such disastrous events. The final document was quite wide-ranging, including sections on the reform of the Church, financial reform, the nobility, and the currency, as well as the judiciary and purely military issues (20–28).

Another reason why the Wars of Religion helped cause 1789 was that they led to the weakening of the Estates General. As a result of the repeated failure of the Estates, the crown came to fear them even though it also viewed them as

³⁶ Solange Deyon, "Blaise de Monluc, la guerre, la paix," *Bulletin de la société de l'histoire du protestantisme français* 150, no. 2 (2004): 245–56, cited in Penny Roberts, *Peace and Authority During the French Religious Wars, c. 1560–1600* (Basingstoke, 2013), 122.

ineffectual, and it stopped calling them after 1614. Greengrass devotes a long chapter (66–122) to the 1576 meeting of the Estates, whose deliberations provide much evidence about French ideas of reform at the time and whose failure led to a brief renewal of war. The crown had a long-standing interest in developing the Estates, since it believed that functioning Estates improved the health of the body politic (67) and because it hoped that the Estates would authorize increased taxation. The Protestant movement, born in part in resistance to what it saw as oppressive monarchical policies, was committed to the Estates from the beginnings of its existence as an organized institution in the early 1560s. Given these ideological preconceptions it is not surprising that Protestants proposed, and the crown agreed, to the calling of the Estates General as part of the Peace of Monsieur in 1576, enacted into law by the Edict of Beaulieu.³⁷ Beaulieu granted Protestants freedom to establish churches anywhere in the kingdom, with the exception of the area immediately around Paris. This horrified the large group of Catholics who were prepared to accept the continued existence but not the potential expansion of the Protestant church. Signs of danger appeared almost immediately when Catholics in and around Péronne (Somme) began to organize to prevent the crown from handing the town over to the Protestant leader, Henri, Prince de Condé, as the Peace of Monsieur required. These Catholic organizations eventually coalesced into the Catholic League; although the exact process is rather mysterious (72–74), the electioneering prior to the 1576 Estates General meeting was decisive in organizing the Catholic party (75–81). But the key point is that both the crown and the Protestants allowed their ideals to triumph over their interests—sanity should have prevented them from calling the Estates unless they were certain that they could control them. Permitting the Estates General to debate the issues only reopened questions that had already been decided in the Protestants' favor.

Given France's sharp religious divisions, it is not surprising that the Estates General did not coalesce into a working body that would permit the crown and the localities to agree decisively on fiscal and political issues. Worse, even the large Catholic majority in the Estates could not agree on a common policy. The result was a fiasco. When hardline Catholics were confronted with actually having to make policy, they tended to pull back from the painful and expensive consequences of their demands. As an example, Greengrass cites the case of the discussions surrounding the submission of the Montdidier (Somme) *cahier de doléances*, for which very good records survive. The original draft included a provision demanding that the king enforce Catholicism on the country by requiring all Protestants to convert or go into exile—a stock clause that was circulated via the leagues to other Catholic associations. This draconian anti-Protestant

³⁷ Nicola M. Sutherland, *The Huguenot Struggle for Recognition* (New Haven, CT, 1980), prints the text of the edict on 361–62.

provision was amended to allow all “paisibles” (peaceful) Protestants to remain (79). At the actual meeting of the Estates, the overwhelmingly Catholic majority refused to call for the war to be renewed or to approve the taxes necessary to pay for it, and therefore its militancy was merely rhetorical. Even when debating judicial reform, a less fraught subject, the deputies “wanted an incompatibility; a judicial system that was sophisticated, locally delivered, professional, and equitable, but also cheap and quick” (269).

The meeting of the Estates was not a total failure—the crown used the *cahiers* of the session as a basis for the Ordinance of Blois—but the session helped discredit the institution in the eyes of two major supporters: the Protestant movement and, more important, the crown. The slowness of the process was one reason why in 1583 the crown convened an Assembly of Notables. In two months, the assembly adopted as many articles as the royal council had (on the basis of the *cahiers* of the Estates) in two years (362). The inefficiency of the 1576 Estates helped destroy the institution of the Estates General since it encouraged the French crown to develop other methods to govern the nation and raise the revenue necessary to defend it.

The failure of the Estates did aid the cause of peace, however, since it helped Catholics realize that they did not wish to pay the price for the policies that might eliminate Protestantism from the kingdom. If Beaulieu could not stand, they could accept something that constrained but did not eliminate Protestantism. Further negotiations resulted in a new peace agreement, and Henri III quite rightly insisted that the provisions of the Edict of Poitiers, signed in 1577, were “much more honorable and to the advantage of the Catholics than those of the last edict” (134). In particular, the Poitiers edict limited Protestant worship to those places where it already existed, plus one town per *bailliage* and châteaux where the seigneur was present. Since there were approximately eighty-six *bailliages* in France (so that *bailliages* on average were only slightly smaller in size than the modern *départements*),³⁸ Protestant congregations were essentially limited to their current numbers. Still, especially in the Midi, which the crown believed was “uncouth [and] disobedient” compared to the north (135), people had to be persuaded to accept it. Catherine de’Medici therefore went on a progress through the Midi (188–226), using her prodigious talents as a negotiator to pacify the country. It took her over a year: she took her leave of the king on August 2, 1578, and was not reunited with him until November 9, 1579 (188 and map 194). Catherine wrote to Henri that “I am confident that this work remains so perfect, that nothing better will come to them for a long time, nor likewise a better thing for your service” (224). Although this was certainly exaggerated, her achievements were considerable.

As peace returned, the crown began to plan more ambitious reforms, most notably the elimination of venal office. Contemporaries hated the system of pur-

³⁸ Gaston Zeller, *Les institutions de la France au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1948), 173–74.

chasing offices, and even the crown admitted that only immediate financial necessity justified the practice, which was otherwise “to our very great regret” (275). Although venality dated to the High Middle Ages it was seen as an “innovation,” since François I widened the sale of offices on a grand scale to help finance his wars against the Hapsburgs and Henri II created a new set of courts, the *présidiaux*, specifically in order to sell the judgeships. As such—few things offended the sixteenth-century mind more than innovations—it had to be eliminated. The crown committed itself in the Ordinance of Blois to buying back all offices, but, as Greengrass notes, this reform was “dependent on the fragile internal peace” (286). Eliminating venality was just one part of restoring the administrative machine to working order. The crown also sent commissioners on a tour of local inspection (314–37). The commissioners necessarily stopped only briefly in any given town, but they encouraged proper accounts, attacked corruption, and (as did Catherine’s visit) gave local officials a sense of connection to the crown.

Greengrass argues that Henri’s reform policies were generally well conceived and well executed, thus helping to rehabilitate a traditionally despised king.³⁹ They nonetheless failed. Greengrass argues that this was not the king’s fault: unforeseeable circumstances were to blame. In 1584, the death of Henri III’s brother, the Duke of Anjou, put the whole existence of the Valois dynasty at stake. One might still criticize Henri III and Catherine’s reform policies—they were certainly not very imaginative—but it is not clear that novel approaches were really necessary. Indeed, Henri IV’s widely praised and successful reforms were also very traditional.

Anjou’s death transformed the political landscape because it made the Protestant leader, Henri of Navarre (the future Henri IV), the heir apparent to the throne, turning political positions upside down. Protestants who had shown considerable sympathy toward resistance in theory and in practice suddenly discovered the merits of obedience, now that a Protestant was the heir presumptive to the crown. Catholics, contrariwise, suddenly understood the logic of legitimate rebellion against an anointed ruler, since it was obvious to them that Protestants were constitutionally barred from the French throne.⁴⁰

The new situation also completely undid the Edict of Poitiers, with its assumption that the settlement protected the Protestants but quarantined them, preventing them from expanding. Many Catholics were convinced that Henri of Navarre, on his accession to the French throne, would encourage the spread

³⁹ Michel Pernot, *Henri III: Le roi décrié* (Paris, 2013), is the most recent of many biographies. It discusses Henri III’s changing reputation.

⁴⁰ For overviews of sixteenth-century Calvinist political thought, see Myriam Yardeni, “French Calvinist Political Thought, 1534–1715,” in *International Calvinism*, ed. M. Prestwich (Oxford, 1985), and J. H. Burns and Mark Goldie, eds., *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700* (Cambridge, 1991), 193–218 (and, for more discussion on the political thought of the era, 219–328).

of Protestantism. Instead the final, bitter War of Religion persuaded him to convert to Catholicism (in 1593) and, once the kingdom was pacified, to proclaim the Edict of Nantes (1598), whose provisions were fundamentally similar to those of the Edict of Poitiers. The interlude Greengrass recounts thus represents a major turning point, where French history could have proceeded in quite different directions. Instead, the basic political questions were reopened and had to be fought through all over again. Henri III's legacy came to be not reform and reconstruction, but renewed, even bloodier war, plus the most spectacular political assassinations in all of French history: those of the Duke of Guise and his brother the Cardinal of Guise in 1588, and Henri III's own the following year.

Historians have traditionally argued that the Wars of Religion were a fight to the death because of the extreme hatred that religious difference engendered. As Pierre Miquel put it, Catholics and Protestants during the Wars of Religion "did not have as [their] goal to dominate the adversary, but to destroy it, to reduce it—as the inquisitors did—to ashes."⁴¹ But massacres were actually only a common tactic at the outset of the wars, when Catholics still thought that Protestants were a small minority.⁴² The outlines of a settlement were actually quite clear at an early date, and had Henri de Navarre not fortuitously become heir presumptive in 1584, the wars might easily have ended in the mid-1570s. Both sides in the wars were more rational, and more calculating, than historians have traditionally portrayed them as being.

V. CATHOLIC RENEWAL

In the end, most French people remained Catholic: they had fewer reasons to reject royal authority than the Dutch, for example, and the Dutch also had the advantage of fighting an absent monarch. At the signing of the Edict of Nantes, between 5 and 10 percent of the population of France were probably Protestants. Understanding why the Catholic Church had much greater success reconverting some regions while others remained stubbornly Protestant is the central concern of Jill Fehleison's powerful, persuasive *Boundaries of Faith*.⁴³ Fehleison gives a compelling analysis of the diocese of Geneva in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, showing the importance of politics and of collective rituals in the conversion process. The choice of the diocese of Geneva is, of course,

⁴¹ Pierre Miquel, *Les guerres de religion* (Paris, 1980), 22.

⁴² For a table of massacres during the Wars of Religion, see my article "Massacres during the French Wars of Religion," supplement, *Past and Present* 7 (February 2012): 100–126, a special issue entitled "Ritual and Violence: Natalie Zemon Davis and Early Modern France," ed. Graeme Murdock, Penny Roberts, and Andrew Spicer.

⁴³ Readers should know that Jill Fehleison and I were postdocs together at George Mason University.

highly symbolic. Not only was Geneva central to the international Reformed Church (the seat of the Catholic diocese was moved to Annecy in Savoy as a result), but in addition its bishop from 1602 to 1622 was François de Sales, one of the most important figures of the Catholic Reformation. De Sales was canonized in 1665 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1877. This contest for the souls of the people of this Alpine region was the epicenter of a titanic struggle between Rome and Geneva for the soul of Europe, the equivalent of the battle between King Kong and Godzilla.

Beyond its symbolic importance, the diocese serves as a sort of natural experiment to test the importance of political forces in motivating religious conversion. De Sales, his predecessor Claude Granier, and his younger brother and successor Jean-François de Sales had little ability to sway the consciences of residents of the Genevan Republic. More important was the fact that part of the diocese, the Chablais, was under the rule of the Dukes of Savoy, while the pays de Gex, west and northwest of Geneva, was acquired by Henri IV from Berne by the provisions of the Treaty of Lyon of 1601. The French part of the diocese thus became subject to the Edict of Nantes. The diocese's French Protestant inhabitants, although exhorted to convert, were not under nearly as much governmental pressure as its Savoyard Protestants in the Chablais, where no toleration edict existed. How did the bishops attempt to convert the inhabitants of the two regions, and what success did they have? Political pressure works, apparently, since with the help of the Savoyard state de Sales's efforts were extremely successful in the Chablais, but without the support of Henri IV de Sales achieved very little in the pays de Gex.

After Gex's annexation, de Sales was hopeful that Henri IV would support Catholic practice, although he realized that many ecclesiastical properties had fallen into lay and Protestant hands and that this would complicate reconversion efforts (106). But the king did little. De Sales even complained that he had been restricted in his ability to collect money from the Catholics of the Pays de Gex to repair the churches (121). Although the Protestants were eventually forced to return all the churches, they were permitted to retain three-quarters of the ecclesiastical revenues for a year to subsidize the construction of new ones (128). Without land that could be rented out, it was hard to pay clergy a decent salary. Most of the candidates who did offer to officiate in the region were mediocre; to de Sales's distress, many of them lived with common-law wives (131). When trying to further the Catholic cause in the pays de Gex, de Sales also faced trouble from the Duke of Savoy, Charles-Emmanuel I. From the duke's point of view, de Sales was his subject and should not visit the territory of his enemy, the King of France, even for necessary ecclesiastical business (118). After a decade, de Sales succeeded in reestablishing Catholic services in five parishes in the pays de Gex, but the majority of the population remained Protestant (123).

In short, Fehleison argues that there were a number of reasons why the Catholic Church failed to make much headway in the pays de Gex, but the unwillingness of French authorities to support the Church's efforts forcefully seems by far the most important one. The relative strength of the churches was not a significant factor: if the Church was weak in the region, that does not mean that Protestant institutions there were particularly strong. Most people in Gex were Protestants, but they were not wealthy or powerful. The Protestants of Gex did not even have enthusiastic support from the rest of the French Reformed Church. In 1612, when the Protestant churches of Gex asked the national Protestant synod to help finance the building of the new churches, their Burgundian neighbors and coreligionists grumbled that assisting them would deprive other poor congregations of needed funds (129). The Protestants of Gex used liturgical rites, derived from those of Berne, that were somewhat more conservative—that is, closer to Catholicism—than those used in France. Their new French brethren expected them to conform to French practice. They could no longer use unleavened bread for the Lord's Supper, and some feast days would have to go (112–13). Thus, although the pays de Gex's Protestants were a majority, they would have been vulnerable if the Catholic Church could obtain the support of the state.

When Catholicism in the pays de Gex finally did obtain muscular state support, under Louis XIV, Protestantism's days were numbered. Louis abolished the Edict of Nantes there in 1662, declaring that it did not apply because the pays de Gex had not been part of France at the time the edict was proclaimed in 1598 (135). Again, the political context was paramount. As Fehleison concludes, "Prospects of individual conversions seemed to ebb and flow with the political negotiations of the region" (57).

The methods de Sales used to convert people in the Chablais are still very interesting, and they have important implications for our thinking about the conversion process. Fehleison convincingly gives most of the credit to collective rituals that brought mass conversions in their wake, rather than seeing the Church's successes as a series of individual conversions. This analysis is consistent with her emphasis on the role of politics in motivating conversions. Although in Fehleison's account political pressure was essential to the reconversion of the Chablais, she suggests that de Sales's Forty Hours Celebrations were crucial to triggering conversions. Three of them were held in 1597 and 1598, and Fehleison describes them as "the culmination of three years of missionary work [that] produced impressive results" (64). Beyond the elaborate ceremony, for Fehleison a "key element" in the success of the mission project was the presence of the duke (74–75). He arrived in late September 1598, in the company of Cardinal Alexander de' Medici, the papal legate to France and the future Pope Leo XI. On October 1, 1598, the men went to the church of St. Hippolyte in Thonon, where the ceremony was held. It was decorated with tapestries and

elaborate hangings for the occasion. The cardinal began the proceedings by offering absolution to those who needed it, beginning with a former Protestant pastor, Pierre Petit. The ceremony continued with music, a Mass, and a procession through the streets to the church of St. Augustine, during which the bishop displayed the Host to the townspeople. The duke and other dignitaries went bareheaded, bearing candles. The streets were also decorated with didactic statuary. More preaching and processions by confraternities followed through the day and night. The next day, the duke received the Sacrament in order to set an example, which Fehleison calls a “crucial public statement” (79). Then, along with de Sales and other ecclesiastics, he led a procession to the crossroads of rue de la Croix where they planted a crucifix. Along with the others the duke knelt and kissed the Cross. The sight of their lord’s devotion to their Lord unleashed a flood of conversions.

The Forty Hours ceremonies mirrored Protestant mass preaching of the sixteenth and later centuries, and indeed revival meetings today. They were designed to collect a crowd and whip it into a frenzy, creating an emergent norm where key individuals were tapped ahead of time to testify to their faith, making it appear as though they were the majority even though this may not have been the case. The ceremony created enormous social pressure to convert, and it appears to have had dramatic results.⁴⁴ This is not to deny that many people converted in both directions without official encouragement, or despite official hostility. Cases of principled defiance may be more morally admirable and much more fun to study. But conformism is all too common and cannot be ignored.

François de Sales was also influential in Parisian reform circles, and he exerted a major influence on some of the figures Barbara Diefendorf focuses on in *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in France*, which won the J. Russell Major Prize. The book beautifully describes a transformation in French Catholic spirituality, crisply summarized in its title, and the book also has the merit of great, evocative writing. The tone bears a distinct resemblance to H. Outram Evennett’s classic *The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation* (1968), and Diefendorf’s description of Counter-Reformation piety is quite close to Evennett’s. Both focus resolutely on the internal debates of the Catholic Church, and as a result they elide some of the nastier elements of Church policy—such as the Index of Prohibited Books and the papal medal struck to celebrate the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre. In Diefendorf’s case, this is an entirely legitimate choice: she is writing about pious Catholic women in the early seventeenth century. But the same pious circles were closely linked to some of the most bloodthirsty, pro-League preachers. In this book women are leaders and, less

⁴⁴ The term “emergent norm” comes from Ralph Turner and Lewis M. Killian, *Collective Behavior*, 3rd. ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1987).

commonly, martyrs or victims, but never aggressors.⁴⁵ The shift from penitence to charity that Diefendorf describes owes much to the political context: in the short term, the turn to charity occurred around 1635, when the crown raised taxes to pay for France's entry into the Thirty Years' War, and when a poor economy caused many people to need assistance. In the larger context, the shift reflects the civilizing process famously associated by Norbert Elias with the rise of the state.

Diefendorf begins by describing self-inflicted violence, the penitential activities alluded to in the book's title, arguing that the violence of the period helped induce pious Catholic women to do violence to themselves. Many of these women wore hair shirts and even studded iron bands under their clothes, and they practiced other forms of physical mortification as well (67). In addition to practices that induced pain, early seventeenth-century Parisian nuns humiliated themselves: "Prioresses ordered penitent nuns to eat on the refectory floor instead of at the table, to confess their imperfections out loud to the assembled community, or to parade through the convent wearing a noose around their neck and crying out for mercy" (148). Diefendorf concludes that "the trauma of civil war awakened in women affiliated with both political factions a powerful desire for the expiation of sin" (23). Andrew Barnes has made a similar argument about members of male confraternities, suggesting that in sixteenth-century France these men increasingly engaged in penitential practices because they "allow[ed] the participants to relieve themselves of their fears of what sectarian conflict was doing to the social fabric and their inability to stop it."⁴⁶ Neither provides proof that the frequency of penitential practice was uniquely high in late sixteenth-century France. Diefendorf argues that most Parisian convents had relaxed their observance of their Rules prior to the late sixteenth-century reform movement (51–58), but this is a recurring pattern in the history of medieval and early modern Christianity. It would take much more evidence to prove that penitential practices increased in the later sixteenth century compared to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Diefendorf argues that for many of the pious Catholic women of the later sixteenth century, penitential practices were "fundamental to the process of abnegation" (91) that served "as a means of activating oneself to serve as God's tool or agent" (90). Diefendorf calls this "active mysticism," that is, a form of mysticism that was supposed to infuse the spirit with holiness so that the believer could better discern and perform God's will on earth.

Diefendorf's key argument is that beginning in the mid-1630s Catholic religious and their noble patronesses switched to a new style of piety that was

⁴⁵ Diefendorf does describe how some royalist Catholic women were held hostage by the League (43–46).

⁴⁶ Andrew E. Barnes, "Religious Anxiety and Devotional Change in Sixteenth Century French Penitential Confraternities," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 19 (Autumn 1988): 389–406, quotation at 397.

designed to ameliorate society's problems. Her most important piece of evidence for this is the simple table (136) "Religious Houses for Women Built in Paris between 1604 and 1650," which lists houses by founding dates and gives their "type" (contemplative or active) and the order with which they were affiliated. The table shows clearly that prior to the early 1630s contemplative houses dominated, while afterward active ones did. Thus Diefendorf argues that women caused a major shift in Catholic spirituality, since aristocratic women were responsible for founding the convents by giving the money to build them. Beyond the shift in the type of Parisian convents constructed, it is also important that despite the high cost of real estate, a great many women's orders established houses—forty-eight between 1604 and 1640 (135)—testifying to the strength of the religious revival.

To raise money, houses adopted a variety of measures that allowed donors special privileges, even when this involved bending the rules governing traditional female monasticism. Many houses had to allow lay donors to board with them for a fee (163–67), which weakened the strict rules of claustration. François de Sales created an order where such visits, even from married women, were encouraged, so that lay women could be taught spiritual practices. More broadly, de Sales "wanted to change the tone of religious life and make it more appealing by insisting on the joy to be found there" (181).

Even when new orders eventually adopted stricter claustration rules, physical self-punishment waned. The teaching Ursuline order began as an association of lay women; only later did it become an order where the women took the traditional vows, following the Augustinian rule. Madeline Luillier founded the first house of the new order; she ordered the convent to be constructed it so that the school was located outside an inner wall so that the nuns could teach and still be enclosed (124–30). Other orders of nuns worked with repentant prostitutes (183) and sick women (188). Diefendorf concludes, "where earlier biographies told of self-starvation, flagellation, and bleeding bodies, later ones were more likely to say only that the devout lady worked very long hours, neglected to eat regularly, and did not get enough sleep" (241). Civilized discipline replaced more physically extravagant self-mutilation. This again is akin to Barnes's arguments: he concluded that beginning in the seventeenth century there was a shift from the penitential piety he identified for the sixteenth century to "what can be called Counter-Reformation spirituality—that particular combination of meditative devotion and social activism first advanced in the sixteenth century by the Jesuits."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Andrew E. Barnes, "From Ritual to Meditative Piety: Devotional Change in French Penitential Confraternities from the 16th to the 18th Century," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 1 (Summer 1987): 1–26, quotation at 3. See also his *The Social Dimension of Piety: Associative life and Devotional Change in the Penitent Confraternities of Marseilles (1499–1792)* (New York, 1994).

Diefendorf's sensitive description of this turning point in the history of women religious is a major contribution to our knowledge. She gives two reasons for the shift, although it is my impression that the first reason has (unjustly, in my view) received more attention. First, Diefendorf argues that the movement was subject to "an internal dynamic," since "like any movement born of the extreme emotions produced in moments of crisis, its ardor was bound to fade," and "the introspection the new teachings encouraged led [the women's] focus to shift from exteriorized gestures of corporal discipline to interiorized mortifications of the will" (242–43). Second, Diefendorf argues that poor economic conditions were a major impetus for the shift:

Catholic revival . . . evolved in response to . . . economic depression and war. . . . The economic recovery that helped finance the first foundations gave way by the 1620s to increasingly troubled times. Taxes rose precipitously on account of France's covert, and after 1635, open participation in the Thirty Years' war. . . . [P]easants were forced into extremity. Unemployment rose and with it vagrancy and vagabondage. As depression spread to the cities, poverty took on an increasingly visible face. Under these circumstances, it was natural that elites who had the money and will for charitable giving should find it more urgent to help ease the popular misery than to support the voluntary poverty of contemplative nuns. (244)

One advantage of the second, "external" argument is that it makes better sense of the timing of the change. Why should the movement's ardor happen to change in the 1630s? Diefendorf points to a generational shift (240–41), but the term is notoriously slippery, and the mid-1630s were in any case more than a full generation after the height of the Wars of Religion. Even arguing that economic problems caused the change diverts attention away from the larger context. As Barnes and Evennett argue, this change is part of a much broader shift in religious feeling.

It seems to me that the best large-scale theoretical structure in which to understand this shift is that proposed by Norbert Elias's *The Civilizing Process* (1969). Surely, Christians' declining interest in inflicting physical pain on themselves was part of the shift toward a greater emphasis on personal hygiene, falling murder rates, the decline of judicial torture, and so on that have become part of the Elias model.⁴⁸ Elias argued that this process was caused by the rise of the early modern state; as its tax-collecting apparatus grew, it became more and

⁴⁸ On falling murder rates, see Pieter Spierenburg, *A History of Murder: Personal Violence in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Malden, MA, 2008); Andrew Linklater and Stephen Mennell, "Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*—an Overview and Assessment," *History and Theory* 49 (October 2010): 384–411, provides a recent overview. See also Peter Sahlin, "The Royal Menageries of Louis XIV and the Civilizing Process Revisited," *French Historical Studies* 35 (Spring 2012): 237–69, and the references therein.

more important to maintain internal stability and cohesion. The main difficulty with this argument is that although the link is intriguing, it only postpones the question of what caused the rise of the state. Nonetheless, it is hard not to conclude that the political and social context powerfully shaped the shifting religious ideals that Diefendorf documents.

VI. CONCLUSION

The books reviewed here show that if Protestantism began when clerics in the Circle of Meaux contemplated theology, from the outset the movement required elite political support—provided by Marguerite de Navarre above all—and conversions increased dramatically only when Protestant critiques resonated with the political context. Meaux broke up under threat; some of its members remained within the Catholic Church while others rejected it, many of them fleeing into exile. Farel was among the most important of the latter, establishing himself as leader of the new church in Geneva and writing a number of important, emotional, and influential works on prayer and theology. Marguerite greatly assisted French evangelicals by patronizing them and protecting them from the authorities; her network also undoubtedly assisted them intellectually and spiritually by fostering a community of ideas. However, over the course of the 1530s the frustrated evangelical community began to radicalize and slipped more and more from Marguerite's influence. By the early 1540s Calvin had created a new network of people and institutions, centered in Geneva. His influence, both through his theology and the institutions he built, greatly unified French evangelicals.

Nonetheless, Protestantism was a highly demanding, if also highly rewarding, faith that struck many contemporaries as overreaching and unfair rather than pure and noble. French evangelicals tended to find a receptive audience among frustrated political outsiders who liked its clear moral categories, while more conventional souls rejected it. It seemed in the 1540s that a movement of outsiders was unlikely to become France's majority faith. But Protestant conversions mounted dramatically beginning in the mid-1550s, along with discontent with the crown, especially in the towns of the "Protestant crescent" in the Midi. Again, the political context was key, since at the height of these tensions Henri II died unexpectedly, leaving the fifteen-year-old François II (r. 1559–60) on the throne. After his early and painful death, he was succeeded by the ten-year-old Charles IX. This collapse of authority had the worst effects on the nation's stability, and the country slid into civil war.

The war became the theater for a variety of political agendas. Protestants favored a greatly expanded role for the Estates General, which would meet regularly to provide a popular voice in politics. There is good evidence that even the Guises, who have traditionally been seen as extremely ideological Catholics, in

fact positioned themselves at the head of the Catholic party to further their family interests. Even the most religiously motivated Catholics were prepared to compromise with Protestants so long as the Protestant movement was contained; this was especially true once the aftermath of the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre proved that Protestantism could not be eliminated. The peace provided a virtually unparalleled opportunity for reforms because the war had demonstrated that the nation faced grave ills that justified fundamental change—everything was in a state of flux. Some of the crown's attempted reforms were traditional, but others, including the calling of the Estates General, could, had they continued, have resulted in very substantial changes to the French constitution. However, the Estates General failed to pass realistic legislation to solve the nation's problems and refused to approve new taxes. The crown was forced to rely on expedients, and was unable, despite its pledges, to renounce venality. Nonetheless the crown negotiated a peace inaugurated by the Edict of Poitiers (1577) that proved surprisingly durable and allowed the crown to continue its work of reconstruction. The Wars of Religion could easily have ended at this point, but Henri III failed to produce a son and his last remaining brother died in 1584, making the Protestant leader, Henri of Navarre, the heir presumptive. Catholics feared that his accession would permit the Protestant movement to renew its campaign to convert the country, and Protestant hopes were renewed. War broke out again and lasted longer than all of the previous wars combined. Catholic worries only eased when Navarre converted, leading eventually to the end of the wars formalized by the Edict of Nantes. Nantes was extremely similar to the Edict of Poitiers and gave Protestants relatively little freedom to proselytize, although it did guarantee their personal safety. If the second round of fighting frustrated participants who thought the issues had already been settled, the process tended to reward pragmatic politicians like Henri IV rather than stern ideologues like the more extreme members of the Catholic League.

In the early seventeenth century the crown took a more *laissez-faire* approach to religious issues. Henri IV was reluctant to use significant state pressure to encourage the conversion of local Protestant communities, although Jill Fehleison's study of the diocese of Annecy-Geneva suggests this strategy was necessary for the restoration of religious unity. Collective rituals such as the Forty Hours devotions were particularly effective means of converting communities. However, under Henri IV's reign and especially that of his successor, Louis XIII, the reconstruction of Catholic institutions began and noblewomen in particular patronized a dramatic increase in women's religious houses—over forty in Paris alone. In the 1630s, in response to worsening social conditions and as part of the general trend toward greater state control and increasing self-discipline first noted in Elias's *Civilizing Process*, these noble Catholic women turned their patronage away from physically punishing penitential orders toward charitable orders, women who worked with the poor, ill, and ignorant. The result was that

noblewomen helped strengthen the state, although they acted without direct state intervention by creating a network of institutions that expressed God's love while also fostering social peace. The change in emphasis strikingly paralleled sixteenth-century Protestant demands, which suggests that the women were responding to the needs of society rather than to specifically Catholic theological concerns. The effect of the Wars of Religion was thus to reinforce the central role of the monarchy, reduce the power of the Estates, entrench venal office, and civilize and discipline French subjects.

Although as a result of recent work we have a much clearer picture of the evolution of French religious history in the aftermath of the Reformation, there are still a number of potentially fruitful research areas in French Reformation studies. I want to highlight two subfields that have been somewhat underrepresented in recent years: culture and gender. Sixteenth-century France was an extraordinarily intellectually creative period, rich in literary figures such as Montaigne, Rabelais, Marguerite de Navarre, and Ronsard, religious figures like Calvin, political theorists like Bodin and the monarchomachs, and pamphleteers. The publication of Denis Crouzet's *Les guerriers de dieu* (1991), which heralded the arrival of cultural history in sixteenth-century French historical studies, might have been expected to touch off a new wave of research by historians on these texts. A recent article arguing that the Wars of Religion helped create the preconditions for the Higher Criticism that was crucial to the Enlightenment suggests one fruitful avenue for future research.⁴⁹ I also hope that Diefendorf's *From Penitence to Charity* encourages further work on gender and religion, for which the records of the Protestant consistories, for example, provide considerable source material. Suzannah Lipscomb has begun work on this, but many other topics are worthy of investigation.⁵⁰ I suspect, for example, that consistorial records could be used to examine issues of women and work, along the lines of Sheilagh Ogilvie's *A Bitter Living* (2003). Hugues Daussy and Philip Benedict are currently finishing books that should add to our knowledge of the "wonder years" of the French Reformation, the period from the mid-1550s through the early 1560s when Protestants confidently expected to become the majority.

Methodologically, the books under review here suggest that there is still a lot of mileage in sociocultural approaches to sixteenth-century French history. Beyond methodology, Crouzet's most substantial impact was his "attempt to elaborate an interpretive system of the French sixteenth century crisis which accords primacy to the religious factor."⁵¹ In particular, Crouzet insisted on the im-

⁴⁹ Dmitri Levitin, "From Sacred History to the History of Religion: Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity in European Historiography from Reformation to 'Enlightenment,'" *Historical Journal* 55, no. 4 (2012): 1117–60, at 1160.

⁵⁰ Suzannah Lipscomb, "Maids, Wives, and Mistresses: Disciplined Women in Reformation Languedoc" (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2009).

⁵¹ Crouzet, *Guerriers de dieu*, 1:45.

portance of eschatological feeling in the period preceding the civil wars. My principal concern with Crouzet's thesis was that it did not explain the sharp regional contrasts in religious adherence in sixteenth-century France. Why should Normans and Dauphinois find Protestantism more attractive than Bretons or Auvergnats?

More important, however, I find it unhelpful to make sharp distinctions between religion and politics. Even today many religious issues have political implications; in the sixteenth century, the French crown and the French Catholic Church were so tightly interwoven that it was impossible for religious choices not to have strong political implications, which necessarily affected them. In particular, the French Protestant movement wanted the support of the crown—and if the crown chose to ally with the Catholic League instead, war would necessarily follow. Beyond this, it seems to me that there is a danger that when we ascribe a particular statement or action to religious feeling we exempt ourselves from our duty to analyze it. There is an old joke among archaeologists that if they find an artifact they cannot understand, “it must be religious.” Historians should avoid the analogous trap. Sincere religious feelings must not only constantly contend with the stumbling blocks of real life: they must respond intellectually to them as well. Accepting that reality is not reductive. It seems to me that Carroll's, Fehleison's, and Reid's books in particular show the fruitful consequences of studying the relationship of religion and politics without presupposing the primacy of either.

It would be foolish to deny that religious feeling and commitments—however arrived at—increased the bloodiness of the Wars of Religion. The religious issue made Catholics feel that Protestants were an existential threat even though Protestants were small and weak enough that Catholics also believed (erroneously) they could be massacred with impunity. While I would not place the emphasis Crouzet did on eschatological feeling—and none of the works reviewed here does either—more work is needed to understand how religion mattered to the period. In particular, we know less than we should about the religious consequences of the wars, and about how the intense, violent religious disputes of the sixteenth century shifted in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁵²

Perhaps the most serious long-term consequence of the Wars of Religion is that they shook but did not shatter the trajectory of the French state. Before the

⁵² Joseph Bergin is apparently working on these issues, and Jonathan Israel has devoted large sections of his massive, controversial trilogy on the Enlightenment—*Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (New York, 2001), *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* (New York, 2006), and *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750–1790* (New York, 2011)—to the debates within the Huguenot diaspora and between it and its Catholic opponents after 1685.

Revolution of 1789, the Wars of Religion were the most serious popular uprising that the French monarchy ever faced, and they provided a unique opportunity for remaking the kingdom's institutions. In the end, the wars strengthened the monarchy because they demonstrated its centrality. Moreover, one of the principal reasons why early modern Europeans respected the French crown was its antiquity and its apparently divinely ordained ability to survive: unlike George III or Catherine the Great, Louis XVI could boast of being in the direct line of succession from kings who had reigned a thousand years earlier. The monarchy grew in power and prestige as a result of the Wars of Religion, which eventually gave it the strength to revoke the Edict of Nantes and suppress Protestantism (1685). The Wars of Religion also permitted the monarchy to reduce the strength of other potentially competing centers of power, including the nobility and representative institutions, although the weakening of the Estates General hindered the monarchy's ability to raise funds. The wars also inhibited the reform of venal office. In that sense, Henri IV's conversion created the Old Regime, with its strengths—and its weaknesses.