The Michelade in Nîmes, 1567

Allan A. Tulchin

In sixteenth-century Nîmes, September 29, or Michaelmas, marked the start of the biggest fair of the year, and the town was filled with excitement, people, and activity. On Michaelmas 1567 the celebrations took a sinister turn, in what became the best-known, and darkest, date in the town’s annals. On September 30, in an event that because of its timing became known as the Michelade, members of the town’s Protestant majority, led by many members of Nîmes’s présidial court, rose up and overthrew the Catholic town council. Nîmes’s Catholics were unlucky enough to have a traitor within their ranks, Pierre Suau, called Captain Bolhargues, who led the town’s troops before switching to the Protestant side. The Protestants first went looking for the town’s first consul, Guy de Rochette, who carried the keys to the town’s gates, and then seized him, the keys, and the gates. Crying “Kill, kill the papists,” they arrested many leading Catholics, laymen and priests; imprisoned them in a room used for killing animals; and then, according to contemporary estimates, massacred one hundred of them in cold blood, including Rochette. About one-third of the dead can be securely identified.¹

Once in power, Protestants remade the town’s sacred geography, while

¹ The standard account of the Michelade is in Léon Ménard, Histoire civile, ecclésiastique et littéraire de la ville de Nîmes, 7 vols. (Paris, 1750–56; rpt. Marseille, 1976), 5:16.18–37, 9–37. The other edition available (Nîmes, 1874), although it lacks the documentary extracts, the Preuves, was recently reprinted (Nîmes, 1988–90) and may therefore be more readily available for some readers. I have therefore given volume, book, and chapter references as well. For a reproduction of a contemporary print of the Michelade, see Philip Benedict, Lawrence M. Bryant, and Kristen B. Neuschel, “Graphic History: What Readers Knew and Were Taught in the Quarante Tableaux of Perrissin and Tortorel,” French Historical Studies 28 (2005): 188–89.

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at the same time they attempted to secure their position by seizing the royal château located at the northeastern corner of the town walls.

The Michelade is significant for several reasons. First, it was large even in an era of religious massacres: if the estimated death toll is correct, the Michelade was nearly as bloody as the Saint Bartholomew’s Massacre of 1572, taking into account the relative populations of Nîmes and Paris. Protestants in Nîmes even perpetrated a second, comparably sized massacre in 1569. Second, the Michelade is remarkably well documented. For most massacres during the Wars of Religion we possess only secondhand printed accounts, but for the Michelade we have depositions from actual witnesses. Third, the Michelade was unusual in that it involved a Protestant majority attacking a Catholic minority. Since Catholics were usually more numerous and more powerful in sixteenth-century France, the Michelade offers an unusual opportunity to look at how Protestants behaved when they were not restrained by their minority status. The standard scholarly interpretation—commonly associated with Natalie Z. Davis—argues that sixteenth-century French Protestants were less violent or practiced different forms of violence than Catholics. The case of the Michelade suggests this view needs to be significantly modified. Not only were the Michelade and the Saint Bartholomew’s Massacre similar in relative size, their perpetrators pursued similar methods and goals. Protestants in sixteenth-century Nîmes behaved much like their Catholic compatriots.

The Michelade occupies a peculiar place in the historiography of the French Wars of Religion. On the one hand, it is well known, mentioned in most standard surveys. On the other hand, no historian devoted more than a paragraph of analysis to it for well over two centuries, until in 2000 Joshua Millet devoted a major portion of his doctoral dissertation to it. The consensus of historians appears to be that the Michelade was the single exception that proves the rule: in sixteenth-century France, Catholics massacred Protestants. Thus, because the Michelade was an anomaly, it does not need an explanation. Instead, we need to understand Catholics’ motivations to commit

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2 In Paris, between 2,000 and 4,000 people died in the Saint Bartholomew’s Massacre, out of a population of 250,000–300,000 (the figures for the massacre are from Arlette Jouanna, *La France du XVIe siècle* [Paris, 1996], 472; for the population of Paris, cf. ibid., 55, and Philip Benedict, ed., *Cities and Social Change in Early Modern France* [London, 1989], 9), while Nîmes had a population of 10,000–12,000; if the midpoints of the ranges are used, 1.1% of the population died in the Saint Bartholomew’s, compared to 0.9% in the Michelade.

violence elsewhere and the elements of French Protestant ideology that restrained them from such behavior. Denis Crouzet, the author of the most extensive study of religious violence in the period, insists that there was not, in the beginning and before a perversion that issued naturally from the rituals of war, a Protestant practice of massacre (the celebrated Michelade of Nîmes is a separate case) because the Millennium was dawning for the Protestant party in these crucial years, in the course of which they were engaged with all their being in a war glorifying at every instant the infinite greatness of God. . . . [Protestant] thought is thus optimistic, perhaps utopian, rooted in the power of the Truth finally restored to men, a thought which conceived of a “soft” reconstruction of humanity under the Reign of Christ, without breaking bodies and without torturing flesh.4

Crouzet argues that theology alone drove Protestant behavior: Protestants did not massacre Catholics because, at least at first, there was no cultural or intellectual logic leading them to do so, not because they did so desire but because they lacked the ability. (Crouzet does admit that over time, as Catholic massacres accumulated, Protestants began to desire revenge and this “perversion” led them to respond in kind.) In this he is following the arguments of Davis, who inaugurated the modern study of sixteenth-century French religious violence, but her arguments were more cautious and nuanced. She concludes that the iconoclastic Calvinist crowds still come off as the champions in the destruction of religious property. . . . This was not only because the Catholics had more physical accessories to their rite, but also because the Protestants sensed much more danger and defilement in the wrongful use of material objects. . . . In bloodshed, the Catholics are the champions. . . . I think this is owing not only to their being in the long run the stronger party numerically in most cities, but also to their having a greater sense of the persons of heretics as sources of danger and defilement. Thus, injury and murder were a preferred mode of purifying the body social.5

Davis carefully notes that Protestants were less violent than Catholics for religious reasons in addition to their weakness, but she does not attempt to discover which factor was the more important one. This article argues that the only way to conclude whether weakness or ideology was the predominant cause of French Protestant behavior is to look at the few places like Nîmes where Protestants were dominant. If Protes-

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5 Natalie Z. Davis, “The Rites of Violence,” in Society and Culture in Early Modern France (Stanford, CA, 1975), 173–74. Davis’s greater attention to social history is hardly surprising, since (as she acknowledges) she was inspired to work on crowd violence by reading E. P. Thompson and George Rudé.
tants were reluctant to shed blood when they held power in Nîmes, it would be powerful evidence that religious ideology was a more important cause of religious massacres than sociology and power.

The surviving sources for the Michelade are unusually rich. They consist almost entirely of thirty firsthand accounts by the victims, in the form of affidavits that were collected by agents of the Parlement of Toulouse who were sent to organize the prosecution of the perpetrators. Their style is disjointed, going from one anecdote to the next, which suggests that their written form is quite close to their original oral delivery. They are also fairly circumspect, frequently admitting that they cannot remember all of the people present, adding sometimes that they would “remember them if they saw them again.”

To learn as much as possible about the witnesses, the participants, and the victims of the massacre, I have also used the records of the town council and the Protestant consistory and a database I compiled of all wills and marriage contracts that survive for Nîmes from the period 1550–62 (Old Style), which give very rich data on most men’s occupations, wealth, and so forth. This extensive source material contrasts very favorably with the usual printed accounts, in which we often cannot even tell the source of the authors’ information, and in which it is easy to imagine how rumor inflated reality. In comparison, it is possible to learn a great deal about the participants in the Michelade, which can aid us substantially when we try to understand their actions. For the Michelade, it is possible not only to analyze the discourse used by the participants but also to investigate the people creating it.

The Origins of the Reformation in Nîmes

Nîmes in the sixteenth century was a town of about ten thousand people and an important settlement in the region of Bas-Languedoc. It was the seat of a bishopric; the bishop in the 1560s was Bernard d’Elbène. Nîmes’s château had a small garrison of royal troops, led by Captain La Garde. A municipal militia led by Captain Bolhargues was in charge of patrolling the streets. Bolhargues had fought valiantly for the Protestant cause, but Nîmes’s Catholic leaders were equally happy to employ him—indeed, he was friends with several. Much of the population

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6 About half of the surviving depositions have been printed in Ménard 5, *Preuves*, 24–65, while the rest can be found in the Archives Départementales du Gard (hereafter ADG), G442. Crouzet, *Guerriers de dieu*, 1:48, argues that “il fallait, soit tout accepter des violences dont s’accusent, voire s’auto-accusent les protagonistes, soit tout refuser,” but this position seems extreme to me.

7 Many writers, including Ménard, normalize the name to Bouillargues. Bolhargues’s religion is unclear and is discussed in more detail later. Several members of his family were Protes-
worked the fields outside of town; a large percentage of the population was also occupied in transforming wool and hides, the products of the Cévennes mountains, northwest of town, into cloth and leather. Nîmes was also already famous for its Roman antiquities. The most important people in Nîmes, however, earned their living and derived their prestige from the government offices they held and from the lands they had bought. In 1552 King Henri II had awarded Nîmes a présidial court, which was grafted onto the town’s existing sénéchaussée. The judges of the présidial court were the most prestigious people in town, and on the basis of the dowries in their marriage contracts (on average, about twelve hundred livres tournois), the richest. The court enjoyed a wide jurisdiction, and the steady flow of litigation produced a great deal of revenue: in effect, the judicial business was a mainstay of the local economy. It is not surprising therefore that the town’s constitution reserved the most powerful position in local government, the post of first consul, to a lawyer. Among Nîmes’s professions, lawyers had the second-highest dowries at slightly more than 900 livres, well above those of merchants (259 livres), bourgeois (456 livres), doctors (633 livres), and other professionals and artisans. Nîmes’s three other consulships were also reserved for specific occupational groups, which gives some idea of the hierarchy of prestige among them: the second consul had to be a merchant or bourgeois, the third consul an artisan or notary, and the fourth consul a laboureur (a wealthy farmer). The four consuls were the leaders of the town council. These two institutions, the présidial court and the town council, were key to maintaining local public order. The judges served for life, sometimes resigning in favor of younger relatives. The members of the town council served for a year, but they were not elected. Instead, the sitting members selected four candidates for each of the four consular positions, and the winner was then selected by lot.

8 On lawyers in Nîmes, see Albert Puech, *Une ville au temps jadis, ou Nîmes à la fin du XVIe siècle* (Nîmes, 1884), 17, 119. For average dowries, see Allan A. Tulchin, “The Reformation in Nîmes” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2000), 413–14.
(Some of the elections turned out very conveniently. The lottery may have been rigged.) The new consuls and the old consuls then chose the new members of the council. Thus Nîmes’s citizens had no right to vote for the town’s leadership, although ordinary citizens could speak at council meetings. The self-perpetuating elite that governed through the consuls was nonetheless responsive to popular needs: its members were prepared, for example, to dip into their own pockets when faced with harvest shortfalls and high grain prices. Their attitude might best be described as deeply paternalistic.

In Nîmes, the years 1557–60 were particularly bad: there was a nearly catastrophic flood in 1557, and the grain harvest failed in all four years. The town’s elite was extremely concerned by the crisis and attempted to remedy it as best they could given the limited means available. They were prepared to borrow considerable sums and to spend their own money to purchase grain for the town. They also attempted to restrict food prices by law, which led to a hostile relationship with members of most of the food trades. But influential members of the town council were frustrated. They faced a tremendous task in trying to keep the town on an even keel in terrible economic times, while the crown, instead of assisting them, imposed numerous heavy and illegal fiscal burdens—taxes, forced loans, and bribes—to support its unsuccessful foreign policy. Sensing that the town’s hard times had created a better climate for recruiting members, in 1559 the Company of Pastors in Geneva sent Nîmes its first permanent pastor, Guillaume Mauget. He arrived in late September, and a tumultuous period of mass meetings began in the spring of 1560. Although Nîmes’s présidial, as yet relatively uninfected by heresy, acted with considerable energy to repress the disorders, the Protestant movement gained support by arguing that the kingdom’s problems stemmed from a pervasive moral degeneration and that Nîmes needed a church governance vested in local leadership. Furthermore, money should be diverted from useless masses and ceremonies to poor relief. Nîmes’s leadership, hitherto resistant to Protestantism, found these arguments powerfully persuasive because they provided a convincing narrative that explained how Nîmes’s problems had developed and how to solve them. As a result, the governing elites associated with the town council began to convert—Protestant recruitment figures make it clear that between 1560 and early 1561 the movement was particularly successful in attracting lawyers, notaries, and other legal professionals. As a result, over the course of 1560 the Nîmes town council, recruited from this group, rapidly lost the will to act against heresy.

The crown was deeply concerned by the Nîmes town council’s
waning zeal, but its attempts to alter this state of affairs only made matters worse. Royal troops entered the town, and with their support the crown ordered that special elections for consuls be held at which only Catholics could be candidates. But this unconstitutional action only further alienated the town’s legal governing elites, who were extremely attached to local liberties and due legal forms. In early 1561 the Protestant movement, hoping to extend its support among the political classes, organized around a cahier de doléances for the forthcoming meeting of the national Estates General. The cahier’s provisions show that it embodied contractualist principles of limited government. Poverty, war, and high taxes seem to have been the primary concerns for the political elite, and they believed that arbitrary government caused them all. These later Protestant recruits, although they were no doubt religious, were thus less interested in abstract theology than in practical ethics, and in the church’s role in the world.9

Eight days after the Protestants rammed the cahier through the town council, they officially organized the Nîmes consistory, the governing body of the Protestant church. From March 1561 to February 1562, consistory records show, the top of the town’s elite, its judicial officials, finally converted to Protestantism, thus cementing the movement’s successes; by early 1562, 60 percent of the twenty-six présidial members had become Protestants. As conversions accelerated, Protestant power grew, and in late 1561 they took over Nîmes’s Catholic churches, including the cathedral and the chapel of the town hospital. Many clergy fled; some converted. Catholic control of the council lasted only one year: it was so unpopular that at the end of 1561, the crown authorized a special election, which brought the Protestants triumphantly to power. Thus by early 1562 Protestants had converted the key members of the elite, and by 1563, when the Protestants began to sell off church property, only a hard core of religious Catholics remained unconverted. Catholics became a minority among the elite: although they retained a significant minority presence on the présidial, they were a small minority among the town’s merchants, bourgeois, lawyers, and professionals and were concentrated in low-status occupations, including agriculture and lesser artisan trades, especially food trades such as bakers, butchers, and the like.10 Nonetheless, members of Nîmes’s political elite did not take over power in the town’s Protestant

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9 This paragraph and the next summarize the argument of my dissertation, and interested readers should refer to it for more information on these topics.

10 Catholics concentrating in the food trades was quite common in France: see, e.g., Penny Roberts, A City in Conflict: Troyes during the French Wars of Religion (Manchester, 1996), 126. For a table showing the process among Nîmes’s elite families, see Tulchin, “Reformation in Nîmes,” 355.
Instead, the merchants and bourgeois who were the consistory’s first leaders continued to lead it. Despite persistent tensions with the political elite of magistrates, they called on its assistance in dealing with political issues. In short, the two groups worked together to preserve the Protestant movement.

**Peacetime Struggles and the Victory of the Catholic Party**

The crown saw that letting Nîmes choose its own political leaders was a serious mistake; indeed, because of the mounting tide of heresy, the crown was in danger of losing control of the entire province of Languedoc. In 1563 the crown therefore named a new governor: Henri de Montmorency, seigneur de Damville. Damville began a progress through the province to survey his new domain. On November 16 Damville arrived in Nîmes, staging his own entry, accompanied by a small band of troops and a significant entourage of dignitaries, both civil and official, including members of the Parlement of Toulouse and several bishops. He promptly engineered the overthrow of the Protestant party and their replacement with Catholic consuls for the following year, 1564. He also ordered that the Catholic clergy be permitted to return. The new regime was led by Robert des Georges. Des Georges, like François de Gras, was a lawyer for the cathedral chapter. He had been one of the first people to complain about the growth of Protestantism in Nîmes.\(^\text{11}\) His selection showed that Damville was determined to put the Catholic leadership in charge. The new council duly began to rebuild Catholicism in Nîmes: it immediately reestablished the tradition of hiring a preacher for Lent and, in addition, paid a priest to say Mass every day in the cathedral. The council also hired a new, Catholic chaplain for the hospital.\(^\text{12}\)

The Catholic consuls could not pursue a completely hard-line policy. First, the council asked that “the garrisons of soldiers be removed, except that the château remain guarded.” Even the hard-line Catholic consuls felt that the troops were an expensive menace to local liberties. (Royal troops loose in the town were also likely to do more harm than good. Even if the council members had been prepared to toler-

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\(^{12}\) On the Lenten preacher, the priest at the cathedral, the hospital, and Tuffan, see AMN, LL10, fols. 7–8 and v, and fol. 10.
ate their presence, they knew well that moderates would be driven into the Protestant party if the troops stayed.) Second, the Observantine friars, whose monastery had been sacked by the Protestants, asked for alms so that they could pay to move back into town. The council replied that, given the charges for the king’s troops, they could not afford to assist them. Third, they never even discussed buying back the church property that the Protestants had sold off. In short, they were not such zealous Catholics that they were prepared to forgo any financial consideration or to renounce local autonomy. The trouble was that reconverting Nîmes would take a substantial financial investment, but the inevitable fiscal burden was likely to provoke so much resentment that the attempt would be counterproductive. Reestablishing Catholic worship, disavowing Protestant emissaries, and removing Protestants from positions of authority were satisfying victories, but they were unlikely to persuade many Protestants to return to the Catholic fold.

In late 1564 the crown was able to repeat its intervention into Nîmes’s consular elections, because the king himself, Charles IX, visited Nîmes in December, around election time. He ordered that two nominees be selected by lot for each position, with Governor Damville to make the final choice. Of the two candidates, Damville selected François de Gras to be first consul. De Gras was, along with his predecessor des Georges, the cathedral chapter’s lawyer: the result shows that Damville was again determined to keep the Catholic leadership in power and probably manipulated the lottery system to further his goal. (De Gras was eventually murdered in the Michelade.) Furious Protestant protests were of no avail. The new consuls undertook a new initiative, to petition the king for further help. They had three main demands: First, they wanted the Mass restored. Second, they insisted that the edicts of pacification be obeyed. Third, they wanted Protestants removed from the présidial court. However, this last demand required a substantial cash outlay, because the judges of the présidial would have to be reimbursed for the purchase price of their offices. The consuls wanted the crown rather than the town to foot the bill. Unsurprisingly, the crown refused this request.


14 On the king’s visit, see Ménard 4.15.58–67, 398–404. The original four candidates were François de Gras, Jean Gregoire, Louis Guiraud, and Barthélemy Bastid, dit Odoable. As a result of the Protestant protests, the second and fourth consuls were replaced—by Jacques Finor, bourgeois, and Pierre du Fesc, laboureur, who were equally Catholic. They all appear on several lists of contemporary Catholics, including that in Puech, “Débuts de la Réforme à Nîmes,” 181–83.

15 Ménard 4.15.68, 404–5, and Preuves, 327–28. It is indicative of the unusual religious
In March 1565, during a visit to Toulouse, Charles IX issued a decree that tried to redress Catholic grievances to some degree but that also showed the limitations of royal support for Catholicism in Nîmes. On the one hand, the king ordered that until Catholic worship was restored, the income from all benefices where the Mass was not being celebrated should be seized. On the other hand, he ordered that Protestants not be excluded from office because of their religion, that they be given two lots on which to build churches, and that royal troops be confined to barracks in the château. The Protestants proceeded to build on the sites allocated to them, and in a demonstration of their members’ prestige the first stones of the foundation were laid by President Guillaume Calvière, the presiding judge of the présidial court, along with Denis de Brueys, seigneur de Saint-Chaptes, the juge criminel, and other members of the court. In Nîmes, however, possession was nine-tenths of the law, and Charles’s other commands were not obeyed. Protestants had as little ability to force Catholics to share the council as Catholics did to force Protestants to give up their hold on benefices. If Catholics were going to improve their religious position, they would have to take measures that did not rely on Protestant cooperation.16

In late 1565 the crown intervened again and imposed its own Catholic group of men on Nîmes’s government.17 But this does not seem to have been enough for Nîmes’s increasingly frustrated Catholics: beginning in 1565, their leadership pursued bolder policies. Shortly after Charles IX’s decree, the Catholic church in Nîmes reasserted its authority and reestablished the Mass in the cathedral. In May 1566 the chapter published a schedule of masses, indicating which priest was assigned which week, and a priest, Julien Corbon (later murdered in the Michelade), and a boy were hired to improve the choir; at later meetings they hired more choirboys and an organist. Although the canons were prepared to vote collectively to restore the Mass, they were not necessarily willing to stick their necks out and perform the ceremony; throughout the summer and fall many of the canons failed to show up when it was their turn to perform the rite. Presumably, situation in Nîmes that although institutional rivalries between municipal governments and royal courts were common, it was far more common that the court was Catholic and the town’s government Protestant. Such rivalries were also associated with violence elsewhere in France, in the Protestant uprising in Toulouse in 1562, for example.  

16 Ménard 4.15.72, 406–8, and Preuves, 11 (laying the foundation stones), 328–30.
17 The new consuls were Jean Saurin, Jean de Combes, Louis Grimaldi, and Bernard Corconne. All of the new consuls except de Combes had attended the meeting in 1561 that marked the formation of the Catholic party in Nîmes. Corconne was also the only elector who defied the Protestant consensus and voted for the Catholic nominees for consul in 1561. On the elections, see Ménard 5.16.1, 1–2. For the first meeting of Catholics, see Puech, “Débuts de la Réforme à Nîmes,” 181. For Corconne’s voting, see AMN, L1.9, fols. 274–81.
standing at the altar, the priests felt like easy targets. Still, the situation gradually improved, and in early 1567 the chapter went even further, ordering the revival of a mass in honor of the Virgin and of the town’s Corpus Christi procession. In June 1566 the cathedral chapter also showed its frustration at the failed policy of the preceding years by taking out its anger on the Catholic leadership: it removed des Georges and de Gras from their positions as the chapter’s lawyers, complaining of their “notorious absences.” They were replaced by Guy de Rochette, another leading Catholic lawyer. He was younger than his predecessors. This may have made him more prepared to pursue more extreme policies: des Georges, for example, had first served as first consul in 1546 and thus perforce had long-standing connections with Protestants pre-dating the religious split.18

At the end of January 1566 Antoine de Crussol, a leading local nobleman, took credit for reestablishing the Mass in a letter to the king.19 But the tougher Catholic political line seems to predate his arrival, and therefore it seems likely that the new tone is due more to the efforts of local Catholics, whether lay or clerical, who were emboldened by Charles’s decree. More plausibly, Crussol, a moderate Calvinist who eventually returned to Catholicism, was happy to make it appear to the king that, despite his own views, he was prepared to permit a certain degree of freedom to Nîmes’s Catholics. It is also possible that this letter is part of his gradual shift to the Catholic side. The consistency with which the church’s lawyers became first consul suggests that the clergy was in charge of planning local Catholic strategy: naming them to the position may have been in effect a directive to the Catholic party to make those people its leaders. But that is only an inference, and it seems unlikely that the church could have risked alienating its embattled supporters with brusque commands. Instead, such decisions were probably the product of a collective process.

Protestants, of course, were unhappy with the new, bolder policies being pursued by their Catholic opponents in the council chamber and the cathedral. Attempting to undo the effects of the royal order, at the end of 1566 Protestants mounted a determined attempt to regain some of the power they thought their position in town entitled them to. They proposed appointing the seneschal, Jean (II) de Senneterre, to preside over the elections. This led to a complex series of negotiations: in the end, the Catholic party agreed to send two representatives to meet

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18 Millet, “City Converted,” 215–16 and n. 150. For des Georges’s previous service as consul, see Ménard 6, Successions généalogiques.
with two Protestants. The Protestants proposed splitting the four consul positions evenly between the two religions. Although the meeting took place, the Catholic representatives, once again the lawyers and former first consuls des Georges and de Gras, refused to make any concessions, and the meeting broke up without any agreement. Instead, the council chose an uncompromisingly Catholic slate for the next year. Rochette, newly chosen to be the lawyer for the cathedral chapter, was picked, by the suspicious workings of the lottery system, to be first consul.20

During 1567, increasingly bitter relations between the two religions across France made the resumption of civil war likely. The trouble began in 1565, when Spain destroyed a French colony on the Florida coast, beginning a chill in the relationship between Paris and Madrid. In the summer of 1565 the Duke of Alva, one of King Philip II of Spain’s chief advisers, met with Catherine de Medici and Charles IX at Bayonne. The talks resulted in no agreement. The following year, a Protestant revolt broke out in the Netherlands, and in the summer of 1567, on his way to repress the revolt, Alva led a Spanish army along France’s eastern frontiers. The presence of this large army worried even the French crown, and Alva’s purpose was yet more worrisome to the French Protestant party. The crown decided to raise troops, but the Catholic duc de Montmorency and the leading Protestant nobleman, the prince de Condé, fought over who would be in supreme command. Protestants were worried that royal troops could be turned against them if they were not in control; as the dispute continued, they even began to wonder whether Alva and Catherine had agreed to some secret plan of coordinated repression. To forestall any such plot, France’s Protestant leadership organized a nationwide rising for late September, called by historians the Second Civil War. A crucial part of the Protestant plan was an attempt (which failed) to kidnap the king.21

In Nîmes tensions were already high. Four successive groups of Catholic consuls had managed to reestablish a significant Catholic ritual presence in the town and to infuriate the town’s Protestants, but they had not made many converts, who might have strengthened their party. Nonetheless, the crown attempted to build up the Catholic party for the coming trial of strength. On April 10, 1567, as renewed

20 The other consuls included Jean Baudan, François Aubert, and Cristol Ligier. Baudan was also a vehement Catholic, as is evident from his fiercely Catholic will, which disinherited any of his sons should they desert the church. AMN, LL10, fols. 150–56, cited in Millet, “City Converted,” 188–89. For Baudan’s will see ADG, IIE36, vol. 058, fol. 617 (May 25, 1562).
civil war loomed, Charles IX issued letters patent directed to the seneschals, granting police powers to Nîmes’s consuls and the consuls of a number of other towns in the region. This undercut the authority of Nîmes’s Protestant-controlled présidial court. Some Protestants apparently feared that this was the signal for a new round of oppression, and word circulated that the Protestants meant to overthrow the government. In May the town council informed the royal lieutenant in Languedoc, the vicomte de Joyeuse, about these rumors, and asked for his assistance in quelling any potential revolt. He was unable to provide any: the situation was increasingly volatile, and he had few forces to spare. Grain prices also appear to have surged, which could hardly have helped induce a calmer atmosphere. At the same time in Nîmes, the king’s peace was endangered by disputes between the two commanders of the royal forces, Captains Bolhargues and La Garde. In May 1567 the town council became alarmed enough to attempt mediation. Given the growing hostility between the Protestant and Catholic parties in Nîmes and across France, these disputes were particularly worrisome for the town’s Catholic administration. In an effort to placate Bolhargues, the consuls asked for La Garde’s removal, but they failed to obtain it, and in any case their confidence in Bolhargues was misplaced. The dispute between the two captains greatly contributed to the breakdown of Catholic control and to the massacre that followed. The Protestant party was able to exploit the dispute to turn Bolhargues against his Catholic masters, to seize power, and to commit the Michelade.²²

The Uprising

The uprising in Nîmes was coordinated with the national Protestant plan. On September 27 Jacques de Crussol and his brother Gaillot came to Nîmes to pass the word about the nationwide rising that was

²² On police powers see Devic and Vaissete, Histoire générale de Languedoc, 9.39.28–29, and Ménard 5.16.11–12, 6–7. On dissension between the two captains, see Ménard 5.16.12, 7, and AMN, LL10, fol. 191: “Par M. le premier consul a été expouzé que en la present ville s’assemblent plusieurs gens qu’on ne peut savoir à quelles fins ne pourquoi ils y sont et d’ailleurs que entre le capitaine La Garde qui est logé au château et le capitaine Bollargues ont quelque differant et noise que pourroit causer a la ville une sedition et tumulte bien grand. Et a fin d’y proprement remedier seroit besoing en advertir Monsgr. de Joyeuse lieutenant pour le Roy en pays et gouvernement de Languedoc et depputer gens pour se transporter la part ou il sera. Led. de Gras a esté d’advis qu’il est expedient pour eviter l’inconvenient qui pourroit ensyvre d’envoyer promptement un homme espres par devers mon dit sieur de Joyeuse qui est à Lodun ou en Avignon afin qu’il lui plaise à pourvoir et mesmes de renier [i.e., discharge?] led. capitaine La Garde de sa garnison, attendu qu’il y a longuement demeuré et à ces fins a nommé M. le grenetier Combes.” The council followed this suggestion. Also cited in Millet, “City Converted,” 219, 229–30. For other examples of the role of urban militias in revolts, see William Beik, Urban Protest in Seventeenth-Century France: The Culture of Retribution (Cambridge, 1997), 79–94.
planned for the end of the month. The exact circumstances are hard
to determine, but it appears likely that the Crussols met with François
de Pavée, seigneur de Servas, who then took a leading hand in organiz-
ing the uprising. De Pavée, probably working with Robert LeBlanc,
the Protestant juge ordinaire of the présidial, managed to turn Captain
Bolhargues’s anger at his fellow captain into treachery to the Catho-
lic cause. Bolhargues’s position was complicated. He had first been
appointed captain of the town by Nîmes’s Catholic leadership in 1560.
The language of his 1559 marriage contract is entirely Catholic, and
most of the friends whom he chose to witness it were prominent Catho-
lings, including François de Gras, the future first consul and victim in the
Michelade. However, Bolhargues had also loyally served the Protestant
party after it took power in late 1561 and had served under de Pavée in
an expedition to support the Protestants of Beaucaire in 1562. In plot-
ing the Michelade, de Pavée probably asked LeBlanc to go with him
to meet Bolhargues because LeBlanc and Bolhargues had been friends
for years: LeBlanc was the only Protestant witness to Bolhargues’s mar-
riage contract. It is unclear whether Bolhargues persuaded his men to
follow him or simply took over the leadership of one of the Protestant
companies. In any case, his defection left the Catholic consuls with no
armed support apart from the troops in the château, who were soon
trapped there.

Once the uprising began and its leadership moved out into the
open, nearly everyone in Nîmes’s Protestant political—but not reli-
gious—elite formed a provisional governing committee, called the Mes-
sieurs by the populace. Virtually the entire Protestant membership of
the présidial was part of it, including President Guillaume Calvière.
Several of those who were not members of the présidial were former
consuls or otherwise socially prominent. A roster of Protestant perpe-

24 De Pavée, although a Protestant and an important person in Nîmes’s social hierarchy,
was not prominent in the consistory (he appears in the records only once, attending a meeting
with other notables). Millet, “City Converted,” 200, concludes that Robert LeBlanc, juge-ordinaire
of the présidial, was the host of the meeting, while Ménard argues that the rising was discussed at
LeBlanc’s but the massacre was planned at a more private meeting at de Pavée’s. For de Pavée, see
was asked to take on a financial post for the consistory, but refused (CR, vol. 1, fol. 154).
25 On Bolhargues’s appointment, see Puech, “Débuts de la Réforme à Nîmes,” 137. For
his wedding, not previously noticed by historians, see ADG, IIE 36, vol. 323, fol. 390 (contracted
on Dec. 17, 1559; the bride was Suffrenete du Valais). The other witnesses to the contract were
Tanequin Besserier, Pons Finor, François de Gras, and Jacques Rochemaure. For his actions
on behalf of the Protestant leaders of Nîmes, see Ménard 4.14.104, 15.14, 31. pp. 339, 363, 375. For a
summary of his career, see E. Haag and E. Haag, La France protestante (Paris, 1846–59), s.v. “Suau,
Mathieu,” which concludes, perhaps because the author was unaware that Suau was reappointed
captain of the militia, that he converted by 1565.
Table 1 Sociology of the Michelade in Nîmes, 1567

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Group</th>
<th>Nîmes Population</th>
<th>Alleged Victims (Catholics)</th>
<th>Alleged Perpetrators (Protestants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Cases</td>
<td>% Cases</td>
<td>% Cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. High status: officials, etc.</td>
<td>3 125</td>
<td>11 8</td>
<td>19 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Medical professions</td>
<td>2 86</td>
<td>0 2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Legal professions</td>
<td>9 379</td>
<td>25 18</td>
<td>30 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Education &amp; books</td>
<td>1 59</td>
<td>0 1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Clergy</td>
<td>3 115</td>
<td>27 20</td>
<td>1 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. All professions (lines 1–5)</td>
<td>19 784</td>
<td>62 46</td>
<td>53 118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plus other professions</td>
<td>8 331</td>
<td>8 6</td>
<td>15 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Merchants, bourgeois</td>
<td>26 1095</td>
<td>70 52</td>
<td>68 148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. All high status (lines 1–7)</td>
<td>1 36</td>
<td>0 2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Luxury trades</td>
<td>6 235</td>
<td>7 5</td>
<td>3 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Food, drink, groceries</td>
<td>9 363</td>
<td>5 4</td>
<td>7 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Leather trades</td>
<td>12 504</td>
<td>5 3</td>
<td>10 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Clothing and textiles</td>
<td>9 391</td>
<td>0 2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Building, wood, metal</td>
<td>36 1529</td>
<td>16 12</td>
<td>24 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. All artisans (lines 9–13)</td>
<td>35 1466</td>
<td>4 3</td>
<td>4 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Agriculture (e.g., laboureurs, travailleurs)</td>
<td>3 121</td>
<td>10 7</td>
<td>5 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Other (servants, military)</td>
<td>100 4231</td>
<td>100 74</td>
<td>100 219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: “Victims” includes all men who were alleged to have suffered at Protestant hands, whether they survived or not. “Perpetrators” includes all Protestant men who were alleged to have participated, even if (for example) they also helped some victims escape. For Nîmes population, see Tulchin, “Reformation in Nîmes,” chap. 1. For victims and perpetrators, figures are compiled from Ménard 5, Preuves, 24–71, combined with the depositions in ADG G442 and with the database I have compiled of all Nîmes wills and marriage contracts, 1550–62/63 (ADG series IIE). Three female victims are excluded from the above statistics. Percentages do not sum due to round-off error. The database is also discussed further in my dissertation (Tulchin, “Reformation in Nîmes”). Unknown occupations excluded.

The list of Messieurs shows how elite they were (table 1). However, this leadership represented the political, rather than the religious, leadership of the Protestant movement. Although most of the members of the Messieurs are mentioned in the minutes of the Protestant consistory, very few of them appear there as regular participants, or as early deacons, elders, or other officers of the church.26 By contrast, the consistory promptly

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26 For the list of Messieurs, see, e.g., Ménard 5.16.18, 18, and ADG, G442, fols. 47 and v; but the most complete list is in Millet, “City Converted,” 260. Millet’s list is rather misleading for occupations, since he calls all the doctors of law lawyers, even those who sat as judges on the présidial; compare it with the list of présidial members in Ann Guggenheim, “Calvinism and the Political Elite of Sixteenth-Century Nîmes” (PhD diss., New York University, 1968), 15. The only Protestant member who was not one of the Messieurs was Pierre Bompar, the avocat du roi (not
sent a representative to de Servas—which confirms that they saw him as
the leader—condemning the uprising. This was consistent with long-
standing policy, for the consistory had acted as a moderating force
since the movement’s earliest days. Furthermore, given the social divide
between the members of the consistory and the elite officials of the pré-
sidial, who, although Protestants, were only rarely officers of the consis-
tory, certain differences in approach were to be expected.

Given that the leadership of the revolt held so much institutional
power in Nîmes, it is not surprising that the violence in Nîmes was
fairly well organized. Once it began, the uprising consisted of five main
phases: (1) Protestant forces asserted their control by marching in the
streets and seizing the keys to the town gates. (2) They arrested many
Catholic leaders and clergy. (3) They imprisoned the arrested Catho-
lics, sorted them out using lists they compiled, and murdered those
whom they had selected. (4) They remade the sacred geography of
Nîmes, polluting the bishop’s palace and destroying churches and the
homes of leading Catholics. (5) They laid siege to the château.

The first phase of the uprising began on September 30, when Prot-
estant forces formed into regular companies and began to march about
the town. Little is known of their composition or training, but apart
from those who had served under Captain Bolhargues, most probably
lacked military experience, although a number of witnesses listed the
names of their captains. The troops were armed, but not identically.
As they marched, they shouted crude but effective slogans. Jeanne
Auberte reported that she heard loud noises coming from the street,
and after shepherding her children inside, she saw armed men heading
up the street shouting, “Close the shops!” Other witnesses heard the
Protestants saying, “To arms! To battle,” “Kill! Kill! Kill the papists!”

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27 For the consistory’s condemnation, see Ménard 5.16.18, 22, citing now-lost consistory
deliberations.

28 See Tulchin, “Reformation in Nîmes,” 329–30. In this they were following Calvin: see
Stuart Foster, “Pierre Viret and France, 1559–1565” (PhD diss., Saint Andrews University, 2000),
40–43. I consulted this dissertation at the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies at Calvin
College.

29 Catherine de Parades saw “a large troop of men at arms, some [with] pistols, arquebuses,
halberds, and others” (Ménard 5, Preuves, 42). There are a number of lists of the captains of the
Protestant companies. See, e.g., Ménard 5, Preuves, 30.
In one probably exceptional reference to the glory days that would follow a Protestant victory, the troops shouted, “Kill, kill! New world, new world!” All of the surviving reports come from hostile witnesses, but to judge from them, the Protestant forces’ anger far outweighed their eschatological hopes. The Protestants marched around town mainly to intimidate the Catholic community.\textsuperscript{30}

After asserting their control over the town’s streets, the Protestants sought to seize the keys to the town’s gates. Protestants and Catholics commonly tried to seize the gates as part of attempts to take over towns; they did so for both practical and symbolic reasons. In Nîmes, Protestant control of the gates meant that royal or other outside Catholic troops could not intervene to prevent the Protestants from taking whatever steps they wished. It also threatened Catholic residents, since they could not escape if the Protestants attempted to arrest or, as in the Michelade, murder them. Furthermore, in Nîmes, Catholics were heavily concentrated in agricultural occupations, which employed about one-third of the adult male population. When Protestants controlled the gates, they also controlled the agricultural workers’ access to their farms and gardens, their assets and their livelihoods. At the same time, possession of the keys to the town was an important attribute of sovereignty; normally, Nîmes’s consuls held the keys. Possession of the keys conferred legitimacy.\textsuperscript{31}

In Nîmes’s case, the keys were in the hands of Guy de Rochette, the first consul and the lawyer for the cathedral chapter. Our only account of what followed relies on the description provided by Blaise Valon, a servant of Rochette. According to Valon, Rochette took refuge at the house of his stepfather, Jean Gregoire, a merchant who was also a prominent Catholic and a former secretary of the bishop. When Protestant forces, led by Jacques de Possaco, a prominent merchant draper and early Protestant, showed up at the door demanding the keys, Catherine Valladier, Rochette’s mother, lied and insisted that he was not there. Rochette, accompanied by his half brother Robert Gregoire, decided nonetheless to leave the house, hoping to use his authority to order the Protestants to desist. To enhance his authority, Rochette put on the red robes that identified him as a consul and went

\textsuperscript{30} For the soldiers' cries, see Ménard 5.16.18, 11, and ADG, G442, fol. 68v, 80v, 91v.

\textsuperscript{31} In Poitiers, local tradition held that when a traitor tried to steal the mayor’s keys during the Hundred Years War, the statue of the Virgin Mary in the town’s cathedral took them into her hands for safekeeping. See Hilary Bernstein, “Politics and Civic Culture in Sixteenth-Century Poitiers” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1996), 328; for the Protestant takeover, see 315–16. In Dijon, Protestants raised barricades at each end of the rue des Forges, where they were numerous, according to James R. Farr, Hands of Honor: Artisans and Their World in Dijon, 1550–1650 (Ithaca, NY, 1988), 226.
with Gregoire to summon other town officials to assist him in restoring order, but he did not find any of them. He probably also carried the keys with him. He then went to plead even with the Protestant companies that he encountered as he walked, including those of Tanequin Finor, a Protestant apothecary, who threatened him for his pains. Similarly, Jean Bonaud, one of the captains of the Protestant forces, and Jean Bertrand, a prominent early Protestant who also took a leading role in the uprising, “turned their backs on him.” It seems odd that they did not arrest him; perhaps the leader of each Protestant company had an assigned task, and they were afraid of committing the fateful act of arresting the first consul without orders. Finally, Rochette went to the bishop’s palace, found Bishop Bernard d’Elbène, and cried, with tears in his eyes, that “he did not know what to do.” The bishop replied that they should pray, which they did in the front hall. At this point, according to Valon, Captain Bolhargues arrived, along with “two hundred” men, arrested them, and brought them back to the Gregoire house and locked them into the kitchen, before removing them to the house of Guillaume l’Hermite, an early Protestant who at one time had gone into exile in Geneva. Presumably, Bolhargues also took the keys to Nîmes’s gates, which were soon under Protestant control. Valon, some of the other servants, and the bishop managed to escape through a hole in the wall separating the palace from the house of Antoine de Brueys, a conseiller of the présidial court. De Brueys, a Protestant, hid them for the next several days but was nonetheless eventually condemned to death for his role in the Michelade.

32 Valon’s deposition is in ADG, G442, fol. 42–49v. For Jean Gregoire, notarial references refer to him as the bishop’s secretary from at least 1555 to 1562. See, e.g., ADG, IIE36, vol. 658, fol. 617 (May 25, 1562). He is also on a list of Catholic guards chosen to guard the town on Dec. 24, 1560, reprinted in Ménard 4, Preuves, 259. It is also likely that he was the second consul for 1559, although town council minutes give his name as Jean Gregoire, bourgeois (Ménard 6, Successions généalogiques). Valladier’s name comes from Ménard 5, Preuves, 71. Jacques de Possaco was named an adversaire at the first meeting of the Protestant consistory (CR, fol. 2). Valon describes Rochette as “portant toutjours son chaperon rouge de consul sur son espaulle.” (See also Ménard 5, Preuves, 42, 52, which confirm this detail.) Although I do not have much information on Firmin Chabassuti, Pierre Chabassuti, likely a close relative, was a notary and a prominent Catholic (Catholic guard, Ménard 4, Preuves, 259). Tanequin Finor’s last name is not given in the deposition, but he is the only apothecary of that first name known to me. He was a Protestant as of 1562 (CR, fol. 94) and a member of a prominent family that included Jacques (second consul in 1540, 1547, 1558, and 1565) and Pons, a bourgeois. Pierre Finor, a greffier in the next generation, was second consul in 1596, and his daughter’s godfather was Pierre Suau’s (i.e., Captain Bolhargues’s) son (Puech, Une ville, 219–20).

33 For Bonaud, see Ménard 5, Preuves, 30; for Bertrand, see Preuves, 57, CR, fol. 1. L’Hermite is recorded arriving in Geneva on Oct. 16, 1559: see Paul-F. Geisendorf, ed., Livre des habitants de Genève, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1957–63), 1:211, and in consistory records on Mar. 28, 1562, CR, fol. 107v. De Brueys was a Protestant. Ménard 5.16.18, 13, mistakenly gives de Brueys’s first name as André. His assistance is attested to by both Jean Tardeau (Preuves, 25) and Pierre Journet (46). For his religious affiliation, see CR, fol. 106 (attended consistory meeting). For De Brueys’s condemnation, see Ménard 5.16.43, 44.
I hesitate to accept Valon’s account, although Rochette’s presence at the palace is confirmed by another witness. It seems too perfect. Certainly, it was normal for an official in Rochette’s position to clothe himself in the robes that signified his authority and to try to rally the town’s officials, but Rochette’s attempt to reason with armed Protestant forces seems foolhardy. Similarly, the scene of the arrest, with Rochette and the bishop discovered on their knees in prayer, seems tinged with sanctimony. In short, Valon’s account is dubious, although it does depict how Catholics wished to imagine their leaders behaving. As such, it is revealing. According to Valon, Rochette was a perfect martyr: he carried no weapon and used no threats. He was a loyal son of the church, but in this account not its lackey by any means, since he turned to the bishop only when he could do nothing further himself. At the same time, Rochette’s actions risked further inflaming the Protestants’ anger against the bishop and clergy: since Rochette knew the Protestants were pursuing him to get the keys, his decision to find the bishop only ensured that the bishop would be delivered into Protestant hands. Perhaps Rochette meant to warn Bishop d’Elbène that ruin was upon them. Certainly, he did not ask the bishop for assistance, nor did he receive any: if he had wanted something other than prayer, he did not complain when prayer was all he got. The image of the company at prayer right inside the bishop’s front door suggests that they anticipated their arrest. Other Catholic accounts of martyrdom suggest a yearning to die, to replicate and thus to activate in the present Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. Something similar seems at work in the report that Father Jean Quatrebars, prior of the Augustinian monastery in Nîmes, when trying to hearten his fellow prisoners on the way to their execution, “exhorted them to patience, telling them that he saw the heavens open to receive them.” It is worth noting that Quatrebars’s statement was broadly Christian rather than narrowly sectarian—and therefore he was sending a message directed as much to his Protestant captors as to his Catholic flock.

In some instances, even when Catholics escaped death, they were anxious to show that their deliverance was not due to the merciful

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34 Ménard 5, Preuves, 46–47. The other witness was Journet; his account lacks Valon’s colorful detail. Ménard 5.16.18, 12–13, accepts Valon’s account absolutely and even heightens it. For information on Tardeau, see his deposition in Ménard 5, Preuves, 25–27; and Puech, “Débuts de la Réforme à Nîmes,” 195.

35 On Catholic martyrdom, see Brad S. Gregory, Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe (Cambridge, 1999), 250–314, esp. 274 (killing at prayer) and 279–80 (longing for death). Quatrebars’s quote is from Ménard 5, Preuves, 52–55. In French, “Cathrebars donnoit coeur auxdicts catholiques, et les exhortoit à patience, leur disant qu’il voyoit les cieux ouverts pour les recepvoir.”
behavior of Protestants. That would have given their opponents too much credit. Instead, they attributed their survival to the effect of other Protestant vices, including avarice and perfidy. According to Pierre Journet, a clerk who worked for one of the bishop’s aides, when Protestant forces came to présidial member Antoine de Brueys’s house looking for the bishop and the little troop of Catholics hiding there, de Brueys advised them to bribe the attackers. A bargain was agreed on. The bishop paid sixty ecus for his release, and correspondingly lesser sums were negotiated for the others. The Catholics handed over everything they had, including some of their clothes. The Protestants dumped the bishop and his manservant outside of town. The others were taken away and murdered. Journet explained that he had survived only because the Protestants, having wounded him in the side and the thigh, had left him for dead on the stairs in de Brueys’s house.36

In the second phase of the Michelade, after the Protestant forces had taken control of the gates, they arrested other prominent Catholics. François de Gras, the ex-consul, was also a target. Guillaume l’Hermite arrived with a body of Protestant forces to search de Gras’s house and that of his neighbor François le Roux. After their search was completed, l’Hermite told de Gras that he had to come with them because someone wanted to speak to him. Antoinette de Massilhan, de Gras’s wife, then started to cry, but de Gras replied that he had to go see what they wanted, adding that “our Lord will guard [me], and [I] can only die once.” Presumably, this remark was intended to tell his wife to be brave in the face of their enemies—it could hardly have reassured her. L’Hermite wanted to take Jean Canonge, the tutor to de Gras’s children, as well, but de Gras prevailed on him to let him stay, saying that there was no other man in the house. De Gras was then taken to l’Hermite’s house.37

It seems clear that the Protestant leadership intended to institute a general roundup of Catholic lay and clerical leaders. Protestant forces targeted at least eight of the sixteen men who had served as consul between 1564 and 1567, when Catholics had been in power. Although only Rochette and de Gras were killed, all of Rochette’s fellow consuls were arrested.38 Similarly, of the nine Catholic members of the présidial, 36 Ménard 5, Preuves, 47.
37 Jean Canonge’s deposition is in ADG, G442, fols. 113v–118v. (In French, the quotation reads “disant que Nre. Sr. le garderoit et qu’il ne pouvoit mourir que une foys.” De Gras’s wife’s name comes from Ménard 5, Preuves, 71. The incident is also in Ménard 5.16.18, 14.
38 Ménard 5.16.18, 21. The other consuls who were victims were Étienne André (Ménard 5, Preuves, 60); Jean Voluntat (ADG, G442, fol. 124v); Jean Saurin (Ménard 5, Preuves, 28); and Bernard Corconne (ADG, G442, fols. 69v–71). Interestingly, there is no evidence that Robert des Georges, first consul in 1564 and de Gras’s colleague as lawyer for the cathedral chapter,
only two do not appear among the victims, although a number of them managed to escape and only one, Jacques Barrière, paid for his religion with his life. He fled to the land he owned near Calvisson, but the Protestants seized him there.\textsuperscript{39}

In the third phase of the Michelade, once the Catholics were under arrest, the Protestant forces imprisoned them while attempting to decide their fate. Some of those arrested were taken to Pierre Cellerier’s house, as well as to the town hall and to Guillaume l’Hermite’s house. Cellerier, a jeweler, was like l’Hermite an early, prominent Protestant. The prisoners’ conditions were arduous. Most of the surviving evidence concerns conditions in the town hall, although Nicolas Pradier, the secretary of the town council, who saw Gregoire and Rochette escorted to the town hall, refused to watch them leave because “he did not dare leave his room, for fear of being massacred with them.” Rochette and Gregoire were kept separately from the many other prisoners, who were confined upstairs and in the basement. The lower chamber, although in the end a safer holding place, had a sinister reputation, since it was used as an abattoir to butcher animals for the sick during Lent. The symbolism was surely not accidental. For much of the first day, as they awaited their fate, no one came to see them. This must have been disquieting, since it implied that the leaders wanted to kill them, rather than to interrogate them. Apparently no food was brought to the prisoners: Pradier said that they were “dying of hunger.” Moreover, the Messieurs taunted them. Cellerier, perhaps referring to the abattoir where the prisoners were held, suggested that they should eat a large meal of meat (\textit{grand chere}); they replied that they were in no position to do so. Cellerier reassured them with deliberate ambiguity, saying that they would “leave very soon,” but he did not say whether they would be released from custody or from life. In short, their imprisonment was designed to terrify even those Catholics who were not destined to be killed.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{39} The two were Tanequin Besserier and Jean-Poldo d’Albenas. For a list of Catholic members of the \textit{présidial} as of 1560, see Guggenheim, “Calvinism and the Political Elite,” 223. Of the eleven she lists, two, Pierre Robert and Robert de Brueis, had died and been replaced by Protestants before 1567 (Puech, “Débuts de la Réforme à Nîmes,” 84, and \textit{Une ville}, 80), unless Ménard (5.16.18, 14) is correct and de Brueis had been replaced by George Gevaudan, who was arrested as a Catholic in the Michelade. Guggenheim, “Calvinism and the Political Elite,” notes, 192n, 193, cites Ménard 5.16.18, 10, that Barrière, Ruffi, Jean de Montcalm, and d’Albenas fled town during the Michelade. The others were Honoré Richier (ADG, G442, fol. 72); Pierre Vallete (Ménard 5.16.18, 14); and Pierre Saurin (Ménard 5.16.18, 20, 10, 26).

\textsuperscript{40} For evidence of Cellerier’s Protestantism, see CR, fol. 17v. For Pradier’s testimony, see Ménard 5, \textit{Preuves}, 55. In French, “tous lesdicts prisonniers furent menés les ungs après les aul-
tres au supplice, mais qui le conduisit, dict ne le scavor ... car n’osoit il qui dépose sourir de sa
chambre, de peur d’estre massacré avec eulx.” For the use of the basement and for the statement
The leaders of the conspiracy had prepared for the arrests. First consul Rochette’s servant Blaise Valon testified that he saw Guillaume Calvière, the president of the présidial, holding a list of Protestants who were to be armed. Similarly, prisoners who were scheduled to die were also placed on a list, although since many of those arrested were not killed, there was probably some confusion or conflict among the Protestant leaders about some of the prisoners’ ultimate fates. In the middle of the night of September 30, groups of soldiers, including Cellerier, consulting their lists, removed some of the most prominent Catholic officials, including Rochette and de Gras, as well as the priests whom they had detained in the basement of the town hall. Their officers moved them to the courtyard of the bishop’s palace, a large open area with a well in the center. There they were killed, by sword, dagger, or pistol, and their bodies dumped down the well. Jean Rovyer, a leatherworker, testified that he saw the area the following day, “all covered with blood and the water of the well all red, and he saw several dead bodies in it.” Jean Vallat, a merchant, claimed that he had gone to see the well afterward, and there were “certain loud noises” coming from it, which gave him “a great fright and made his hair stand on end.”

Another witness, Pierre Rovyer, claimed that his stepfather, Pierre du Fesc, had told him that he had seen the bodies being tossed in and had counted 108 of them. Jean Rovyer claimed to have heard from another leatherworker that Jacques d’Estenet, a gardener, and Guillaume l’Hermite were responsible for most of the dirty work. Another witness, Jean Bouze, gave a list of more than a dozen perpetrators. He named some wealthy men, like the Protestant Jean Bertrand, but most were more modest men: leatherworkers, hosiers, and other artisans. They were more suitable for such disagreeable tasks. There appears to have been an element of inversion in the choice of the bishop’s palace for the murders: the aim was to destroy the Catholic party at the site most closely associated with its power.41

41 On the list of those to be arrested, see ADG, G442, fol. 120v; for Jean Rovyer, see ADG, G442, fol. 89; for Vallat, see fol. 52v–53. In French, “passant une foys aupres dicelluy ouys quelque grand bruit venant dud. puys comme aussi ceulx de lad. religion novelle disoient publicquement avoir ouy led. grant bruict que occasionna de se arrester ung peu aupres led. puys pour scavoir si cella estoit veritable, et treuva qu'il estoit ainsin, et entendist comme dit est led. bruit tel quy faisait frayeur bien grande et eliser les poilhz.” For Pierre Rovyer, see fol. 79; for Bouze, see Ménard 5, Preuves, 59. For the rest, see Ménard 5.16.18, 16–17.
In one respect the Protestant party showed both mercy and practicality: they attacked only men, not women. Indeed, a prominent Protestant leader, the lawyer Charles Rozel, warned some women to lock themselves behind their doors to protect themselves. That does not mean that Catholic women were exempt from suffering: they lost husbands, sons, and so forth. When Rochette’s and Gregoire’s mother and stepfather heard the rumor of their deaths, they broke into loud laments, exclaiming that they had “no other children.” Furthermore, although women were not targeted for arrest, they were imprisoned if they did not obey the new regime. Jeanne Corconne attempted to leave town, since her husband had fled for Beaucaire and she wanted to live “according to God’s commandments.” She was arrested on the road and brought back to Nîmes. On this occasion Charles Rozel was not so gallant: he told Corconne that her husband was “a wicked papist.” She spent several days in jail, along with a number of other women, before being released. The primary goal was to drive the Catholics from power, not to kill them all.  

The Messieurs claimed to have no doubt that they would be obeyed: one of them, Jean Bertrand, boasted that “there is no reason to fear the populace, because they will not do anything that we and the other officers and principals of the long and short robes do not make them do.” Nonetheless, they performed their most shocking acts at night, because, as another Protestant, Jacques Nicot, explained, they did not want to “scandalize the people.” Fearing the authorities, they also hesitated to sign orders that might later incriminate them. When Catherine de Parades demanded a signed order before she would pay a special tax on Catholics, Pierre Rozel, brother of Charles and also a member of the Messieurs, replied, “Would you do it if you were in our place?” Rozel also worried about spies. Most witnesses insisted that the Messieurs were in complete control and therefore completely responsible at all times. One witness, Vidal Caintemesse, a merchant, said that “the ordinary people [menu peuple] were upset on two separate occasions last summer and took up arms against the soldiers of the garrison” and that the elite had repressed them then, so it was obvious that if there was rebellion now, they could have controlled it.  

The witnesses were anxious to see as many Protestant leaders as possible

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42 For Rochette and Gregoire’s parents’ reaction, see ADG, G442, fol. 45v. For Corconne’s story, see Ménard 5, Preuves, 40. Ménard also comments that women were not the principal objects of Protestant aggression: see 5.16.18, 22. For Rozel’s warning to the women, see ADG, G442, fol. 92. Cf. Davis, “Rites of Violence,” 175.

43 For Bertrand’s comment, see ADG, G442, fol. 56v; for Nicot’s, fol. 65v; for Rozel’s, Ménard 5, Preuves, 43, and for a similar comment, 38; for Rozel’s concern about spying, 57; and for Caintemesse’s comment, ADG, G442, fol. 99v, cited in Millet, “City Converted,” 229.
punished, but they do not appear to have improved on the evidence. Some Catholics did escape despite the wishes of the Messieurs. Some Protestants, for example, were unwilling to participate in the round-ups and even helped Catholics escape. Pierre Blaise, one of the bishop’s servants, escaped by finding refuge with a man named Jean, a Protestant baker. This case is striking, since Blaise’s ignorance of the man’s last name suggests that they did not know each other well, although it is possible that Blaise was deliberately keeping the name of this particular Protestant from the authorities. Louis Blachière was on his way to being killed, so he thought, when “someone called Christol, a wool carder, son of Simon Vidalot the butcher,” a member of the Protestant companies, came up to him, said that “this one should not be killed,” and led him back to prison. Blachière was eventually released. Again, the hesitant way Blachière named his savior suggests that they were not well acquainted, but it is possible that Christol meant that Blachière should be spared because he was not on the official list. In other cases, friends and neighbors assisted Catholics in making their escape. Jean de Roverie, the seigneur de Cabrières, hid in a well while Protestants searched his house; then he fled to a neighbor’s. Father Jean Bompar pretended that he wanted to pay his debts before he died and asked to see Louis Pillet, a tanner, to pay him. Pillet brought his “grand ami le Bastel,” who was in Captain Bolhargues’s company, and they arranged to bring Bompar to the house of Robert LeBlanc, one of the principal organizers of the conspiracy, where he was hidden. Nor was LeBlanc the only high-ranking Protestant to hide Catholics: Jean-Guy d’Airebaudouze, a Protestant conseiller of the présidial, warned his neighbor Jeanne Auberte that she should hide her husband, Jean Vallat, at her brother-in-law’s house. D’Airebaudouze was later condemned for his role in the massacre and named as a member of the Messieurs. Unlike LeBlanc, he did not run the risk of taking a Catholic into his own household. Finally, some Catholics escaped by using their own wits: for example, Father Jean Vincens hid in the suburbs and pretended to be a cook in an inn. In short, despite Protestant efforts at efficiency, events—in particular, deciding who lived and who died—were only partially in their control.44

In the fourth phase of the Michelade, once the town was in Prot-
estant hands and the Catholic leadership had been imprisoned, exiled, or killed, the Protestants remade the sacred geography of Nîmes to deny the Catholics any focal point for a revival. In the following days, the Protestant leaders ordered every church in town destroyed, except one, Sainte-Eugénie, which they used as a space in which to make gunpowder. They destroyed churches even on Sunday. They also destroyed the bishop’s palace and houses belonging to priests and some lay Catholics in the town and its suburbs. They burned all of the church furniture and many ecclesiastical records and pillaged the houses of some rich Catholics. Some of the stone from the churches was sold to builders. There were impositions on laypeople as well. While everyone in town was ordered to pay special taxes to support the Protestant forces, Catholics were ordered to pay especially high taxes, to hand over ecclesiastical revenues, and to support soldiers billeted in their houses. Those who complained were given more soldiers to feed. Beyond these semilegal exactions, there was also out-and-out looting. Jacques Saurin saw one of Captain Bolhargues’s servants wearing first consul Guy de Rochette’s turquoise ring, and Father Bompar had his purse taken. The leaders of the Michelade had little incentive to repress looting: they wanted to terrify the Catholics into submission. Overall, Protestants directed their destructive energies more at the property of Catholic clergy than at the lay leadership. Some of their hatred arose from disgust at the notion of the special holiness that Catholics supposedly claimed for themselves but that Protestants believed was the privilege of all Christians. But at least some Protestant leaders also believed that the church sustained the Catholic party in crucial ways and hoped that, shorn of this support, it would collapse. As one of the Messieurs, the présidial conseiller Jean de Sauzet, commented, “The nests must be destroyed, so that the birds will not return.”

Certainly, the killings were in at least one respect counterproductive, because they delayed the fifth phase of the Michelade, an assault on the garrison in the château. The Protestants’ delay cost them the advantages of surprise. In any case, seizing the château must have seemed a risky undertaking, given the inexperienced troops the Protestants had to command. The killings put the garrison on notice that the

45 For the destruction of the churches, see Ménard 5.16.22, 27–28, and of houses, ADG, G442, fol. 88; in suburbs, see fol. 104v; on Sunday, see fol. 48; on taxes and billeting, see Preuves, 35, 37–38, and ADG, G442, fols. 58, 60 (a litany of impositions that concludes, “bref, n’ont omis lesd. Messieurs user en endroict desd. catholiques d’aucune espesse de cruauté qu’ilz ayent peu exeger”). For Rochette’s ring, see Preuves, 32; for Bompar’s purse, 24. For another example, see 55. On the tendency of Protestants to attack priests, see Davis, “Rites of Violence,” 159–60, 179.
46 Millet, “City Converted,” 196, makes this point.
conspirators meant business. But the defenders refused to be intimidated: the garrison held out for six weeks, despite repeated calls for it to surrender. At the same time, a Catholic force from Tarascon could not relieve the defenders. Instead of trying to storm the citadel, the Messieurs ordered trenches dug, at which Catholics were required to work or to pay to have substitutes. President Guillaume Calvière of the présidial court oversaw the digging. On November 10 the garrison, running out of food, gave up, despite the exhortations of Captain La Garde. Terms were eventually agreed on. The captain and nine soldiers could leave with all of their arms and baggage, while the rest of the garrison was limited to its swords and daggers. The Catholics who had escaped the massacre were permitted either to return to Nîmes and promised safety or to leave, at their choice. The actual surrender occurred on November 15.47

Nationwide, the Second Civil War ended in a peace settlement, signed at Longjumeau in March 1568. This essentially restored the status quo, but was the merest pause, for hostilities resumed in September.48 Nor did the Michelade inaugurate a long period of Protestant rule in Nîmes. Royal troops entered the town in June 1568, and an edict of the Parlement of Toulouse, issued on March 18, 1569, condemned more than one hundred people to death for their participation. Many of them had had little or nothing to do with the massacre: the authorities seem, on principle, to have put every prominent Protestant on the list, including the clergy. Most of those named fled, but four men—only one of whom, Charles Rozel, a member of the Messieurs and a longtime Protestant leader, was an important figure in the Michelade—were caught, transported to Toulouse, and executed. Their heads were returned to Nîmes and mounted on the four principal gates of the town. But the Catholic triumph did not last long, either: on November 15, 1569, Protestant forces seized Nîmes again, this time for good. This takeover was accompanied by a second massacre, of equal or greater size. Contemporary accounts suggest that 100–150 more Catholics were murdered. Others were held for ransom. (Since the uprising was successful, and the victorious Protestants had no incentive to investigate themselves, this second massacre is poorly documented.) After this second bout of violence, Nîmes became a Protestant-ruled town for a century.49

48 Holt, French Wars of Religion, 65.
49 Ménard 5.16.27, 45–44, and 51, 31–33, 42–45, and 50–56, and Preuves, 70–74. The three others executed were Jacques Andron, a conseiller of the présidial court; Lazare Fazendier, a retired legal official (greffier); and Claude Garnier, a notary. Ménard (following a journal in vol. 4, Preuves,
Catholics, Protestants, and Motives

It is impossible to determine exactly how many people died, but the surviving records indicate that about seventy-five people suffered at the hands of the Messieurs, and about half of them were killed (tables 1–2). It is unclear whether the discrepancy between contemporary estimates of one hundred killed and only about one-third that many known victims is due to defects in the statistics, contemporary exaggeration of the death toll, or both. It is also possible that the figure of one hundred killed is too low: one source suggests that eighty to ninety soldiers were killed outside of town, at Sommières and in other nearby villages. Unnamed victims were probably less prominent than those whose names we do know, but the statistics suggest strongly that the Michelade was a conflict among the elite. Three-quarters of both the victims and the alleged perpetrators belonged to high-status professions, including officials, lawyers, merchants and bourgeois, and — on the Catholic side — clergy. The two groups were also sharply different in other ways: most important, the relative size of the two groups shows that the Catholic community had become a distinct minority in town, even though most of our information is derived from Catholic survivors, who identified members of their own party more often than their persecutors. (It is also true that the depositions were collected to assemble a list of those responsible, which may have biased the sample in the opposite direction.) In percentage terms, moreover, Catholics were overwhelmingly concentrated in the clergy and legal professions, while Protestants, although equally well represented in the law, had far more officials on their side than Catholics did. All in all, Catholic victims in Nîmes appear to have been much more elite than Protestant victims of Catholic massacres elsewhere. Among the alleged perpetrators, the Protestant clergy was notably absent from participation, which makes sense given the consistory’s condemnation of the uprising. As noted earlier, about half of all recent Catholic consuls were singled out for arrest, and more than three-quarters of all Catholic members of the présidial were. By contrast, only about one-fifth of Nîmes’s priests were imprisoned. Yet their death rate was much higher, since the

15) estimates the dead in 1569 at 100–120; Jacques-Auguste de Thou, Histoire universelle (London, 1734), 5:652, following La Popelinière, suggests 150.
50 Ménard 4, Preuves, 8 (journal of Jacques Davin).
51 Tulchin, “Reformation in Nîmes,” 76, discusses the number of priests resident in Nîmes. Although only a hundred clergy appear in notarial records in the period 1550–63, judging by population, it seems likely that there were at least double that number. Many no doubt fled during the troubles, and a good number also converted. Judging from the minutes of the cathedral chapter, whose meetings were fairly well attended, many of Nîmes’s priests appear to have returned
Table 2  Deaths in the Michelade by occupational category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High status: officials, etc.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>J. Barrière</td>
<td>présidial conseiller</td>
<td>Preuves, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G. Rochette</td>
<td>first consul, lawyer</td>
<td>Preuves, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal professions</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>C. Chimieu</td>
<td>notary, sec. of bishop</td>
<td>Preuves, 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F. de Gras</td>
<td>lawyer</td>
<td>Preuves, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>? Ginestot</td>
<td>clerk</td>
<td>Preuves, 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R. Gregoire</td>
<td>lawyer</td>
<td>Preuves, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>? Luchet</td>
<td>solliciteur</td>
<td>Preuves, 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>J. Saissac</td>
<td>solliciteur</td>
<td>Preuves, 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>J. Alesti</td>
<td>canon</td>
<td>Preuves, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A. André</td>
<td>curé of Millau</td>
<td>Preuves, 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A. Blanchon</td>
<td>canon</td>
<td>Preuves, 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>J. Corbon</td>
<td>singer at cathedral</td>
<td>Preuves, 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>L. de Rocles</td>
<td>curé of cathedral</td>
<td>Preuves, 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A. du Prix</td>
<td>canon</td>
<td>Preuves, 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M. du Prix</td>
<td>priest</td>
<td>Preuves, 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P. Folcrand</td>
<td>Augustinian monk</td>
<td>Preuves, 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>? Guillaume</td>
<td>Franciscan</td>
<td>Preuves, 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E. Mazoyer</td>
<td>canon</td>
<td>Preuves, 60</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T. Mosque</td>
<td>chaplain of bishop</td>
<td>Preuves, 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>J. Paberan</td>
<td>vicar-general of bishop</td>
<td>Preuves, 27</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>J. Quatrebras</td>
<td>Augustinian prior</td>
<td>Preuves, 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N. Sausset</td>
<td>prior of Jacobins</td>
<td>Preuves, 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 hebdomadiers</td>
<td>G442, fol. 122v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High status: artisans</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A. Michel</td>
<td>jeweler</td>
<td>Preuves, 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food, drink, groceries</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A. Faure</td>
<td>baker</td>
<td>Preuves, 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other artisans (textiles and leather)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>J. des Aurieres</td>
<td>brodeur/vaneur</td>
<td>Preuves, 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>J. des Ollieres</td>
<td>cordwainer</td>
<td>Preuves, 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>L. Doladille</td>
<td>silkworker</td>
<td>Preuves, 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B. du Faux</td>
<td>cobbler</td>
<td>Preuves, 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A. Farelle</td>
<td>cobbler</td>
<td>Preuves, 71</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G. Guerinot</td>
<td>leatherworker</td>
<td>Preuves, 57</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>? Vidal</td>
<td>soldier of garrison</td>
<td>Preuves, 54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (unknowns excluded)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M. Benezet</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Preuves, 55</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>J. Bonhomme</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>Preuves, 54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>37</td>
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</table>
Notes: This list differs from both Millet, "City Converted," 254–55, and Ménard 5.16.18, 22–23, which is why I have taken some care to give the sources for each reference. Names listed in Ménard and/or Millet but not here were omitted because I was unable to substantiate them. Preuves refers to Ménard, vol. 5; G442 refers to ADG, G442, the additional depositions. Preuves, 71, refers to a petition, reproduced by Ménard, which includes a list of victims compiled by the Parlement of Toulouse as part of the court case against the perpetrators. Most individuals are referred to multiple times in the records, although for reasons of space only one source is given; printed references in the Preuves are always preferred if available, since they are easier to check. First names are abbreviated; unknown first names are indicated with a question mark. In a very few cases, where the identification seemed sure, I have silently filled in a missing occupation using the notarial database. I also include the four unnamed clergymen separately, as Millet does, although it is possible that they are wholly or in part the same as some of the clergy listed by name. Jean des Aurieres is listed in Ménard and Millet as Jean "des Fantaisies," which was his nickname; it is possible that Jean des Oliieres, listed separately here and by them, is really just a corrupt spelling of the same person (especially since only Ménard's text, not the source document, gives his occupation). The two men of unknown occupation are included under "other" but not counted when calculating the percentages.

overwhelming majority of officials were eventually released, while most priests, once caught, were killed. As Millet has noted, many of these were associated with the public performance of the Mass, including (as mentioned earlier) Julien Corbon, hired for the choir. Millet infers from the high death rate among priests that the primary goal of killing them was to silence the Mass in Nîmes forever. He therefore argues that religion was a more important motive than politics in provoking the massacre.\textsuperscript{52}

Assessing human motivation is inevitably difficult, particularly in a tumultuous event like the Michelade. Many people were involved in its planning and execution, and there is no reason to believe that any one of them participated for one single reason. Furthermore, religion and politics were thoroughly intertwined in the sixteenth century. There is plenty of evidence for both religious fervor and political passion among the participants. One anonymous contemporary listed six motives for the Michelade: (1) the wrong done to a female gardener, whose harvest was stolen by members of the garrison; (2) the tyranny of the Catholics, who had usurped the consulate; (3) the Protestant prince de Condé's national plan for Protestants to take up arms; (4) quarreling between two leading families, the Catholic d'Albenas and the Protestant Calvières, headed by Guillaume Calvière, the president of the présidial; (5) the Protestants' getting wind of a plan for a Catholic counterattack, before 1567. On the occupational breakdown of Protestant victims, see Davis, "Rites of Violence," 177 (here she disagrees with Janine Garrisson-Estèbe); and Philip Benedict, Rouen during the Wars of Religion (Cambridge, 1981), 76, 128.

\textsuperscript{52} Millet, "City Converted," 184–87, 191–92, 207–8, 221–23.
planned for the same time; and (6) the desire to avenge previous massacres of Protestants elsewhere in France. Several of these motives have been discussed already; the first and fifth do not appear to be substantiated by outside evidence, and the fourth is discussed below. Several participants are also quoted in the depositions offering their own explanations. Captain Bolhargues implied that the massacre was a matter of revenge (the sixth reason), because “the papists did the same thing throughout France.” Bernard Arnaud, one of the leading Micheladeurs (he was in charge of guarding the Bocarié gate), put it differently. He saw it as a question of survival: “Either [we] will be their heirs, or the Catholics will be [ours].” Once Protestants knew that war was coming anew, they must have viewed the Catholic elite as the potential nucleus of a fifth column, should Catholic forces threaten the town. Similarly, Jean Vallat reported that he was menaced because he “supported those of [Catholic-controlled] Beaucaire, whom they called enemies.” Both of these are rather secular, or political, interpretations of the conflict. Some Catholics failed to see the logic of this position. When Jean Rovyer was threatened by Protestant forces, who said to him that they wanted to cut his throat and throw him down the well because he was a papist, he replied that he “had not done wrong or displeased anyone in the world.” Still, it is striking how many imprisoned Catholic laypeople were released. Some Catholics may have been spared because the Protestants hoped that they would be potential candidates for conversion. Vidal Caintemesse was taken to hear a Protestant service and then taken out to dinner at an inn and urged to sign up. Protestants could also force Catholic laypeople to pay the many onerous expenses of war. Vallat also reported that when people complained to the Messieurs about the impositions, they replied that “they had had too much mercy in saving their lives, and they were papists and they wanted to ruin them entirely.”

It seems clear that one cause of the Michelade was that the Protes-

53 Ménard 5, Notes sur l’histoire de Nîmes, 1–5, exp. 2.
54 Bolhargues is quoted in Ménard 5, Preuves, 25. The original reads, “l’on faisoit le samblable par tout le royaume de France, pour aultant que les papistes avoient faict plusieurs massacres contre ceulx de leur religion, volant dire des huguenots, a occasion desquels massacres l’on avoit emeu sedition par tout le royaume de France.” Bernard Arnaud, seigneur de la Cassagne, quote from ADG, G442, fol. 56: “Il fallot qu’il feussent leurs heretiers ou que les catholicques feussent les leurs.” The Vallat quotations are from fols. 52, 60 and v: “il entretenoit ordinairement ceulx de Beaucaire, qu’il appeloinent ennemis,” and “lors que comme dessus a dit qu’il s’alloit plaindre aud. Messieurs à lad. maison consulaire qu’ilz respondoent à pleuseurs catholicques s’allans plaindre à eulx qu’il leur auvoient faict trop de grace de leur avoir sauvé la vie, et qu’ils estoient papistes et les voloent ryner entierement.” Rovyer quote is from fol. 90: they said, “huy vouloient le coup-ple la gorge et getter dans le pays, pour ce qu’il estoit ung papiste. Sur quo, il leur remonstra qu’il n’avoit fait tort ny deplesir à personne du monde.”
tants of Nîmes felt deprived of what they saw as their right to rule. There was a long history of conflict over the composition of the town council in the years preceding the Michelade, which surely was a major cause of frustration on the part of leading Protestants. Millet argues that the massacre, which he sees as religious, should be distinguished from the uprising, since the Protestants could have taken over the town without bloodshed. But Protestant officials, especially officers of the présidial, also resented the pretensions of the upstart Catholic consuls: the consuls de Gras and Rochette were also murdered. Furthermore, the Protestant leadership deeply hated those Catholic officials who were not killed: the punishing conditions of imprisonment were clearly aimed at humiliating the victims.

The political and religious rivalry between the two confessions may have turned personal, and leading Protestant families may have wished to purge their Catholic rivals. As noted above, there was a rumor that the Michelade began because a member of one leading Catholic family, the d’Albenas, gave a member of a leading Protestant family, the Calvières, a slap in the face. Guillaume Calvière was the president of the présidial, and a member of the d’Albenas also served on the court: there were few more eminent families in town. As part of my dissertation, I analyzed the connections between the leading 249 families in Nîmes (674 people), using the notarial records of 1550–62, and concluded that there were six main factions among them. Thirteen people who were killed, arrested, or molested in the Michelade were members of these 249 elite families; seven of the thirteen (including the d’Albenas) belonged to the most elite faction of all, consisting of fifty-six of Nîmes’s richest and most powerful families, who were linked by marriage and friendship. Indeed, the records suggest that the d’Albenas were by far the most prominent Catholic family in town. In the notarial records, the d’Albenas were connected to twenty-two other families, more than any other family that remained Catholic at the time of the Michelade, and

55 Millet, “City Converted,” 191–92. Such conflict was hardly limited to Nîmes: for the case of Castres, see Olivier Christin, La paix de religion: L’autonomisation de la raison politique au XVIIe siècle (Paris, 1997), 86, and more generally, for the conditions of coexistence in urban areas, see chap. 3.

56 Pierre Rovyer reported a similar incident with different participants. He heard Pierre Maltrait say to Guy de Rochette that Rochette “payeroit lors le soufflet qu’il luy avoit baillé” (ADG, G442, fol. 70).

57 It is clear that the d’Albenas remained Catholic, since they appear repeatedly as godparents in AMN, UU1, Livre des batisés de le glise [sic] catedrale de nostre daine de nîmes depuis le mois d’aoust 1568. It should be noted that one leading member of the d’Albenas family, Jean-Poldo d’Albenas, author of the first description of Nîmes’s antiquities, appears to have flirted with Protestantism before returning to the Catholic fold. He probably died in 1566. On him, see Puech, “Débuts de la Réforme à Nîmes,” 196.
they were also the wealthiest Catholic family. Of the twenty-two families connected with the d'Albenas, twelve converted to Protestantism before the Michelade, eight remained Catholic, and two are unknown. For comparison, the des Georges family was connected to six families, all of whom converted, and of the three families connected to the Gregoires, two converted and one remained Catholic. Since the des Georges and the Gregoires were members of consular rather than judicial families, it is not surprising that they were connected to fewer families than the d'Albenas, but even the Richiers and the Valletes, also members of the présidial, were connected only to eight and fourteen families, respectively. Of the thirteen elite victims in the Michelade, six (including Bernard Poldo d'Albenas) were members of families that were tied to the d'Albenas family. Victims in this group included members of the d'Albenas, Richier, Roverie, and Vallete families. The d'Albenas were close to the Richier and Vallete families, as one would expect, since all three were associated with the présidial; given their prominence in Catholic circles, it is also no surprise that the d'Albenas were close to Jean Paberan, the bishop’s deputy, who was killed.\textsuperscript{58} The evidence thus suggests that the d'Albenas were at the center of a complex of families that included the most elite Catholics in Nîmes and that constituted just under half of the victims of the Michelade who were members of the 249 elite families. Although there is little direct evidence of antagonism between the d'Albenas and Calvière families, it does appear that they headed opposing religious factions on the présidial, and certainly a high percentage of Catholic présidial members were arrested in the Michelade. There is no other evidence for a d'Albenas slapping a Calvière in the face, but that they disliked each other is plausible, although before the Reformation ties existed between them. Perhaps these ties explain why only one of the Catholic members of the présidial was killed, in addition to the advantages they had owing to their wealth.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{58} The seven killed were Honoré Richier, Jacques Barrière, Jean and Bauzille de Roverie, Pierre Saurin, Pierre Vallete, and d'Albenas. All of their families had ties to the d'Albenas except Barrière and Saurin. For definitions of elite and an explanation of how the analysis was done, see Tulchin, "Reformation in Nîmes," 356–61 (table of factions, 357), and appendix, 395–429. For some examples of the kind of ties I am referring to, when Pierre Vallete married, Jean, Jacques, and Galhard d'Albenas were all among the witnesses (ADG, IIE\textsuperscript{1}, vol. 233, fol. 196 [Sept. 18, 1551]). When Catherine d'Albenas married, Paberan was among the witnesses (ADG, IIE\textsuperscript{1}, vol. 234, fol. 119 [July 19, 1552]).

\textsuperscript{59} It should be borne in mind that the notarial database covers 1550–62, before the impact of the Reformation was felt among the elite. In that era, the elite was fairly unified, and preexisting factional lines do not appear to have had any effect on religious choices. Somewhat more surprisingly, the ties between the d'Albenas and the Calvières persisted right to the end of the period, even when one might think that religious divisions might have started to matter: when Pierre d'Albenas was married, Guillaume Calvière was one of the witnesses (ADG, IIE\textsuperscript{1}, vol. 251, fol. 281v [Feb. 21, 1562 old style, 1563 new style]).
As noted earlier, Protestants everywhere had a horror of the Catholic clergy. The Protestant leaders behind the Michelade may also have felt that Catholic priests were particularly dangerous because they were the backbone of the opposition. The Catholic clerical and lay leadership worked hand in glove in the period 1564–67, and it is certainly reasonable to suppose that the initiative came from the clergy. Why else were its legal representatives so often subsequently chosen first consul? In short, although it is certainly true that Protestant distaste for Catholicism was fixated more on the clergy and the Mass than on the Catholic political elite, the extreme frustrations that led to the Michelade might have been caused by political as well as religious factors. The Catholic church in Nîmes could hardly have taken the course it did without political support, and, indeed, religion and politics had been jumbled together since the beginning of the Reformation. It is possible that, with more adroit policies, the Catholic party could have avoided the provocations that led to the Michelade. But Catholic control of the council did make an uprising extremely likely, not least because it would have been well-nigh impossible for the Catholic party to resist making the decisions it did. Reinstating Catholic ceremonies had been about, among other things, asserting their dominance. The Protestant response was violent, ugly, and direct: as several Protestants were reported to have said, Catholics were “papist vermin.”

Conclusion

Davis’s interpretation cautiously endorses the Calvinist Histoire ecclésiastique, whose authors wrote that “those of the Reformed Religion made war only on images and altars, which do not bleed, while those of the Roman religion spilled blood with every kind of cruelty.” According to the standard interpretation, Protestants shed less blood because they did not believe that heretics were social pollutants. If this were true, then when Protestants had the power to kill Catholics, they would not have done so. Nîmes suggests that was not the case: in two incidents only two years apart, Protestants probably killed more than two hundred people—a remarkably high number, given Nîmes’s population. This record makes one shudder to contemplate what Protestant parties might have done elsewhere had they enjoyed the strength they did in Nîmes. Indeed, the events of the Michelade are disturbingly similar to a massacre committed by the Protestant majority in La Rochelle in 1568.

60 ADG, G442, fol. 61.
61 Cited in Davis, “Rites of Violence,” 173.
Many parallels could also be drawn to Catholic massacres, including that of Troyes in 1572, in which troops again arrested and then murdered people, although in Nîmes there was more popular participation: in Troyes the men who arrested and murdered the Protestants were few and mostly professionals, members of the town militia. Protestant and Catholic massacres were more similar than different, probably because they stemmed from similar anxieties.62 Protestants elsewhere may have focused their attacks on statues because vandalism can be done at night, with few or no witnesses. A riot against real people requires a superiority of force that sixteenth-century French Protestants rarely possessed. Nîmes was one of the few exceptions. The Michelade suggests that there are two essential preconditions for mass murder: an overwhelming superiority of force and a fear that the weaker party nonetheless poses an existential threat to the stronger one.

While the Michelade shows that Protestants could be just as violent as Catholics in sixteenth-century France, it would be a mistake to throw out all of the insights of previous scholars. Protestant anger in Nîmes was especially directed at priests and leading political opponents. The evidence of those murdered in the Michelade thus supports one of Crouzet’s major conclusions, namely, that priests and the “enemy army-rabble” were the principal targets of Protestant violence. It should be borne in mind, however, that only one-third of the victims can be identified, and that if the list were complete, the percentage of ordinary Catholics would surely be higher. Even without a complete list, given the numbers of people who died, it seems excessively kind of Crouzet to call Protestant violence “optimistic” and to suggest that Protestants pursued their aims “without breaking bodies and without torturing flesh.” If Protestant rage was more narrowly focused than its Catholic equivalent, Protestants were nevertheless quite as capable of mass murder as Catholics when circumstances permitted it. Furthermore, Crouzet contends that Protestants limited their targets because it supports his thesis that (killing priests aside) Protestant violence was more “rational.” It was designed merely to restrain Catholic attacks and to preserve the Protestants’ ability to proselytize, whereas the Catholics’ burning desire to extirpate heretics led them to kill Protestants indiscriminately.63 Crouzet insists that Protestant violence was rational as part of a larger argument that Protestantism was a modernizing force. But the Michelade does not support this. When Crouzet

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63 Crouzet, *Guerriers de dieu*, 1:616.
emphasizes cool rationality, he downplays the fury of Protestants stuffing bloody bodies down the well at the bishop of Nîmes’s palace. When the Protestants conveyed their victims to the room traditionally used as a Lenten abattoir, they demonstrated their hatred and contempt. Catholic crowds elsewhere, who flushed Protestant corpses down the sewers, may have been sending a similar message as much as enacting a rite of purification.

Beyond comparing Protestant and Catholic styles of violence, in “The Rites of Violence” Davis was making a broader point that is now widely accepted, namely, that historians need to consider what crowds meant by their actions, rather than dismiss them as irrational. For her argument, one of the prime examples is that sixteenth-century crowds held mock trials of their victims, as Catholics in Montpellier did in 1569, to proclaim the justice of their cause. But as Davis implies, we need to consider not just the message but also the audience. Explaining this mock judicial conduct, she comments that “when the magistrate had not used his sword to defend the faith and the true church and to punish the idolaters, then the crowd would do it for him.” In other words, the crowd was sending a message to the authorities, appealing to and rebuking them at the same time. Unlike in Montpellier, in the case of the Michelade the participants appear to have intended to deliver their message not to the authorities but to their opponents. They were proclaiming their views not to posterity, or to future historians, but to specific people whom they probably knew well. When we attempt to read the meaning of a sixteenth-century crowd’s actions, we should bear in mind that we are eavesdropping. Understanding their meaning thus requires integrating social analysis with the analysis of discourse; unless we know something about the players, we will miss part of the conversation. Once we recognize that people engaged in murderous uprisings like the Michelade and other forms of religious riot were interested in sending messages to specific opponents and potential supporters, it becomes understandable that, in many respects, the two groups used a common language and largely similar symbolism. Religious violence was a form of communication, where the differing parties had different messages but used a common medium to communicate them. In Nîmes, Protestants demonstrated their hatred and contempt of Catholicism by their treatment of the elite and the clergy, but ordinary Catholics could hardly have avoided getting the message.

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65 Davis, “Rites of Violence,” 161 (quotation), 178–79 (purification rites).