

**Penitents, Militants, Scoundrels, and Saints:  
Early Modern Catholicism and the French Catholic League**

by

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B.A., University College of the Fraser Valley, 2003

PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

In the  
Department  
of  
History

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Simon Fraser University

Summer 2006

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## **ABSTRACT**

Historians have explained Catholicism in the early modern period with a variety of terms. In recent decades, they have used some of these to describe the religious motivations and actions of the French Catholic League. While each of these labels explains some aspects of the League's religiosity, none fully encompasses the complexity of League Catholicism. This project analyzes how adequately different terms depict the League. Although four of the most commonly used ones help describe different facets of the League's history, this study argues that "Early Modern Catholicism," a term recently coined by John O'Malley, is necessary to describe completely the League's religiosity.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Several individuals have helped make this past year the most enjoyable and rewarding of my academic life. I was very fortunate to have Hilmar Pabel as my senior supervisor. He provided invaluable help to me in my course and project work and gave to this aspiring teacher a wonderful example of what one should be through his spirited teaching style and genuine concern for his students.

I was also privileged to have Luke Clossey for a supervisor. His keen and helpful criticism of my work and the interest he took in it made me excited about what I was doing and inspired me to think more critically about my project and consequently, I hope, to produce a better essay.

In addition, I must thank Christopher Friedrichs at the University of British Columbia, who read early drafts of my project and helped me at a critical stage to form my project topic.

My mother and my oldest sister deserve a big note of thanks for editing my often unruly written work. Their task was torturous and unrewarding for them but immeasurably helpful for me. My family was an immense source of support and encouragement in many varied ways; they made accomplishing this goal of mine much easier.

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## Penitents, Militants, Scoundrels, and Saints: Early Modern Catholicism and the French Catholic League

The death of King Charles IX of France in May 1574 was good news for his youngest brother François, Duke of Alençon. Not only was the one who had imprisoned Alençon earlier in the year for his part in a foiled attempt to eliminate the Guise nobles at court now dead, but more importantly he was now heir presumptive—next in line—to the throne. As his last remaining brother Henry III ruled the kingdom as the successor of Charles, Alençon did not idly wait for the moment he could be king; he sought immediate power for himself in other ways and consequently caused significant problems domestically and internationally. In France, after his escape from court in September 1575, even though a Catholic himself, Alençon sided with the Protestants against his co-religionists in the fifth civil war since 1562 fought between the two confessions.<sup>1</sup> After gaining more territory and money along with the new title of Duke of Anjou as part of the peace agreement ending this war in May 1576, he joined the Catholic side in France. However, he sided with Protestants in the Netherlands in their revolt against Philip II of Spain. He also desperately tried (in vain) to marry the Protestant queen, Elizabeth I of England. In the minds of many French Catholics, such amicability with Protestants did not seem fitting, especially for one who might become king.<sup>2</sup>

For Anjou, who desired political clout first and foremost, religious considerations were not a factor in his actions. Unfortunately for him he never achieved the monarchical

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Knecht, *The French Civil Wars, 1562-1598* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 180-181, 190-192.

<sup>2</sup> Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 106, 109-110, 119-120; Knecht, *French Civil Wars*, 193, 214-215, 218.

power for which he hoped because he failed to outlive Henry III. Anjou died on 10 June 1584. If the possibility of Anjou's becoming king was a serious concern for many Catholics, his death was even more alarming since it left Henry of Navarre the heir to Henry III. Anjou was at least Catholic; Navarre was Protestant and had been leading the Huguenot forces since 1569. Even though he promised that as king he would tolerate Catholicism, zealous Catholics were not convinced, and they resolutely refused to accept him as their monarch.<sup>3</sup>

In September, only three months after Anjou's death, Henry, Duke of Guise, along with his brothers Charles, Duke of Mayenne, and Louis, Cardinal of Guise, formed the Catholic League, or Holy Union, to preserve the Catholic throne from Protestant defilement and to restore by force Catholicism to its place as the only practiced religion in France.<sup>4</sup> Numerous nobles joined the League. Some prominent ones included the Dukes of Mercoeur, Aumale, and Elbeuf. Yet the League was by no means simply an aristocratic organization. Even before the end of 1584 the League had a footing in Paris among a small group of mostly lawyers and merchants. This group of men radically devoted to Catholicism—the Sixteen—was named after the number of districts in the city which provided members to its main committee. They were independent of the Duke of Guise, but kept connected with him in their common cause. Both found support among the masses of city dwellers of different classes who saw in the League the embodiment of their desire to make all of France, and especially the throne, Catholic. Since for the

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<sup>3</sup> Knecht, *French Civil Wars*, 151, 218.

<sup>4</sup> The focus in this essay is on the League founded in 1584. However, there were local Catholic leagues as early as 1560. In 1576, after the Peace of Monsieur, a new League was started which threatened the authority of Henry III. To overcome this, he actively supported this League and successively took control of it. He was not able to subvert the cause, however, of the 1584 League. See David Potter, ed. and trans., *The French Wars of Religion: Selected Documents* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 154 and J. H. M. Salmon, *Society in Crisis: France in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), 201-202.

League Navarre could not possibly become king, it proposed that his uncle Charles, Cardinal of Bourbon, be made Henry III's new heir.<sup>5</sup> Naturally, Navarre did not give up his claim to the throne or cease his fight for Protestantism, and so the civil wars continued. For the following decade, the League exerted itself in its effort to suppress heresy and to fight for "the maintenance and defence" of the Catholic religion.<sup>6</sup>

While the League's proclaimed objectives seem simple enough, historians have long struggled in defining what truly motivated those who belonged to it. They have paid special attention to the role of religion as a motivating factor in the organization. One of the earliest historians of the League, Pierre-Victor Palma Cayet, a tutor to Navarre and convert to Catholicism in 1595, denied that there was any authentic religious motivation at all in the League in a work published in 1607.<sup>7</sup> In the late seventeenth century, Louis Maimbourg, a "Jesuit turned Gallican" and a firm believer in absolutism and the divine right of kings,<sup>8</sup> agreed fully with Palma Cayet. He argued that the League was fundamentally an unlawful and rebellious party, not unlike the Huguenot faith, which was "covered with the specious pretence of religion and piety."<sup>9</sup> In 1909, James Westfall Thompson said much the same when he suggested that the Leaguer nobility, and in

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<sup>5</sup> Holt, *Wars of Religion*, 122-124; Knecht, *French Civil Wars*, 222-223, 218, 219.

<sup>6</sup> From the title of a printed work authored by Nicolas Nivelles and Rolin Thierry, *Establissement du conseil general de la Sainte Union, pour la manutention et defense de la religion catholique, apostolique et romaine, Estat et couronne de ce royaume; en attendant l'assemblée générale des estats* (Paris, 1589); listed as number 407 in the "Catalogue des Impressions Ligueuses Parisiennes (1585-1594)," in Denis Pallier, *Recherches sur l'Imprimerie à Paris pendant la Ligue, 1585-1594* (Geneva: Droz, 1975), 308.

<sup>7</sup> Ann Ramsey, *Liturgy, Politics, and Salvation: The Catholic League in Paris and the Nature of Catholic Reform, 1540-1630* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1999), 59-60, 353, n. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Edmond M. Beame, "The Politiques and the Historians," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 54 (1993): 366-367.

<sup>9</sup> Louis Maimbourg, *The History of the League, written in French by Monsieur Maimbourg; translated into English by His Majesty's command by Mr. Dryden* (London: Printed by M. Flesher for Jacob Tonson, 1684). The quotation is found on the second last page of "The Authour's Advertisement to the Reader."

Early English Books Online, [http://eebo.chadwyck.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/search/full\\_rec?SOURCE=pgimages.cfg&ACTION=ByID&I=V42159](http://eebo.chadwyck.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/search/full_rec?SOURCE=pgimages.cfg&ACTION=ByID&I=V42159) (accessed 24 June 2006).

particular Guise, hid “under the cloak of religion” their quest for more power.<sup>10</sup>

Thompson’s chronology of the Wars of Religion revealingly ends in 1576, eight years before the birth of the Holy League, because, he emphatically argued, “the dominant issue of the succeeding years of conflict from 1576 to 1598 was not a religious, but a political one.”<sup>11</sup> For these historians, religion was just a ruse for the League; politics was what really motivated it.

Such evaluations of the League seem to be a thing of the past. While there is no consensus on the degree to which religion played a role in it, at the present time, virtually all historians acknowledge that religion was a genuine component of the League.<sup>12</sup> They have convincingly demonstrated that the Catholic League was, in Mack Holt’s words, “very much a Holy Union.”<sup>13</sup> It was authentically religious, a truly *Catholic* League. In describing its religious nature, historians have associated the League with two principal terms which have been used to describe Catholicism in general during the early modern period: “Counter-Reformation” and “Catholic Reform.” Robert Descimon and Eli Barnavi along with Holt and Philip Benedict all identify the League with the former;<sup>14</sup> Denis Richet and Ann Ramsey both associate the League with the latter.<sup>15</sup> These oft-used designations, though, along with other popular terms which describe early modern

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<sup>10</sup> James Westphall Thompson, *The Wars of Religion in France, 1559-1576: the Huguenots, Catherine de Medici, Philip II* (1909; reprint, New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., n.d.), 524.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 523.

<sup>12</sup> For historiographical analyses of the League, see Mack Holt, “Putting Religion Back into the Wars of Religion,” *French Historical Studies* 18 (1993): 537, 542-543, 546, 548-550 and Barbara Diefendorf, “The Catholic League: Social Crisis or Apocalypse Now?” *French Historical Studies* 15 (1987): 332-344.

<sup>13</sup> Holt, *Wars of Religion*, 150.

<sup>14</sup> Elie Barnavi and Robert Descimon, *La sainte ligue le juge et la potence: l'assassinat du Président Brisson (15 novembre 1591)* ([Paris]: Hachette, 1985), 66; Holt, *Wars of Religion*, 152; Philip Benedict, “The Catholic Response to Protestantism: Church Activity and Popular Piety in Rouen, 1560-1600,” in *Religion and the People, 800-1700*, ed. James Obelkevich (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 190.

<sup>15</sup> Denis Richet, “Aspects socio-culturels des conflits religieux à Paris dans la seconde moitié du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in Richet, *De la Réforme à la Révolution: Études sur la France moderne* (Paris: Aubier, 1991), 42; Ramsey, *Liturgy, Politics, and Salvation*, 190.

Catholicism such as “Tridentine Reformation” and “Confessional Catholicism,” can be problematic. While doubtlessly useful in describing and analyzing early modern Catholicism, their drawback lies, as Hilmar Pabel writes, in that “they do not and cannot stand for the diffuse and diverse nature of Catholicism.”<sup>16</sup>

A term that was only recently suggested by John O’Malley on the other hand, “Early Modern Catholicism,” can not only include within its purview what the other terms signify, but can also encompass what they miss and thus account for the “diffuse and diverse nature” of the League’s Catholicity. While he does not write about the League, O’Malley is nevertheless a helpful guide to a study of it. In his book *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era*, O’Malley surveys the nomenclatural history of sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth-century Catholicism. Over the last two centuries, historians have used a variety of terms to describe the Catholicism of this period. This essay uses these terms in an examination of the League’s religiosity to judge how effectively each one succeeds in describing the League and how it fails. This investigation demonstrates that all of the terms enable us to understand and describe many different aspects of the League, but that O’Malley’s “Early Modern Catholicism” in particular is necessary as a descriptive term for the League’s religiosity because it includes what the other terms miss about it and it demonstrates that League Catholicism was of immense diversity.

The process of assigning a name to early modern Catholicism began with the Lutheran Johann Stephan Pütter, who first coined “Counter-Reformation” (*Gegenreformation*) in his 1776 introduction to the *Augsburg Confession*. For him, it had

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<sup>16</sup> Hilmar M. Pabel, “Humanism and Early Modern Catholicism: Erasmus of Rotterdam’s *Ars Moriendi*,” in *Early Modern Catholicism: Essays in Honour of John W. O’Malley, S.J.*, ed. Kathleen M. Comerford and Hilmar M. Pabel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 28.

decidedly negative connotations, describing his perception of the efforts by Catholic powers to force the return of Catholicism to Lutheran territory and re-convert Lutherans back to their former faith.<sup>17</sup> Since there were several attempts at this between the Peace of Augsburg in 1555 and the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, he originally and deliberately used the plural—Counter-Reformations—to describe these efforts.<sup>18</sup>

Another historian, one with much greater academic influence than Pütter, Leopold von Ranke, also adopted “Counter-Reformation” in two works he published in the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>19</sup> He believed that the Counter-Reformation was spearheaded primarily by the papacy, the Jesuits, and the Council of Trent. With Pütter, he applied “Counter-Reformation” only to the post-1555 Catholic Church. It was not long, however, before historians were using that name to describe the pre-1555 Church as well.<sup>20</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century, Eberhard Gothein was one such historian to invest “Counter-Reformation” with this broader meaning.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, another term entered circulation. Wilhelm Maurenbrecher made “Catholic Reformation” a viable expression with his book *History of the Catholic Reformation (Geschichte der katholischen Reformation)*. It was a scandal to his fellow Lutheran scholars that he had paralleled the authentic Reformation with something the Catholic Church had done.<sup>22</sup> He felt compelled to do so, nevertheless, because he had come to the conclusion that the roots of the Counter-Reformation lay in the pre-1517 Church. Since there was no

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<sup>17</sup> John O’Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 20.

<sup>18</sup> Hubert Jedin, “Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation?” trans. David Luebke, in *The Counter-Reformation: the Essential Readings*, ed. David Luebke (Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 23; O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 20.

<sup>19</sup> Leopold von Ranke, *The Popes of Rome: their Church and State in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, vol. 2 (Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1847), 1; O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 20.

<sup>20</sup> O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 23-24.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 25, 26.

Protestant Reformation to oppose prior to this time, another label was necessary. Thus, he argued that there was a Catholic Reformation even before the Protestant one.<sup>23</sup> Even though Maurenbrecher had not been the first to use the term (in 1859 a Catholic priest had used “Catholic Reform” to describe the reform of the Church in sixteenth-century Italy), he was the first to make it acceptable to historians on a large scale.<sup>24</sup>

In his multi-volume *History of the Popes, From the Close of the Middle Ages*, written in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Ludwig von Pastor also adopted “Catholic Reformation” but added “Catholic Restoration” as a necessary description of the early modern Church.<sup>25</sup> According to him, “Catholic Reformation,” begun in Italy and Spain, meant a reform of the Church from within based on a more thorough observance of disciplinary norms. He believed that this period ended around the turn of the seventeenth century. His use of “Catholic Restoration” had the same meaning as that intended by Lutheran historians’ “Counter-Reformation”: the effort by the Catholic Church and Catholic powers to *restore* Catholicism to places where Protestantism had gained control.<sup>26</sup> Why then did he not just use “Counter-Reformation?” Quite simply, that term was “ugly and inappropriate.”<sup>27</sup>

Although many would have agreed with Pastor that using “Counter-Reformation” was problematic, another more accurate term did not exist for historians to use until the mid-twentieth century.<sup>28</sup> Hubert Jedin, a priest and Church historian from Germany, was not content with the nomenclature of his object of study. In 1946, he published the essay

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<sup>23</sup> Jedin, “Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation?” 24.

<sup>24</sup> O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 26; Jedin, “Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation?” 24-25.

<sup>25</sup> Ludwig von Pastor, *The History of the Popes, From the Close of the Middle Ages: Drawn from the Secret Archives of the Vatican and Other Original Sources*, vol. 19: *Gregory XIII (1572-1585)*, ed. Ralph Kerr (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1952), 2; O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 32-33.

<sup>26</sup> O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 33, 39; Jedin, “Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation?” 33.

<sup>27</sup> Pastor, *History of the Popes* 19: 2.

<sup>28</sup> O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 37-42.

“Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation?” which offered a solution to the naming problem. It entailed joining the two concepts named in the essay’s title, resulting in the term “Catholic-Reform-and-Counter-Reformation.” Believing this to be the best way to describe early modern Catholicism, he stated: “*The Catholic Reform was the church’s reorientation toward Catholic ideals of living through an internal process of renewal, while Counter-Reformation was the self-assertion of the church in the struggle against Protestantism.*”<sup>29</sup> He preferred “Catholic Reform” to “Catholic Reformation” because of the “antithetical implications” of the latter term, but they meant precisely the same thing for him and he used both in his essay.<sup>30</sup>

Jedin suggested four phases in the Catholic Reform. The first was the “grass-roots” reform which had its origin in the fifteenth century. This included all the people and their actions which seemed particularly concerned with the salvation of souls. This phase was extraordinarily inclusive, encompassing devout individuals of every rank within the Church.<sup>31</sup> The second phase was, according to Jedin, the “decisive” one: the “irruption of Catholic Reformation into the church’s center.”<sup>32</sup> This phase began around 1540 with the official approbation of the Society of Jesus and ended about two decades later. During this span of time, the Council had begun to meet, the Jesuits were already enjoying a fruitful ministry, and the papacy was in the midst of its resurgence. The third phase lasted from 1561 to 1563 when the Council of Trent issued its decrees on the reform of the clergy, in which the Church demanded a morally upright and educated hierarchy. Through these reforms, the Church demonstrated that her greatest concern

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<sup>29</sup> Jedin, “Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation?” 45. The italicization of this quotation is Jedin’s or Luebke’s.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-35; O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 52.

<sup>32</sup> Jedin, “Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation?” 37.

was the *cura animarum* – the care of souls.<sup>33</sup> The fourth phase was the implementation of the conciliar decrees. This was the longest phase, lasting from 1563 until the eighteenth century. It not only involved the observance of Church law, but also included a more general spirit of reform.<sup>34</sup> All in all, for Jedin the Catholic Reform lasted around three hundred years.

The label “Catholic Reform” is a valuable way of describing what Catholicism was about in the early modern era. There is a problem, though, in how Jedin invests it with too broad a meaning. He has not been the only historian to do so; numerous others have also been guilty of suggesting that everyone who seemed to care deeply about living a holy life in the early modern period or participating in special devotions was a part of Catholic Reform.<sup>35</sup> O’Malley, in contrast, argues that “Reform” (*reformatio*) should have a much narrower focus if it is to be of value to historians. It should be used as the Church understood it at Trent and in previous councils where it was understood primarily to be concerned with priests and bishops, ensuring that they were faithful to their vocations as shepherds of souls according to canon law. The expansive meaning it came to assume for Jedin and other scholars—that of a more devout Christian living—is simply inaccurate. Accordingly, we must understand “Reform” in the more limited canonical or conciliar sense. Even defined in this way, it still identifies much in Catholicism, and therefore should be used, especially coupled with “Counter-Reformation.”<sup>36</sup>

For Jedin, “Counter-Reformation” meant the Church’s reaction to the Protestant

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 37, 38-39; O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 52. See Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 2: *Trent to Vatican II* (London: Sheed and Ward, Ltd., Washinton, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 744.

<sup>34</sup> Jedin, “Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation?” 39.

<sup>35</sup> O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 52, 133; Jedin, “Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation?” 34-35.

<sup>36</sup> O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 131-134.

Reformation. This was no different from the original meaning that Pütter gave it nearly two hundred years before. Unlike Pütter, however, Jedin argued that the Catholic reaction was both positive and necessary; the Church had to defend herself against the spread of Protestantism and counter it. The Counter-Reformation involved the condemnation of Protestant heresy and clear teaching of Catholic doctrine. It initiated the beginnings of the Roman Inquisition and the Index of Forbidden Books; just as importantly, it included the efforts of the Society of Jesus to spread the faith in lands lost to the Protestants. According to Jedin, this period ended sometime around the mid-seventeenth century. For more than one hundred years, the Counter-Reformation progressed concurrently with the Catholic Reform, but the latter clearly came first. It was the Catholic Reform which gave the Church the necessary strength to launch the Counter-Reformation.<sup>37</sup>

When the League was founded, the Church was in the midst of both of these processes. Examining even the League's earliest actions demonstrates the value of "Catholic-Reform-and-Counter-Reformation" in describing the League's religiosity. Its most important founding members—the Dukes of Guise and Mayenne and the Cardinal of Guise—allied with Philip II by the Treaty of Joinville on 31 December 1584. They committed themselves to resist any heretical prince from becoming king and to rid France of "all practice of heresy . . . by public edict and all other means, with no exceptions, so that no other but the Catholic religion will be permitted." Philip promised the Guises large sums of money to assist them in these undertakings, and the Guises promised to ensure that the decrees of the Council of Trent would be published and

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<sup>37</sup> Jedin, "Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation?" 40, 42; O'Malley, *Trent and All That*, 53.

observed in France.<sup>38</sup> This one treaty indicates that League Catholicism was clearly directed against the Protestants and thus a part of the Counter-Reformation, and at the same time favourable to the Council of Trent, which indicates a support for and an inclusion in the Catholic Reform movement.

Along with this treaty, much else in the League's history supports Jedin's perception of Catholicism as "Catholic-Reform-and-Counter-Reformation" and gives reason for applying that label to the League's religiosity. Dealing with "Catholic Reform" first, by the time the League was founded, the first three phases were finished, but the fourth—the implementation of the Council—was then taking place in Catholic Europe. Denis Richet, in a seminal essay discussing the League, wrote that "one must not neglect an essential dimension of the League's actions: the beginnings of a deep penetration of the institutions and methods introduced by the Council of Trent."<sup>39</sup> Well before 1615 when the French clergy officially adopted the conciliar decrees, the League had already accepted them.

A crucial question to be asked when discussing the French Catholic Reform is why the League supported the Council of Trent when the French monarchy did not. Why did the League accede to the Council fathers' demand of princes "to give their help and not allow the decrees . . . made to be abused or violated by heretics, but to see that they are devoutly received and faithfully observed by them and by all"?<sup>40</sup> The kings of France ignored the call, never accepting them. They perceived the decrees and canons of Trent to be a threat to the independence of the French church and monarchy. Even before the

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<sup>38</sup> "The Treaty of Joinville, January 1585," in Potter, *Wars of Religion: Selected Documents*, 188-189.

<sup>39</sup> Richet, "Aspects socio-culturels des conflits religieux," 40.

<sup>40</sup> Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2: 798; Thomas I. Crimando, "Two French Views of the Council of Trent," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 19 (1988): 169.

Council had decreed anything, France showed hostility toward it.<sup>41</sup> This hostility continued until 1562, when the Wars of Religion broke out; only then was France represented at Trent with bishops and ambassadors. Even so, the ambassadors left indignantly before the Council finished in 1563. They were upset because the reforms which the fathers were proposing were at variance with their Gallican understanding of the nature of the French church and monarchy.<sup>42</sup> Gallicans believed that the French kings and bishops enjoyed a great deal of independence from the pope, that, in fact, most of the French church's affairs could be decided without papal intervention. They feared that by accepting the decrees, they would be opening a door in France for the pope to have too much influence.<sup>43</sup>

The League had a different perception of the Council. In 1584, Pierre Grégoire, an avid supporter of the Guises and proponent of the League's goals, in a substantial written response to a work of a Gallican advocate, argued that the pope had superiority over all kings and that any privileges the French church enjoyed had been granted by the pope.<sup>44</sup> The decrees of the Council of Trent had to be accepted in France for two reasons: first, because it was called by the pope, and second, because either the pope or his representative attended it. The real danger threatening the church and monarchy in France, Grégoire said, was not the decrees of Trent as the Gallicans claimed, but the presence of heretics. For him, it was obvious that the king needed to publish the decrees and conquer the Huguenots if France were to enjoy peace.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Crimando, "Two French Views of the Council of Trent," 170; Frederic J. Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995) 186, 145-146.

<sup>42</sup> Crimando, "Two French Views of the Council of Trent," 172-174.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 176, 182.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 179, 185.

Grégoire's writing was representative of the mentality of the Catholic League.<sup>46</sup> What it shows unambiguously is that the League was ultramontane, not Gallican. Further evidence for its ultramontane character lies in its efforts at obtaining papal support for its work. Immediately after the League formed, the Guises asked Pope Gregory XIII for his blessing. They were hoping he would give unequivocal support to the League, but they had to settle for his November 1584 response which only approved of their desire to fight the Huguenots.<sup>47</sup> Despite the League's failure to get the kind of support it wanted, it still reveals that this group from the moment of its inception did not want to show a Gallican independence from Rome, but a close union with it as ultramontanists. Many Leaguers even believed that the popes possessed "indirect" power to depose the king.<sup>48</sup>

As an ultramontane union, the League was willing to try to enforce the Tridentine decrees and act as an agent of the Catholic Reform in France. The main purposes of the Council of Trent, as the bull of Pope Pius IV confirming the Council said, were "to extirpate so many and most destructive heresies, to reform morals and restore ecclesiastical discipline, [and] to bring about peace and harmony among the Christian people."<sup>49</sup> Without any doubt, the League tried to achieve the first goal as will be shown. The last goal was not possible as long as Protestants inhabited France, but in the cities where the League held power, there were many efforts at ensuring ecclesiastical discipline and reforming morals. It is predominantly with the reform of the clergy's

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>47</sup> Pastor, *History of the Popes* 19: 542, 544-545.

<sup>48</sup> Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 31.

<sup>49</sup> *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, trans. H. J. Schroeder (Rockford: Tan Books and Publishers, 1978), 268-269; John O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 324.

morality and discipline that the Council concerned itself.<sup>50</sup> In sixteenth-century France, the clergy were in desperate need of reform. Absenteeism was prevalent among the bishops and pastors. Concubinage was rampant among all levels of the clergy.<sup>51</sup> It is no surprise, then, that the League believed one of its duties to be to ensure that the clergy changed their lives in accordance with the expectations of the Council. In Nantes, the League-dominated *Parlement* took measures to ensure that the rules of canon law were followed by those assuming benefices. It also tried to get the clergy to live in their parishes.<sup>52</sup> In Rouen, when the League took power in early 1589, two cathedral canons living with their mistresses were tried for their misdeeds and imprisoned.<sup>53</sup> By the seventeenth century, the state of the clergy was significantly better.<sup>54</sup> They had reformed. Certainly, other factors besides Leaguer directives and actions ensured this result, but the League can at least take part of the credit for the improvement in the French clergy.

Even more than being a union committed to Catholic Reform, the League was a zealously anti-Protestant agent of the Counter-Reformation. Less than a year after its foundation, the League was able to pressure Henry III to outlaw Protestantism in France with the Treaty of Nemours in July 1585. This revoked all previous peace edicts with all the rights and protections for which Protestants had fought so hard to obtain. They were no longer allowed to hold political office or have their own towns. The treaty gave them six months to convert or suffer exile. Faced with this persecution, many fled the country. The League armies went to war against those who remained.<sup>55</sup> They wanted every

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2:744-749.

<sup>51</sup> Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 36-37.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Harding, "Revolution and Reform in the Holy League: Angers, Rennes, Nantes," *The Journal of Modern History* 53 (1981): 398.

<sup>53</sup> Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion*, 190.

<sup>54</sup> Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century*, 250.

<sup>55</sup> Holt, *Wars of Religion*, 124-125.

heretic who would not convert either killed or expelled from France. One Leaguer's statement that Protestantism was a "rotten member whose stench has infected, infects, and will infect" shows with perfect clarity what the League thought of "la Religion Prétendue Réformée."<sup>56</sup> The Leaguer lawyer in the Paris *Parlement* Louis Dorléans went so far as to say, "If your brother, your friend, and your wife all of whom you hold dear wish to strip you of your faith, kill them, cut their throats and sacrifice them to God."<sup>57</sup> Given how the League perceived Protestantism, it is no surprise that its actions against the Huguenots were particularly harsh. As its support grew throughout France, the League struck against the armies of Navarre and fought a number of successful battles, taking Châlons, Dijon, and Mâcon in less than one year.<sup>58</sup> Besides eliminating Protestants in conventional battles, the League also did so through official public executions once it controlled a city and could sentence individuals to death. Only one month after taking control of Paris in May 1588 the League had two Protestant sisters hanged and burned.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to its efforts at destroying Protestantism, the League was also concerned about defending French Catholicism. Indeed, these two objectives were inseparable. The League perceived a military attack by Navarre's armies as a direct attack on its religion; Leaguers rallied to defend it. One man in Rouen claimed to be "one of the first to enter *the party of those who had united and come together for the*

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<sup>56</sup> *Les Vrais pièges et moiens pour atraper ce faux hérétique et cauteleux grison*, Henry de Valois (Paris, 1589), 7; quoted in Dalia M. Leonardo, "'Cut off this Rotten Member': The Rhetoric of Heresy, Sin, and Disease in the Ideology of the French Catholic League," *Catholic Historical Review* 88 (2002), 253-254; Potter, *Wars of Religion: Selected Documents*, xiv.

<sup>57</sup> Louis D'Orléans, *Replique pour le Catholique Anglois, contre le Catholique associé des Huguenots* (n.p., 1588), 8; quoted in Leonardo, 247. See also Holt, *Wars of Religion*, 131, for information on Dorléans.

<sup>58</sup> Knecht, *French Civil Wars*, 219.

<sup>59</sup> Nancy Lyman Roelker, ed. and trans., *The Paris of Henry of Navarre as seen by Pierre de l'Estoile: Selections from his Mémoires-Journaux* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 155.

*defense of the faith* [that is, the League].”<sup>60</sup> The cathedral chapter in the same city published a pamphlet in 1591 declaring that “all shall be moved by the zeal which we owe to the defense of our religion.”<sup>61</sup> Heretical armies had risen to attack the faith, and the League was the only body in France that would defend it. Henry III did almost nothing to assist the war effort against the Protestants, while Navarre was able to get assistance from England.<sup>62</sup>

With the increasing strength of Navarre’s forces, the League needed help from every quarter if it was going to achieve its goals. Some notable aid came from the confraternities. Robert Harding has called attention to the activities of particular confraternities in defending Catholicism in sixteenth-century France.<sup>63</sup> By the middle of that century, membership in the once popular confraternities had significantly decreased, only to rise again during the time of the League.<sup>64</sup> One group of confraternities closely linked to the League, those of the Holy Name of Jesus, which Harding calls “vigilante organizations,” came to Paris and Orléans in 1590. They promised to be ever-ready to take up arms against the enemy at the command of their superiors.<sup>65</sup> The purpose of this confraternity was to defend the Catholic faith and do everything possible to rid France of heresy. Members were to do so to the point of death. The confraternity considered all

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<sup>60</sup> Archives Départementales de la Seine-Maritime (Rouen), B, Parlement, Registres Secrets – Rouen, entry of 19 June 1593; quoted in Philip Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 169. The italics are Benedict’s.

<sup>61</sup> Archives Départementales de la Seine-Maritime (Rouen), G.2476; quoted in Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion*, 165.

<sup>62</sup> Potter, *Wars of Religion: Selected Documents*, 183; Knecht, *French Civil Wars*, 241.

<sup>63</sup> Robert R. Harding, “The Mobilization of Confraternities against the Reformation in France,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 11 (1980): 100-101.

<sup>64</sup> Penny Roberts, *A City in Conflict: Troyes during the French Wars of Religion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 164; Holt, *Wars of Religion*, 152.

<sup>65</sup> Harding, “The Mobilization of Confraternities,” 100-101.

those who died in such obedient service in the struggle against heresy as martyrs.<sup>66</sup>

In all the offensive and defensive ways in which the League combated the Huguenots, the League showed itself to be a militant reactionary response to the Protestant Reformation. This reactionary element in the League is a characteristic which Jedin identifies as fundamental to the Counter-Reformation.<sup>67</sup> One can conclude, then, that “Counter-Reformation” depicts some of what the League did just as “Catholic Reform” does. Jedin’s “Catholic-Reform-and-Counter-Reformation” indeed describes some of the religiosity of the League. It is a helpful designation.

The same can be said for the more recent term “Confessional Catholicism” which denotes the process of Catholic confessionalization in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>68</sup> “Confessionalization” can be defined as “the slow consolidation of religious belief and practice in Europe.”<sup>69</sup> Wolfgang Reinhard and Heinz Schilling first championed this category of analysis beginning in the 1980s. Since then, scholars have used it with effect to explain how the different confessional churches and states conjointly strengthened their positions through social disciplining and building strong states.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Christopher W. Stocker, “The Confraternity of the Holy Name of Jesus: Conflict and Renewal in the Sainte Union in 1590,” in *Confraternities and Catholic reform in Italy, France, and Spain*, ed. John P. Donnelly and Michael W. Maher (Kirksville: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999), 165, 159, 162.

<sup>67</sup> Jedin, “Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation?” 44.

<sup>68</sup> Wolfgang Reinhard, “Pressure towards Confessionalization? Prolegomena to a Theory of the Confessional Age,” in *The German Reformation: the Essential Readings*, ed. C. Scott Dixon (Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 173-174 ; Heinz Schilling, “Confessional Europe,” trans. Thomas A. Brady, in *Handbook of European History, 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation*, vol. 2: *Visions, Programs and Outcomes*, eds. Thomas A. Brady, Heiko A. Oberman, and James D. Tracy (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1995), 641.

<sup>69</sup> Patrick T. Ferry, “Confessionalization and Popular Preaching: Sermons against Synergism in Reformation Saxony,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 28 (1997): 1144.

<sup>70</sup> O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 109, 110; Mack P. Holt, “Confessionalization beyond the Germanies: The Case of France,” in *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555-1700: Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan*, ed. John M. Headley, Hans J. Hillerbrand, and Anthony J. Papalas (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 257.

Many historians have effectively applied Reinhard's and Schilling's confessionalization thesis to the German states and have consequently made important contributions to our understanding of the early modern period. Their concept of "confessionalization" is problematic, however, if applied to sixteenth-century France for two principal reasons: first, the French state was weak during the religious wars; second, the monarchy did not accept the Tridentine decrees, a major tool for Catholic social disciplining.<sup>71</sup>

While the confessionalization thesis does not substantially contribute to situating the League within Catholic history, what Reinhard has marked as the "methods" of confessionalization do shed some light on League religiosity. They demonstrate how the League tried to form a Catholic identity for France even without the assistance of the monarch, indeed as rebels fighting against the monarch starting in late 1588. Reinhard argues that there were seven methods: the promulgation of clear statements of belief, the spread and implantation of confessional doctrine, the use of propaganda and censorship, the "internalization" of Catholic beliefs in individuals through a thorough and orthodox education, the removal of dissidents and the disciplining of errant faithful, the control of ritual, and the control of language.<sup>72</sup> In the League we see at least four of these in practice. The first was the use of propaganda and forms of censorship, which could include sermons, literature, processions, and indices of forbidden books.<sup>73</sup> The League went to great lengths to spread its message in print. The League printers in Paris, at the height of their output in the late 1580s, published almost four hundred works in a single

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<sup>71</sup> Holt, "Confessionalization beyond the Germanies, 257-259.

<sup>72</sup> Reinhard, "Pressure towards Confessionalization?" 177-182.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

year,<sup>74</sup> producing papal bulls, stories of current miracles taking place in France, prayers, sermons, numerous accounts about the Guises and their assassination in 1588, strong criticisms of Henry III, and at least one exhortation to Catholics to reform and for magistrates to render “severe justice” to heretics.<sup>75</sup> The city of Troyes also contributed significantly to the spread of League literature.<sup>76</sup>

A second way in which the League took part in confessionalization was by encouraging the “internalization” of Catholic beliefs in individuals through education.<sup>77</sup> No religious order was more renowned for providing an orthodox education than the Society of Jesus, which offered boys throughout Europe free education.<sup>78</sup> The League recognized the importance of having Jesuit colleges. For instance, in 1592, despite the city of Rouen’s financial straits, the League urged the Jesuits to found the Collège de Bourbon there, which they did in 1593. Even though by this time League domination of the city was coming to an end, the college survived and after only ten years of existence, nearly two thousand students were studying there.<sup>79</sup>

The League’s third method of confessionalization is found in its efforts to create homogeneity by removing dissidents and disciplining the erroneous.<sup>80</sup> Removing Protestant dissidents from France was one of the League’s most important reasons for being. In this goal, it even received the approval of Pope Gregory XIII.<sup>81</sup> In January 1588, the League demanded that the king establish the Inquisition, deeming it “the best

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<sup>74</sup> Pallier, *Recherches sur l’Imprimerie*, 16.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 16, 370, 394, 405, 411, 431, 282-289, 331.

<sup>76</sup> Roberts, *A City in Conflict*, 175.

<sup>77</sup> Reinhard, “Pressure towards Confessionalization?” 179-180.

<sup>78</sup> O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, 213, 226.

<sup>79</sup> Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion*, 195-196.

<sup>80</sup> Reinhard, “Pressure towards Confessionalization?” 180-181.

<sup>81</sup> Pastor, *History of the Popes* 19: 542.

way to defeat heretics and suspects.”<sup>82</sup> Henry III begrudgingly gave in to some of the League’s requests, but try as they might, Leaguers could not influence him to bring the Inquisition to France. It was simply too much of an affront to his Gallican sensibilities since it operated under the authority of the Holy See.<sup>83</sup>

The fourth method of League confessionalization involved the way it used rituals and practiced devotions which were distinctly Catholic. Leaguers took part in such activities as Eucharistic adoration and processions; they also venerated relics and showed devotion toward the Virgin Mary, all of which were anathema to their Protestant enemies.<sup>84</sup> The League also employed social discipline. For instance, the *Parlement* in Nantes which was in League hands issued strict laws against blasphemy, gambling, lack of Sunday observance, and the opening of stores on holy days.<sup>85</sup> Thus, in their own way, Leaguers were certainly confessionalizers. In a certain sense, then, one can situate some of what they did within “Confessional Catholicism” so long as it is clear what this meant in France during the religious wars because its definition has connotations which do not describe France at that time with perfect accuracy.

“Tridentine Reformation,” another term used to describe Catholicism in the early modern period, also has its own pitfalls but still effectively helps the historian define League Catholicism. William Hudon, writing in 1996, stated that “so long as it is carefully defined, ‘Tridentine Reformation’ represents the only currently viable

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<sup>82</sup> “The Eleven Articles of Nancy, January 1588,” in Potter, *Wars of Religion: Selected Documents*, 198.

<sup>83</sup> Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450-1700: A Reassessment of the Counter-Reformation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 67-68.

<sup>84</sup> Reinhard, “Pressure towards Confessionalization?” 181. For examples of the League’s Marian devotion, see Ramsey, *Liturgy, Politics, and Salvation*, 163 and Victor de Chalamert, *Histoire de la Ligue sous les règnes de Henri III et Henri IV: ou, Quinze années de l’histoire de France* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1898; reprint, Geneva: Slatkine-Megariotis, 1974), 226.

<sup>85</sup> Harding, “Revolution and Reform in the Holy League,” 398.

terminological alternative [to other terms proposed].”<sup>86</sup> According to him, this term includes three stages: one, the “experimentation” in Catholicism predating the Council of Trent, which included things like Bible study groups and efforts by bishops to reaffirm their authority; second, the period of the Council itself from which Catholic doctrine and practice emerged clearly defined; and third, the time of the Council’s implementation in the Catholic world.<sup>87</sup>

A significant Tridentine characteristic of the League was the emphasis the League placed on the value of Eucharistic worship. The Eucharistic procession was particularly popular among Leaguers. At Trent, in the thirteenth session on the Holy Eucharist, the Council fathers praised the practice of such processions and anathematized those who criticized them.<sup>88</sup> Such processions expressed to all who took part and who witnessed them that, as the Council taught, Christ was “truly, really and substantially contained in the propitious sacrament of the holy eucharist.”<sup>89</sup> Protestants had mocked and tried to discredit Catholic Eucharistic doctrine, so it was incumbent on the Council to be totally unambiguous in defining the Catholic position.<sup>90</sup>

What the Council mandated on the Eucharist, the League put into practice; Eucharistic devotion was exceptionally strong during the League years. One genre of Eucharistic devotion prevalent in League towns was the *Oratoire*. It was a custom

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<sup>86</sup> William V. Hudon, “Religion and Society in Early Modern Italy—Old Questions, New Insights,” *American Historical Review* 101 (1996): 803.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2: 695-696, 698.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 693.

<sup>90</sup> In France, one of the most infamous incidents of Protestant mockery of the Eucharist—the Affair of the Placards—occurred 18 October 1534. Some zealous Protestants placed pamphlets throughout northern cities strongly denouncing the Mass and the doctrine of transubstantiation. One placard was even put in the king’s residence at Blois. See Holt, *Wars of Religion*, 18-19.

unique to the Catholic League towns.<sup>91</sup> During the *Oratoire*, the Eucharist was displayed in a monstrance on the high altar in a parish church, surrounded by various relics for the duration of one week. Throughout the week, the faithful offered prayers and listened to sermons. In addition to reinforcing Catholic beliefs about the Eucharist, the *Oratoire* underlined the utility of venerating relics, another practice denounced by Protestants but encouraged at Trent.<sup>92</sup> When the week had passed, a cleric carried the Eucharist in procession to another parish in the town for the *Oratoire* to continue. The *Oratoire* was perpetual Eucharistic worship.<sup>93</sup> It came to Troyes in 1587 after having found enormous popularity in Paris. In Troyes, too, the devotion was extremely popular, so much so that there were problems with too many parishes wanting to have the *Oratoire* at the same time.<sup>94</sup>

Similar to the *Oratoire* was the Forty Hours devotion, which also had as its focus the continual adoration of the exposed Blessed Sacrament and included processions.<sup>95</sup> The Capuchin friar Bellintani da Salò introduced this practice to Paris.<sup>96</sup> For a duration of forty hours, the Eucharist was exposed in one place to commemorate the time Christ spent in the tomb between His death and resurrection. Pope Paul III (r. 1534-1549) granted indulgences for this practice which was performed, in his words, “to appease the anger of God provoked by the offences of Christians, and in order to bring to nought the efforts and machinations of the Turks who are pressing forward to the destruction of Christendom.”<sup>97</sup> When the practice came to France, its purpose remained to appease

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<sup>91</sup> Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion*, 196-197.

<sup>92</sup> Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2: 774-776.

<sup>93</sup> Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion*, 196.

<sup>94</sup> Roberts, *A City in Conflict*, 165.

<sup>95</sup> Herbert Thurston, “Forty Hours’ Devotion,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1909).

<sup>96</sup> Ramsey, *Liturgy, Politics, and Salvation*, 76.

<sup>97</sup> Sala, “Documenti,” IV, 9; quoted in Thurston, “Forty Hours’ Devotion.”

God's wrath, but it now focussed on thwarting the efforts of the Huguenots, not the Turks.

Eric Cochrane has argued that what is most useful about "Tridentine Reformation" is that "it would make possible bringing together under a single denomination all those various religious movements, persons, and institutions that led up to, paralleled, were sanctioned by, or issued from the Council of Trent."<sup>98</sup> It seems highly problematic, though, to give the label of "Tridentine" to movements that took place even before the Council began. This term also puts too much emphasis on the Council.<sup>99</sup>

For the League and for other early modern Catholics, what transpired at Trent from 1545 to 1563 may have been important for what it demanded or what it threatened, but it was not the all-important event that "Tridentine Reformation" purports it to be. Although the League was Tridentine in a number of different ways, there were many ways in which the League was at odds with the Council of Trent. This is demonstrated vividly through the League's relationship with the episcopate. The Council declared that bishops "have been made by the holy Spirit *rulers of the church of God.*"<sup>100</sup> However, the League faced a predicament as a result of this teaching because most bishops were Royalists: they were loyal to Henry III, and they recognized Navarre as his legitimate heir.<sup>101</sup> Could Leaguers really "treat them with honour and respect due to fathers" as the

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<sup>98</sup> Eric Cochrane, "Counter Reformation or Tridentine Reformation? Italy in the Age of Carlo Borromeo," in *San Carlo Borromeo: Catholic Reform and Ecclesiastical Politics in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century*, eds. John M. Headley and John B. Tomaro (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1988), 42.

<sup>99</sup> O'Malley, *Trent and All That*, 135.

<sup>100</sup> Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2: 743.

<sup>101</sup> Harding, "Revolution and Reform in the Holy League," 408.

Council commanded and let these *politiques* “rule” them?<sup>102</sup> In Auxerre, clearly they could not: Leaguers tried to kill the bishop there after hearing what must have been an exceptionally virulent sermon preached by a local cleric!<sup>103</sup>

In addition, while the Council looked to the bishops to lead their flocks, the League was largely led by lay people and simple priests.<sup>104</sup> In at least two instances in Paris, a priest took control of a parish on his own initiative.<sup>105</sup> The laity, on occasion, chose whom they would have as their parish priest. In 1588, League parishioners at the Parish of St. Gervasius and St. Protasius in Paris expelled their curé, demanding a more zealous priest. Another priest who had been there previously was going to take the place of the unwanted cleric, but he too was rejected because he had been unsupportive of the Guises. Finally, a sufficiently zealous priest came whom they deemed acceptable.<sup>106</sup>

In her book *Liturgy, Politics, and Salvation: The Catholic League in Paris and the Nature of Catholic Reform, 1540-1630*, Ann Ramsey provides examples of some conflicts between the League’s religious customs and the mandates of Trent. From her analysis of Parisian last wills and testaments, she noticed that even though the Council commanded bishops to “banish from the church any idea of a particular number of masses and candles which derives more from the cult of superstition than from true religion,”<sup>107</sup> some Leaguers continued to request thirteen Masses to be said for their souls after death. It is not precisely clear why the number thirteen was popular; it may have

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<sup>102</sup> Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2: 794. A *politique* was a Catholic who still supported Henry III after the murder of the Guises and Navarre as his successor. See Roelker, *The Paris of Henry of Navarre*, 310.

<sup>103</sup> Henry Heller, *Iron and Blood: Civil Wars in Sixteenth-Century France* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 108.

<sup>104</sup> Harding, “Revolution and Reform in the Holy League,” 408-409.

<sup>105</sup> Ramsey, *Liturgy, Politics, and Salvation*, 122-123.

<sup>106</sup> Stocker, “The Confraternity of the Holy Name of Jesus,” 177.

<sup>107</sup> Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2: 737.

been related to the idea that there were thirteen apostles—the original twelve plus Saint Paul.<sup>108</sup> This practice had mostly disappeared by 1590, but it remained among some. Ramsey also suggests that the militant confraternities of the League exemplified resistance to the Tridentine decrees since the Council required that they be solely devoted to peaceful religious actions.<sup>109</sup> While it is true that the League was affected by the Council of Trent, the above examples demonstrate that it would be inaccurate to portray the League’s Catholicism principally with a term like “Tridentine Reformation.”

That term along with “Catholic Reform,” “Counter-Reformation” and “Confessional Catholicism” only provide partially accurate descriptions of League Catholicism. The *Articles de la sainte union des Catholiques François* written in 1588 by the Leaguer Frédéric Morel provide one case in point.<sup>110</sup> The four articles were, at least according to Morel, the key principles of the Catholic League.<sup>111</sup> Presented in an overtly religious manner, the cover of the publication features an image of Christ crucified between the Virgin Mary and Saint John the Apostle. In addition, throughout the text, there are references to Scripture and to the Church Fathers, as well as an emphasis on turning to God and serving Him. It mentions defending the true religion, and it firmly denounces heresy. What is most conspicuous in the work is that one of the four articles emphasizes the need to help the poor.<sup>112</sup> Although one might argue that this article is Tridentine based on the one conciliar statement which says the pastors must

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<sup>108</sup> Ramsey, *Liturgy, Politics, and Salvation*, 205, 204.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 217, 24.

<sup>110</sup> Pallier, *Recherches sur l’Imprimerie*, 267-268.

<sup>111</sup> [Frédéric Morel], *Articles de la sainte union des Catholiques François* (1588), 26. Bibliothèque nationale de France/Gallica,

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k82307b.capture> (accessed 24 June 2006).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, title page, 4, 23, 6, 7, 4, 5, 9, 6, 17.

“have fatherly care of the poor and of all others who are wretched,”<sup>113</sup> Trent did not command everyone to do this. For members of the League, the demonstration of charity was not a reaction to Protestantism and therefore not an aspect of the Counter-Reformation, nor was it an attempt at confessionalization. Some might argue that wanting to help the poor indicates a reformed mindset among Leaguers, but this is to understand “Reform” too broadly. Charity was simply an important part of being Catholic. Wanting to help the poor reflects the fact that Leaguers were Catholics, not necessarily Catholic reformers.

A further demonstration of the inadequacy of the confessionalization thesis and the labels “Counter-Reformation,” “Catholic Reform,” and “Tridentine Reformation” in describing the League’s religiosity is found in a pivotal event in its history: the Day of the Barricades, 12 May 1588, when League discontent resulted in revolt. Even though Henry III was king, a large proportion of the Parisian populace admired Henry, Duke of Guise far more. Parisians regarded him and his father François as “virtuous Catholic warrior heroes” while they saw the monarchy as “tainted by compromise with heresy.”<sup>114</sup> The populace believed that Henry of Guise could effectively lead Catholics to victory against the Protestants. Henry III could not or would not. Leaguers watched him violate the provisions of the Treaty of Nemours by putting little effort into the war against the Huguenots, while Guise fought diligently with great success. When Elizabeth I executed Mary Queen of Scots, a Catholic, in February 1587, Leaguers blamed the king for abandoning her. His failure to save her indicated plainly his apathy in the face of the

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<sup>113</sup> Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 2: 744.

<sup>114</sup> Stuart Carroll, “The Revolt of Paris, 1588: Aristocratic Insurgency and the Mobilization of Popular Support,” *French Historical Studies* 23 (2000): 306.

Protestant threat.<sup>115</sup> Henry III also made a grandiose error in appointing Jean-Louis de Nogaret, Duke of Epernon, to be Admiral of France and governor of Normandy late in the same year.<sup>116</sup> Even before this appointment the League despised him because he supported Navarre's succession. Giving him major positions in the kingdom, especially one Guise expected to receive—the governorship of Normandy—aroused the ire of the League even more. More than once in 1588, someone tried to murder him.<sup>117</sup>

The Duke of Guise and the Sixteen planned a revolt for 24 April 1588. They intended to kill Epernon and seize the king's residence, the Louvre. However, a spy among the Sixteen warned Henry III of the plan, and so he forbade Guise from entering Paris. Nevertheless, Guise ignored the king and entered the city on 9 May. Around the same time, a number of nobles loyal to Guise entered and spread throughout the city. The king, fearing the results of having Guise and his supporters in the city and not trusting the militia's loyalty to him, ordered French and Swiss soldiers into Paris early on 12 May. Then the unexpected happened; Parisians of all classes took to the streets and erected barricades when they saw the presence of troops in the city. The Guisard nobles joined with them and led them in revolt. For most of the morning the Royalists and Leaguers squared off against each other while both sides held negotiations to settle the tense situation. In the afternoon, tired of waiting, Leaguers attacked. Royalist soldiers fared badly against the League. Humiliated, Henry III asked Guise to calm his followers, which he promptly did. It was five o'clock in the afternoon when Guise rode through Paris calling for an end to the revolt.<sup>118</sup> The next day, Henry III fled to Chartres, leaving

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<sup>115</sup> Knecht, *French Civil Wars*, 222, 226, 227; Carroll, "The Revolt of Paris, 1588," 323.

<sup>116</sup> Knecht, *French Civil Wars*, 231.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 218, 220, 231-232.

<sup>118</sup> Carroll, "The Revolt of Paris, 1588," 327, 334, 328, 329, 332, 333.

Paris under the control of Guise and the Sixteen. From Chartres, Henry III agreed to strip Epernon of his office and to declare once again that there should be no toleration for heretics and that the Cardinal of Bourbon, not Navarre, would be his heir.<sup>119</sup> The king's own subjects in Paris, inspired by Guise, had revolted against him. Unfortunately for the king, his subjects in many more cities would do the same after he took his revenge on the Guises, having them murdered in December 1588.<sup>120</sup>

Ordering the murders of the Duke and Cardinal of Guise was possibly the worst action the unpopular king could have taken if he was hoping to garner support for himself. A single revolt in his capital was bad enough; the rampant revolt against him in the wake of the murders was far worse. The League all over France became revolutionary. It wanted the tyrannical king dead. It is ironic that the League in early 1589 hated Henry III more than Navarre, even though the king was a rather devout Catholic, a man who had founded new confraternities of penitents and supported religious orders, who fasted frequently, and who took part in numerous processions, perhaps more than any other French king ever had.<sup>121</sup>

How can we explain this phenomenon? A revolt on the part of a Catholic organization against a Catholic was clearly not in the spirit of the Counter-Reformation. Nor was the revolutionary nature of the League consistent with "Catholic Reform." The revolts were not about implementing the Tridentine decrees in France nor even about becoming better Christians. Nor were they the result of confessionalization. The revolts did not help build up the Church as a homogeneous confessional entity but only resulted in a Church divided between Royalists and Leaguers. One might be tempted to argue that

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<sup>119</sup> Knecht, *French Civil Wars*, 233; Holt, *Wars of Religion*, 124.

<sup>120</sup> Roberts, *A City in Conflict*, 174-175.

<sup>121</sup> Holt, *Wars of Religion*, 130, 125.

they were merely political acts unrelated to the religiosity of the League and thus do not figure into the discussion of Catholic identity. Such a hypothesis is incorrect, first of all because it ignores the overtly religious motivations behind the revolts, and second of all because the League did not distinguish between sacred acts and secular ones; religion permeated everything.<sup>122</sup>

Even acts of murder, which can seem highly irreligious, were part of being Catholic for Leaguers. Violence and Catholicism were intertwined in the League. Since Leaguers hated the *politiques* even more than the Huguenots,<sup>123</sup> the most notable acts of Leaguer violence were actually directed against Catholics. In February 1589, for instance, a League mob killed the first president of the Toulouse Parlement, Jean-Etienne Duranti, and two others with him, because of an appeal for help he or the advocate-general of the Parlement had made to overthrow the League bishop and governor of the city, Urbain de Saint-Gelais.<sup>124</sup> In November 1591, the Sixteen killed another Parlement president of Paris, Barnabé Brisson, along with two of his councillors.<sup>125</sup> Given the hatred of the League for the *politiques* and the preachers' call that they be killed, it is surprising that there were not many more incidents of this kind.<sup>126</sup>

What term can describe such actions? Should any? After all, what does murder have to do with Catholicism? What can be religious in that? For Leaguers, violence could be exceptionally religious. In the case of the murder of Duranti, the mob seemed to believe that it was their God-given duty to kill him. They made themselves "soldiers of

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<sup>122</sup> Harding, "Revolution and Reform," 409.

<sup>123</sup> M. Greengrass, "The Psychology of Religious Violence," *French History* 5 (1991): 471.

<sup>124</sup> Holt, *Wars of Religion*, 142-144.

<sup>125</sup> Knecht, *French Civil Wars*, 253; Roelker, *The Paris of Henry of Navarre*, 208.

<sup>126</sup> Roelker, *The Paris of Henry of Navarre*, 198-201.

God,” to use Denis Crouzet’s phrase,<sup>127</sup> and took it upon themselves to do what they thought God wanted done. The citizens of Toulouse wanted the *politiques* dead because they “care more for the cause of the Valois than that of Jesus Christ.”<sup>128</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis suggests that one of the reasons why mobs engaged in religious violence was because the civil authorities were not doing what the crowds thought they should be doing.<sup>129</sup> Since the authorities did not execute Duranti and his companions with enough haste, the League mob took the task upon itself. This act was not one of Reinhard’s methods of confessionalization, “the disciplining of [religious] adherents”<sup>130</sup> as some might argue. It was not an officially sanctioned act such as an inquisitorial execution which had the support of the secular authority and the Church.

There was also no type of official sanction for the League’s most famous murder, that of Henry III in 1589. For the crowds who rejoiced in his death, governmental sanction was not necessary because it had divine sanction. The murderer, Jacques Clément, was the executor of God’s will. In the League’s eyes, Clément was another David in his slaying of Goliath.<sup>131</sup> Neither “Confessionalization” nor “Catholic Reform,” nor “Counter-Reformation,” and definitely not “Tridentine Reformation” can account for this aspect of the League’s religiosity. “Early Modern Catholicism” can.

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<sup>127</sup> Denis Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu: La Violence au temps des troubles de religion (vers 1525-vers 1610)*, 2 vols. (Paris: Champ Vallon, 1990).

<sup>128</sup> *Advertissement / particulier / et veritable / De tout ce qui s’est passé en la ville de / Tholose, depuis le massacre & assissi / nat commis en la personne des Prin / ces Catholiques, touchant l’emprisson- / nement & mort du premier President / & Advocat du Roy d’icelle/ Paris . . . /MDLXXXIX/ Avec permission, 12;* quoted in M. Greengrass, “The *Sainte Union* in the Provinces: The Case of Toulouse,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 14 (1983): 485.

<sup>129</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Rites of Violence,” in Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 161.

<sup>130</sup> Reinhard, “Pressure towards Confessionalization?” 178.

<sup>131</sup> Knecht, *French Civil Wars*, 236-237; Holt, *Wars of Religion*, 133.

Neither can those first four terms encompass the increased devotion with which Catholics practiced their faith as Leaguers. The diarist Pierre de l'Estoile noted the striking difference in behaviour among Parisians on Mardi Gras in 1589 compared to previous times commenting that "all day long fine devout processions were held in Paris, instead of the Masquerades of other years."<sup>132</sup> During that year, Parisians were so enamoured of processions that they woke their priests up from sleep to lead them at night. If a priest refused, he risked being labelled a heretic or a *politique*.<sup>133</sup>

Such processions were often penitential in nature. They included men, women, and children of all states of life. Having children dress in white and even walking barefoot in procession was one particularly remarkable form of penance in which Leaguers took part. In January 1589, ten thousand Parisian children processed from the Cemetery of the Innocents to the church of Saint Geneviève, and there the children from each parish took turns before the crucifix crying out for God's mercy. At all times of the day, even in the most frigid weather, penitential processions continued.<sup>134</sup> In Rouen, the League formed large groups of penitents. They promised to perform particular devotions and not to blaspheme, and they organized the nocturnal processions.<sup>135</sup> Paris already had penitential confraternities before the existence of the League, but another, the grey Penitents of Saint Francis, was formed there in 1585, and likely played a notable role in the life of the League and its processions.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> In Roelker, *The Paris of Henry of Navarre*, 173.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>134</sup> Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion*, 190; Denis Richet, "Politique et Religion: Les Processions à Paris en 1589," in Richet, *De la Réforme à la Révolution: Études sur la France moderne* (Paris: Aubier, 1991), 72-74.

<sup>135</sup> Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion*, 188, 201.

<sup>136</sup> Ramsey, *Liturgy, Politics, and Salvation*, 138; Richet, "Les Processions," 79-80.

The primary goal of the penitential confraternities was to have their members become holy individuals.<sup>137</sup> An important means to that end was penance. The belief was widely held that if the Catholic faithful did not change their lives and do penance for their sins, God, in His justice, would give France a heretical king.<sup>138</sup> In response, the League instituted days of fasting and prayer to appease God.<sup>139</sup> The message was clear: “Do penance. You are lost and damned forever if you do not do penance . . . Sparring nothing have recourse to the remedies which the goodness and mercy of our Lord gives us in his Church: the Sacrament of Penitence.”<sup>140</sup> The League both gave this counsel and diligently followed it.

The penitential processions were outward manifestations of the League’s religious zeal. There was also among some Leaguers an intense interior religious devotion. This in particular provides one of the most compelling reason for adopting “Early Modern Catholicism” as one label to describe the League’s religiosity because, unlike the other terms, it allows one to deal, as O’Malley says, with “religion in and of itself—religion . . . as a yearning for the transcendent or an experience of it.”<sup>141</sup> Some notable Leaguers cannot be understood apart from this desire. If we examine, for instance, Barbe Acarie and Marie Sévin, two Parisian League women who devoted themselves in singular ways to pious practices, we quickly see that their intense religiosity had nothing to do with confessionalization, the Counter-Reformation, or Catholic Reform. Sévin undertook the rare practice of receiving Communion almost daily and Acarie enjoyed mystical

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<sup>137</sup> Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion*, 201; Stocker, “The Confraternity of the Holy Name of Jesus,” 160.

<sup>138</sup> Benedict, “The Catholic Response to Protestantism,” 178.

<sup>139</sup> Richet, “Les Processions,” 71.

<sup>140</sup> Archives Départementales de la Seine-Maritime (Rouen), G.2476; quoted in Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion*, 194.

<sup>141</sup> O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 139.

experiences. In 1593, it is reported, the latter even received the invisible stigmata. All the evidence would suggest that these women wanted union with God more than anything else.<sup>142</sup> These women represent a fundamental component of League Catholicism. Thus a label which includes them is obviously necessary.

“Confessional Catholicism,” “Catholic Reform,” “Counter-Reformation,” and “Tridentine Reformation,” all work to describe the Catholic League to some degree, but each has its problems and none is fully acceptable. The Catholicism of the League is too complex to be completely understood through any one of these terms, or even through all of these terms combined. A Jedin-like solution of combining all four terms together will not work; not only because such a term would be inelegantly cumbersome, but because it still would not define the League’s religiosity fully. Therefore, historians would benefit from using “Early Modern Catholicism” in their research and discussion of League religiosity because it allows them to include all of its various actors and actions. The League was composed of holy men and women and rather nasty individuals along with everything in between, all in some way forming part of its religious character. Penitents, militants,<sup>143</sup> scoundrels, and saints made up the League. Just as diverse as the people in it were the religious actions in which they engaged. O’Malley’s term lets us see this. In using “Early Modern Catholicism,” historians need not eliminate “Catholic Reform” or “Counter-Reformation” from their vocabulary as William Hudon and Eric Cochrane

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<sup>142</sup> Barbara B. Diefendorf, “An Age of Gold? Parisian Women, the Holy League, and the Roots of Catholic Renewal,” in *Changing Identities in Early Modern France*, ed. Michael Wolfe (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 177-179.

<sup>143</sup> Denis Pallier first described Leaguers as *penitents* and *militants*. See Pallier, *Recherches sur l’Imprimerie*, 173. Other historians have also characterized them in this manner. See, for example, Benedict, *Rouen during the Wars of Religion*, 190.

suggest they do.<sup>144</sup> Nor must they eliminate “Confessional Catholicism” or “Tridentine Reformation.” When understood and used carefully and precisely, these terms are still eminently useful.<sup>145</sup>

Of course, O’Malley’s term is “bland and faceless”<sup>146</sup> as he acknowledges, but no other term signifies as well as his the complexity of League Catholicism. In contrast to every other term proposed, “Early Modern Catholicism” has the capacity to describe the “doctrine and devotion, parish and confraternity, prince and pauper, laws and art, clergy and laity” of the Holy Union.<sup>147</sup> A label that can incorporate this diversity cannot be ignored.

After examining all of these terms, one may be inclined to agree with Simon Ditchfield:

If we could just leave behind what appears to be a lingering obsession with asking what Roman Catholicism *was* during our period (i.e. what noun/label we should attach to it) and, instead, ask ourselves what it *did* ... , we might more easily be able to understand the protean forms it took in the process of remaking itself as this planet’s first world religion.<sup>148</sup>

It is certainly more important to know what Catholicism *did* during the early modern period, as Ditchfield says, but the label we apply to it has a profound effect on what we see Catholicism *doing*.<sup>149</sup> If we perceive League religiosity in terms of “Early Modern Catholicism” we can better understand its heterogeneity and thus better explain its actions, motivations, and the individuals who were a part of it. When we view the

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<sup>144</sup> Cochrane, “Counter Reformation or Tridentine Reformation?” 42; Hudon, “Religion and Society in Early Modern Italy,” 804. Cochrane wants only that one stop using *Counter-Reformation*; Hudon wants both terms eliminated from use.

<sup>145</sup> O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 140.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>148</sup> Simon Ditchfield, “Of Dancing Cardinals and Mestizo Madonnas: Reconfiguring the History of Roman Catholicism in the Early Modern Period,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 8 (2004): 408.

<sup>149</sup> O’Malley, *Trent and All That*, 3.

League through the lenses of “Catholic Reform,” “Counter-Reformation,” “Confessional Catholicism,” or “Tridentine Reformation,” either individually or combined, we can see a great deal of what League Catholicism was, but we risk missing some of its essential characteristics. We perhaps risk missing its most significant characteristic of all: its utter complexity.

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