Religion and the People
800-1700

EDITED BY JAMES OBELKEVICH

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The Catholic Response to Protestantism

Church Activity and Popular Piety in Rouen, 1560–1600

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Our understanding of the Counter-Reformation has been transformed in recent years by the work of a number of French historians following the trail blazed by the great sociologist of religion, Gabriel Le Bras. These scholars have directed attention away from the kinds of studies that dominated church history until recently: studies of church administration, of the papacy, of church-state relations, and of the thought and actions of an elite of saints and theologians. Instead, they have attempted to write the history of the Catholic church as a religious institution encompassing millions of believers, not just a coterie of saints, bishops and doctors. Two questions in particular have engaged their attention: (1) What was the state of the clergy and how did it conceive and carry out its pastoral functions? and (2) How fully did the average member of the church understand the elements of the faith and participate in the ritual life of the church? In focusing their attention on these questions, these French historians have shown the Counter-Reformation to have been a remarkably successful campaign by the church to elevate the quality and status of the clergy, improve religious instruction, quicken popular piety, and eradicate, or at least drive underground, competing beliefs labeled as heretical or superstitious.[1]

In at least one respect, however, all of the recent historians of the French Counter-Reformation owe a strong debt to the preceding generations of scholars who have written on the subject. For centuries church historiography generally began accounts of the Counter-Reformation

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with the generation of saints of the early 1600s. Perhaps these scholars wished to acquit the religious revival of seventeenth-century France from any possible connection with the violent and occasionally radical excesses of the Wars of Religion. The more recent students of religious life have followed this tradition, beginning their studies in the 1620s or later. In consequence, the second half of the sixteenth century has been largely neglected in the recent historiography.[2] Yet this is an exceptionally interesting period. In these years French Catholicism faced its most direct challenge from Protestantism. The Reformed Church blossomed into a major nationwide presence in the late 1550s and early 1560s, reaching its peak strength around 1565. In precisely these same years the Council of Trent was laying down its blueprint for Catholic reform. One Catholic response to the threat posed by the rapid growth of Protestantism was violence and repression: the second half of the sixteenth century is the age of the Wars of Religion. But is there any evidence from the period of the kinds of innovative devotional, missionary, or educational activities that were characteristic of the Counter-Reformation? Was there any increase in popular Catholic piety in reaction to the violent attacks of the reformers on such popular devotional practices as the adoration of the Virgin and the Eucharist? These questions raise the issue of how an ecclesiastical establishment responds to radical challenge and speak directly to the classic debate over whether the renovation of Catholicism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was primarily a reaction against the growth of Protestantism or an autonomous movement of spiritual renewal growing out of sources within the church. So far, however, they have rarely been examined.

I have chosen to investigate these questions through a local study of the important Norman city of Rouen. At once a provincial administrative capital, an important manufacturing center, and a leading port, Rouen housed over seventy thousand inhabitants around the mid-sixteenth century, making it in all probability France's second largest city at that time.[3] It was the seat of an archbishopric and the site of numerous convents and monasteries, including houses of all four mendicant orders. In the course of the sixteenth century it also became one of the chief centers of Protestantism in northern France.[4] Thus, the city provides an excellent locale in which to study the Catholic response to the rise of Protestantism.

The first section of this essay will examine the most important measures taken by the Catholic church in its effort to reawaken the faith of the masses, improve their level of religious instruction, and integrate them more fully into the life of the church. Particular attention will be paid to discovering which elements of the church responded actively and imaginatively to the Protestant challenge and which remained passive or

even hindered innovation. A second section will then attempt to discover how successful the measures taken by the church were in stimulating popular piety and whether or not the second half of the sixteenth century saw any revival of Catholic sentiment among the urban masses. Several quantitative tests of popular attachment to certain devotional practices will be used for this purpose. This study will, I believe, provide a bridge between the Council of Trent and the rather late take off of the Counter-Reformation in France, as well as sketching the outlines of the religious history of this neglected period.

In the seventeenth century, it became almost a commonplace among Catholic prelates to interpret the growth of Protestantism as a providential warning to the church to put its own house in order. The notorious failure of many members of the hierarchy to live up to the standards set for them had to be ended, and the church's champions had to try both to convince those who had left the church of the error of their ways and, perhaps more important, to inoculate against heresy the great silent majority of Catholics, a group often poorly instructed in the basic tenets of the creed and more conforming than fervent in its faith. Did Rouen's clergy interpret the increasing headway made by Protestant ideas from 1520 onward in this same fashion? It would appear not. Their initial response was limited and strictly defensive. Internal reform was barely discussed. Ambitious or innovative efforts to stimulate Catholic fervor—the establishment of new religious orders or confraternities, for example, or the introduction of catechetical instruction—were slow to appear.

In 1528 the first heretic to be condemned to death in Rouen during the Reformation era, one Pierre Bar, was burned at the stake in the town marketplace. Following his execution, the Cathedral Chapter staged a solemn procession that wound its way through the city to the Carmelite monastery, where the prior of the order delivered a sermon "pour l'instruction du peuple, afin qu'il s'abstienne des erreurs de la lecture des livres de l'ecriture sainte transcrits en langue vernaculaire."[5] This was the church's first response to the rise of Protestantism. It dusted off its two great weapons of communication and propaganda, the sermon and the procession, and used them in conjunction with legal means of repression to warn the population of the dangers to society and the state purportedly posed by heresy.

As the true mass medium of the era, the pulpit had long been the essential tool for popular religious instruction, and it was now the natural place from which to attack Protestantism. The frequent sermons that formed a regular part of the religious calendar were directed against the heretic. Contemporaries were not shy in their estimates of the numbers of souls that an effective orator could regain for the church; the governor of Dieppe credited the sermons of the famous Jesuit Antonio Possevino, or

Possevin, with reconverting no less than twenty-five hundred Huguenots by his sermons.[6] But the Jesuits were exceptional in this period in that they tried logically to confute Protestant doctrine. Most preachers seem to have aimed their sermons less at any Protestants who might have been in the audience than at those who were still faithful, warning them in no uncertain terms of evils associated with the Calvinist *preche*. While no sermons actually preached in Rouen have survived, the published sermons of a leading Parisian champion of Catholicism, the Franciscan Thomas Beauxamis, can serve as an example of the thrust of most Roman attacks on Protestantism. His *Resolution sur certains pourtraictz et libelles intitulez du nom de Marmitte* (Paris, 1562), originally a series of sermons countering a widely distributed piece of Protestant propaganda, is a prolonged denunciation of the "Satanic troop" of Huguenots, whose assemblies are little other than orgies and whose doctrine is nothing but an excuse for giving lubricity free rein.[7] That similar attacks were pronounced from Rouen's pulpits is certain: the city's magistrates repeatedly had to reprimand Catholic preachers for stirring up popular violence with their denunciations of the Huguenot.[8]

Processions through the city's streets attempted in symbolic fashion to give the faithful the same warning of the dangers of heresy. Although processions to combat heresy are often associated with the period of the Catholic league, the ceremonies of that era were merely the most extravagant processions of the period. The sight of a long train of clerics and laymen carrying the *chasse* of the Virgin or the Corpus Domini through the streets and singing hymns in their honor would long have been familiar to Rouen's inhabitants. From 1528 onward, special processions were regularly staged in the wake of important Protestant attacks on objects the Catholics held sacred—incidents of iconoclasm, for example—and during the periods of civil war.[9] These usually served a double function. They presented a dramatic, ornate public spectacle of reverence for a person or doctrine attacked by Protestantism, usually the Virgin Mary or the doctrine of the Real Presence, and thus reaffirmed their sacred character. They were also rites of purification, attempting to mitigate God's wrath and cleanse a city polluted by heresy. They commonly included purificatory symbols such as the burning of candles or ringing of church bells. The message thereby conveyed to the onlooking crowds was that the Protestants formed a polluting force within society that threatened to provoke divine retribution against the city unless measures were taken to purify it. Occasionally the purpose of a procession was simply commemorative. A solemn procession was held annually from 1563 through 1577 to celebrate the anniversary of the city's recapture by Catholic forces in October 1562, ending the short-lived Huguenot domination.[10]

If the church's initial response to Protestantism was negative—sim-

ply to denounce the new faith, thereby fostering the climate of religious violence that was to characterize the period of the civil wars—signs of positive efforts to revitalize Catholic devotional life began to appear as the Wars of Religion approached. Significantly, these were not the work of the local clergy, but of laymen and of members of the new religious orders brought into the city by the archbishop.

The earliest efforts came on the eve of the religious wars and took the form of public reaffirmations of elements of the faith that had been called into question by Calvinism. Thus, as Huguenot attacks on idolatry mounted in frequency, Catholics responded by showering especial respect on the statues of religious figures that adorned many of the city's houses. Militant public gatherings were held before these street-corner images. These are known to have begun around 1559 in Paris, where, according to Jacques-Auguste de Thou, crowds of water carriers, servants, and other elements of the "lie du peuple" gathered regularly before statues of the Virgin and saints to light candles and sing canticles. Boxes were placed nearby and donations solicited from passers-by, who faced the prospect of being labeled Huguenots and beaten if they proved too niggardly.[11] By 1560, such wildcat devotions had clearly spread to Rouen as well. In that year, three chaplains were pursued by the authorities after they snatched a tennis racket from a youth and used it to break his collarbone when he refused to genuflect before a statue, in front of which bands of children regularly assembled in the evening to sing "Ave Maris Stella."[12]

In the following year, 1561, a number of Catholics sprang to the defense of another heavily criticized element of the faith, the doctrine of the Real Presence, by establishing the General Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament. This *Confrérie* du Saint-Sacrement, not to be confused with the secret, seventeenth-century *Compagnie* du Saint-Sacrement, was founded by twelve laymen: one *conseiller aux Eaux et Forêts*, two *huissiers au Parlement*, four *praticiens au Parlement*, and five *marchands bourgeois*. The association welcomed members from all of the city's parishes, who were to assemble each week in a different church to hear a special mass paid for by the members on a rotating basis. This mass was followed by a sermon and then, in the afternoon, an *ave verum*, a *salve*, and a small procession around the church and its cemetery in which the Holy Sacrament was carried in honor. In addition to these small weekly processions, the confraternity held larger semiannual ones through the entire city "pour s'esmouvoir le peuple a devotion." Members of the four mendicant orders, the city militia, the students of the four paupers' schools, and a large number of six-year-olds dressed in white and carrying burning candles marched in these larger parades, which also honored the Holy Sacrament.[13] These processions bear a striking resemblance to

those staged by the great seventeenth-century missionaries at the start of a mission, and indeed, the activity of this confraternity could be viewed as a sort of urban mission symbolically defending Catholic doctrine.[14]

Did this confraternity represent a conscious effort to counter the Calvinist denial of the doctrine of the Real Presence? Confraternities in honor of the Eucharist had been a common feature of Catholic religious life from the late fourteenth century onward, and an earlier Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament had been founded in Rouen in 1435.[15] It may be purely coincidental that this second confraternity was founded at a time of growing Protestant strength, but this does not appear to be the case. Louis Marc, one of the founders and the first *maître* of the confraternity, was also one of the most zealously anti-Protestant figures in Rouen.[16] Furthermore, a myth of anti-Protestant origins seems to have been passed down orally within the organization, for in the brief account of its foundation written in 1590, on the first page of its list of new members is the declaration that the confraternity was founded at a time when the Protestants were masters of Rouen and trampling the Holy Sacrament underfoot.[17] In fact, the Huguenots did not take over the city until a year after the association was formed, but the error is a significant revelation of the confraternity's self-image as an organization devoted to rescuing the Host from the Protestants who were trying to vilify it. This task seemed so urgent in 1561 that within the first year of its existence the group had attracted over thirteen hundred members.[18]

The Catholic reaction in 1561 was unable to check the buoyant rise of Protestantism, but only exacerbated tensions and pushed France closer to the civil war that erupted the following year. During this First Civil War, Rouen's Huguenots seized control of the city, pillaged its churches, and banned Catholic services for six months until the town was besieged, retaken, and sacked by a royal army. This period of Protestant domination further embittered relations between the members of the two confessions, and the following decade was marked by almost annual violence between them. Yet despite the tense religious atmosphere and the continued presence of a sizable Calvinist minority within the city, the inertia of the parish clergy and the Cathedral Chapter during the first decades of the religious wars is striking. Since the archbishop of Rouen, the cardinal of Bourbon, was one of the leading political figures of the realm and hence away at court most of the time, the canons of the Cathedral Chapter were the true administrators of the archdiocese. The registers of their deliberations, however, are devoid of any major attempts to combat Protestantism beyond staging processions and dispatching an occasional delegation to court to protest some measure or other of toleration granted the Calvinists.[19] Several important innovations foundered against their indifference or outright hostility, as shall be seen later in this essay re-

garding the foundation of the Jesuit college. If the parish priests took any measures to combat Protestantism, no traces remain in the surviving records.

Any evidence of innovation and concern within the church is provided by the archbishop and the members of the new religious orders he introduced into the city. The cardinal of Bourbon was not a reforming bishop in the manner of Carlo Borromeo; he fit the stereotype of the pre-Tridentine courtier-bishop far more closely. Yet while his visits to Rouen were rare, his concern for church reform cannot be entirely discounted. In 1581 he convened the first archdiocesan council in France to deliberate how to put the reforming decrees of Trent into practice. He also championed the establishment of two of the most important new religious orders of the period, the Capuchins and the Jesuits.[20]

The provincial council of 1581 provides evidence that a concern for internal reform was beginning to stir within the local hierarchy and reveals its limited success. The assembly adopted a series of articles that both echo the Tridentine decrees and suggest some of the problems of the archdiocese.[21] Discipline was ordered to be tightened up at all levels of the hierarchy—from the bishops, who were to be deprived of their income when not in residence in their diocese, down to the parish clergy, which was instructed to take care to wear garb appropriate to its station at all times. Dignity was to be maintained in all church rites, and rites that had fallen into disuse, notably confirmation, were to be revived. A spirit of reverence was to be enforced within church buildings at all times: no secular matters were to be announced from the pulpit, and the choirboys were to cease their "badinerie" on the Feast of the Innocents. To ensure tighter control over the opinions and devotions of the laity, lists of forbidden books were to be read from the pulpit and all confraternities were ordered to obtain the permission of their curate for their assemblies. Special attention was to be paid to detecting any signs of witchcraft, libertinage, or atheism, all of which were said to be spreading alarmingly as a result of the license being accorded heresy by the edicts of pacification that allowed Protestantism liberty of conscience.[22] Finally, a seminary was to be created in each diocese within the province to provide better training for the clergy and, it was hoped, to fill the reputed lack of priests in Normandy. But it is hard to find any evidence that these decrees became anything other than statements of good intentions. The seminary did not open its doors until 1659, the frequent episcopal visitations the council called for were not carried out, and the abuses it attacked appear to have continued unabated.[23] Cases of canons reprimanded for maintaining a mistress dot the deliberations of the Cathedral Chapter as liberally after 1581 as they did prior to that date.[24]

The new religious orders founded by the cardinal undoubtedly had more impact on the city's religious life than did the articles of the provincial council, but its record, too, is one of failure as much as of success. Little is known about the early history of the Capuchins of Rouen except that their house was founded in 1580, that their numbers grew rapidly for a while but diminished after many died giving dedicated service to those stricken by the plague, and that their popularity was so great that their little chapel could not hold the crowds attracted by their sermons, so the fathers were often forced to preach from a boulder outside the chapel so that all could hear.[25] The Jesuits, on the other hand, have left much more copious documentation of their activities.[26] In 1565, the archbishop first announced to his Cathedral Chapter that he intended to found a Jesuit college in Rouen. Although the school did not open until 1593, the Jesuits were not inactive in the city in the intervening years. Individual members of the order are known to have made five visits to the town: in 1565, 1569–70, 1580, 1583, and 1588.[27]

The description left by Father Possevino of his two sojourns in Rouen in 1565 and 1569–70 give an idea of what a remarkable organizer could do in a short period. Possevino preached three times a week before audiences whose size he estimated at several thousand, among them curés taking notes on what he said. He organized an association of women drawn from the best families of the city, who visited the Hôtel-Dieu regularly and assisted the nurses. He attempted to promote the devotion of the Eucharist by having the Host exposed on the altar of all of the churches of the city. Above all, he devoted himself to introducing organized religious instruction to Rouen by promoting that important sixteenth-century innovation, the catechism.[28]

The catechism was first introduced by the great Protestant reformers as a means of conveying to the masses a firm grasp of the elements of the faith. It was quickly adopted by the Catholics and spread particularly by the Jesuits. While in Rouen, Possevino gave lessons from the catechisms of Canisius and Auger, encouraged their sale, and attempted to train priests in the rudiments of pedagogy so that they could continue the lessons after he departed. During his second visit, street vendors circulated throughout the city crying, "Voici le catéchisme enseigné par le Père Prédicateur." Sales of the books were so great, Possevino claims, that six new editions had to be ordered from Paris to keep up with the demand.[29] Unfortunately, it is not clear whether catechistic instruction continued after Possevino left Rouen. A letter of the period declares that his visits had a great effect on the people for a short while,[30] but it is hard to imagine they exercised a permanent influence unless others carried on his work between his visits.

One aspect of Possevino's visit of 1569–70 was surely a failure. He had come to Rouen to oversee the establishment of the Jesuit college, which the cardinal of Bourbon had endowed with a *rente* of two thousand livres, but this project foundered against the combined hostility of the four mendicant orders, the Cathedral Chapter, and the Parlement. Encouraged by the canons, the mendicants had instituted a suit against the Jesuits on the grounds that the proposed college infringed upon their right to control all educational establishments within the city. Even though Possevino had attempted to earn the Parlement's gratitude by aiding it in pacifying a mob that had been threatening Huguenots who refused to take Easter communion, the court ruled against the Jesuits, and the attempt to establish the college was dropped for a time.[31]

The cardinal of Bourbon tried to revive his project in 1583 by granting the society a new *rente* drawn against the revenues of his rich Abbey of St. Ouen. This time his plan ran afoul of the general of the society, who feared that this money might be difficult to collect in the event the cardinal's successor as abbot opposed the alienation of his revenue for such a project. The general consequently deemed the financial security of the college inadequate, and he would not allow it to open.

As the initial failure of the Jesuits to establish their college in Rouen demonstrates, the city's clergy and its monastic orders not only took very little positive action to reform or revitalize Catholic religious life; they actually formed an obstacle to innovation and innovators.

Several explanations of this inertia come quickly to mind, each undoubtedly containing a measure of truth. First, many members of the first estate lacked zeal. Studies of the Catholic clergy in the sixteenth century suggest that many clerics were poorly trained, that nonresidence was widespread, and that timeservers were numerous.[32] The failure of the city's archbishops to carry out any episcopal visitations, combined with the absence of registers of ordinations dating from the period, make a detailed investigation of Rouen's clergy an impossibility. The mere fact, however, that no visitations were carried out indicates something about the state of church administration. All of the surviving evidence indicates that Rouen's clergy, if perhaps better trained than the bulk of clerics of the age because rich urban benefices attracted well-educated priests, nonetheless lacked zeal in performing its duties. In 1535 fourteen of the city's thirty-six parishes were headed by nonresident curates.[33] Attendance at the meetings of the Cathedral Chapter was sparse.[34] The most telling condemnation is provided by the provincial council's denunciations of simony and of the preferment accorded the illegitimate offspring of church officials, as well as by the fate of its decrees.

A second consideration may have tempered the concern of certain clergymen about the rise of Protestantism: they felt a certain openness to

the movement. This was especially true of a group of men within the Cathedral Chapter who were strongly influenced by humanist intellectual currents.[35] The works of Erasmus and, to a lesser extent, Lefevre d'Etaples were heavily represented in the libraries of several canons, and occasionally suspect or even heretical works found their way onto their bookshelves.[36] One canon, Claude Chappuys, resigned his position early in 1562 because of his pro-Calvinist sentiments, only to resume it later because the court backed him; he sat in the chapter for over a decade. Others, although not Protestants, had Huguenot relatives.[37] In short, a substantial part of the Cathedral Chapter, which drew its members from the better educated of the urban elite, held tolerant, latitudinarian religious views both because of Erasmian conviction and family feeling. There is no evidence that these men were ever numerous or outspoken enough to form an active group of Erasmian or evangelical reformists within the chapter, but they were unlikely to press for vigorous measures against heresy.

Vested interests rarely appreciate the creation of rival institutions, and this must be accounted a third obstacle in the way of a vigorous riposte to Protestantism. The established religious orders were jealous of their position in society and resisted newcomers like the Jesuits. They were also suspicious of each other after generations of interorder combats, and these ancient enmities undermined chances for concerted action. In 1570, the grand vicar of the cathedral told the Parlement, which was scandalized by a bitter dispute it was investigating between a Dominican and a Franciscan, that if the court looked into every conflict between mendicant fathers, such affairs would keep a whole Parlement busy full time.[38]

But the most important reason for the clergy's inertia in moving toward religious reform probably lies in a fourth consideration: the normal reactions to radical challenge of men vested with power, wealth, and a sense of their sacred dignity. That in this particular case the men may also have been stung by an often biting Protestant satirical literature probably only added to the already great likelihood that they would respond to attack, not with internal reform, but by vilifying and attempting to squelch their attackers. Those who saw the growth of Calvinism as a sign that the church needed to change its ways were generally already convinced for other reasons of the need for internal reform. The great majority of the clergy believed that the crisis required firm action. And while a liberal conscience may not wish to admit it, such a policy was by no means doomed to failure. The anti-Huguenot violence that became common in the first decade of the Wars of Religion, together with intermittent government measures of proscription, shattered Rouen's Reformed Church. After peaking around the mid-1560s, the congregation's

numbers plummeted by 89 percent over the subsequent decade.[39] By the mid-1570s the threat that Protestantism might become dominant locally had been successfully beaten back. The pressure of popular intolerance, encouraged by the clergy, had indeed met the crisis. Why would other measures to bolster the faith seem necessary?

To jolt the church into measures beyond the simple vilification of Protestantism apparently required a truly alarming crisis that could not be resolved through violence against a local enemy. Such a crisis occurred late in the religious wars, with the death of the duke of Anjou and the emergence of the Protestant Henry of Navarre as the heir-apparent to the throne. This caused a veritable explosion of Catholic devotional innovations that stands in striking contrast to the inertia of the preceding decades.

Many Catholics were convinced that if Henry of Navarre became king, the outlawing of the mass and a severe repression would inevitably follow. Both the Huguenot takeover in 1562 and the example of England stood as warnings of what happened to Catholicism when Protestants ruled, and the lessons of these events were especially vivid in a city that had suffered a disastrous sack as a result of the Huguenot occupation and was a center for Catholic refugees from England.[40] Here was a threat to the faith that came from outside the city and could not be countered by overcoming the Protestants locally. It was also a threat that strongly suggested the warning hand of God. Just as kings were God-given, so presumably were heirs-apparent, and if God chose to make the heir-apparent a Protestant, He was undoubtedly sending France a message about its sinful ways.[41]

What was to be done about this threat? Politically, the Holy League was formed, or, more properly, reformed, becoming the sort of nation-wide organization that was needed to carry on a crusade against a more-than-local threat. But many of the pamphlets of the period provide a two-part prescription: arm for the struggle and pray to God.[42] The second part of this prescription was no less important than the first. The same situation that produced the political activities of the league also stimulated the feeling that religious devotions must be redoubled and morals reformed lest God send a heretical king to scourge the people of Rouen for their sins.[43] The crisis, to borrow a phrase from Denis Pallier, made penitents as well as militants out of the Catholic population.[44]

Perhaps the most important religious activity of this period is the establishment of the Jesuit college, at last, in 1593. The college's financial situation was no more secure at this time than it had been a decade previously, and the college had to be granted special subsidies soon after its doors opened.[45] The general of the society nonetheless relented in his opposition to erecting a college on unsteady financial foundations

because the attitude of Rouen's judicial, ecclesiastical, and municipal authorities changed. The Cathedral Chapter and the municipal government had both written the Society of Jesus urging the establishment of the college, and the city had granted the Jesuits a two-year pension, while the members of the Parlement raised money among themselves to help finance the costs of setting up the institution.[46] With their support, it was established quickly.

Why this change of attitude on the part of corporations previously hostile to the Jesuits? All of these bodies were now controlled by the Holy League, and the Jesuits had been allied with the League elements within the city since before Rouen's Day of the Barricades. Their sermons had, in fact, played an important role in preparing for the Sainte-Union's triumph in the city. In August 1588—after the Day of the Barricades in Paris, but when Rouen was still royalist—two Jesuits arrived in the city. They had been sent from the League-controlled capital by the man who later headed the League council in Rouen, Michel de Monchy, the grand vicar of the cathedral and a *conseiller clerc* in the Parlement.[47] The chapter, still controlled by more moderate elements, forbade them to preach. Nonetheless, following the assassination of the duke of Guise it was one of the Jesuits, Commolet, who first broke the silence imposed on all of the city's preachers after that event by the governor. His sermon is movingly recounted by an English sister of the order of St. Bridget, which had taken refuge in Rouen in 1580:

> When he came into the pulpytt, all eyeis and mowthes gapying upon hym, the good man was in such a passyon that he seemyd lyke to burst and could scars bryng out hys words for weepyng, the passyon of that tyme had so alteryd his voyce. Hys matter was of blessyd St Thomas, declaryng to the people the cause of hys martirdome in the behalfe of Chrystes churche, and of the quarrel betwyxt hym and the kyng, and how hys braynes were stroke out uppon the pavement before ye alter. Thys thyng was so apt for hys purpose that the people could by and by apply ytt that the preacher had no soner namyd the slaughter of theyr 2 Prynces but thatt all fell out into weepyng, and the preacher ther sobbyng alowde could saye no more. Butt after a preatty space, stryving with hymself to speake, he clappyng of hys hands cryed aloude, o pover eglese galicane, and so came downe, the people and all so movyd as we never have seene nor shall see ye lyke.[48]

In the long run, the Collège de Bourbon, as the Jesuit college was named, was undoubtedly the most important of the institutions founded in Rouen during the period of the League. Within a decade of its creation some eighteen hundred students were enrolled, receiving the characteristic Jesuit education, at once theologically orthodox and pedagogically innovative, that shaped unmistakably the ideas and interests of generations of Rouennais, among them Pierre Corneille and the Cavelier de la

Salle.[49] In the short run, however, a second innovation of these years may have made a more dramatic impact on the inhabitants of the city, addressing more directly the fears aroused by the perilous state of the church. This was the practice contemporaries referred to as the *oratoire*, known today as the perpetual adoration.

Introduced to Rouen early in 1588, the practice of the *oratoire* involved displaying the Holy Sacrament amid a collection of relics on a richly decorated altar for a week at a time in each of the city's churches. Services were held daily in the parish where the Host was on display and were accompanied by special sermons.[50] Each week the Host was carried to the next church in a great procession in which many participants marched barefoot. A journal of the period declares that the *oratoire* stimulated "plus de dévotion qu'il estoit possible de dire," and this opinion is confirmed both by Elizabeth Sanders, the English nun, who speaks of the "mervelous devotyon" of these years, and by the large sums of money collected in the basins placed alongside the altar.[51] But this practice was apparently discontinued after 1593, as all mention of the *oratoire* disappears from the accounts of the parish treasuries.

The other two important initiatives of this period were primarily the work of one man, Jehan de Quintanadoines, a fascinating individual whose biography deserves a brief excursus. His life shows the confessional struggle as it was played out within a single family.

The Quintanadueñas were originally important wool merchants in Burgos. Members of the family emigrated to several of the major north European ports with which the family traded, one line establishing itself in Rouen around 1519. Within a generation, the family had been assimilated into the city's leading circles.[52] One mark of the degree to which the Quintanadueñas, their name now frenchified to Quintanadoines, had drifted away from their Spanish origins was the conversion of two members of the second generation to Protestantism. One of these two was Fernande, seigneur de Brétigny, Jehan's father.[53]

Jehan was born in the parish of St. Etienne-des-Tonneliers in 1555. Sometime in 1562, he was—curiously—sent back to Spain, where he was to receive Catholic education from private tutors in his uncle's house in Seville.[54] It is highly improbable that a Protestant father would of his own volition choose to give his eldest son a strongly Catholic upbringing. The most plausible explanations of this peculiar action are either that pressure from the rest of the family was brought to bear on Fernande or that he left the city briefly following the Catholic reconquest and that his son was sent away in his absence. Another member of the Quintanadoines clan was in Rouen around 1562, a cousin Antoine, who was born in Burgos and returned there before marrying, but was clearly the head of the clan during his years in Rouen.[55] Antoine was a zealous Catholic, as

is evident from the fact that he fled the city during the Huguenot occupation and some 10,889 livres worth of his goods was confiscated, while the Rouen-born brothers, even the Catholics, stayed in the city and lost no property.[56] Clearly, the family was divided on religious grounds, and in the extended families characteristic of the leading merchant and *officier* circles it does not seem impossible that the leader of the clan might command the authority to determine the form of his cousin's education.[57] The suspicion that young Jehan was sent away to remove him from his father's heretical influence is strengthened by the fact that Fernande reconverted to Catholicism in 1569 and Jehan returned home the following year.

The relations between father and son in the ensuing years were ambivalent, to say the least. The elder Quintanadoines wanted his son to marry and continue as a merchant. Jehan, already deeply pious but also very timid, wanted to enter holy orders but also to obey his father's wishes. Twice marriage arrangements were on the brink of being concluded when Jehan fell mysteriously ill. During his second illness, as he hovered on the brink of death, his father agreed to allow him to become a cleric. Jehan miraculously recovered.[58]

This long family drama seems to have affected Jehan profoundly. He grew up to be extremely afraid of speaking in public and once was struck dumb in the pulpit when forced by his superior to preach. In his later years, he often suffered from such attacks of extreme scruples that he would on occasion refuse to say mass without a confessor nearby lest he sin on the way to the altar.[59] A remarkable spiritual dialogue between himself and God, which he wrote in 1610, shows that he had a sense of being virtually paralyzed by guilt and the feeling that he had wasted the few moments given him on earth. In it he echoes the prodigal son: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son."[60]

Despite his timidity and sense of personal unworthiness, Quintanadoines' accomplishments during the period of the Holy League and shortly thereafter were far from negligible. The most important of these was the role he played in the establishment of the female order of the Carmelites in France. The Carmelites were first introduced to France in Paris in 1603 thanks to the influence of the circle around Mme Acarie and Bérulle. The first attempt to establish this great Spanish order in France, however, was made in Rouen during the period of the league.[61] After Quintanadoines' first betrothal-induced illness, he was sent to Spain. There he was introduced to, and greatly impressed by, the spiritual activities of the Carmelite disciples of Saint Theresa. His goal became to carry back with him to France the Carmelite rule.

The opportunity to realize this goal came during the years of the

league. To fulfill a vow of thanksgiving made when the siege of Rouen of 1591–92 was raised, Quintanadoines undertook with the encouragement of the widow of the duke of Joyeuse (who was also the protectoress of the violently *ligueur* Capuchins of Caen[62]) to convince Rouen's Cathedral Chapter and the duke of Mayenne to back his project. In this he was successful, but his subsequent voyage to the Escorial to convince Philip II to permit the transfer of several Carmelite sisters to France failed for reasons that are not clear. The enterprise had to be abandoned for a time. On Quintanadoines's return from Spain, though, he translated from Spanish to French a biography of Saint Theresa, and this work caught the attention of Mme Acarie and led her to support the project. These religious activities of the years of the League clearly are linked to those of the *dévot* circles of the early seventeenth century—the same kind of link that can be found in the biographies of many of the leading Parisian *dévots* including Mme Acarie herself.[63]

A few years before his attempt to found a Carmelite convent in Rouen, Quintanadoines was instrumental in establishing a confraternity —the Penitents—about whose activities in the city very little can be discovered, but which is of great interest because of its role in recent historiography. The number, size, and importance of the companies of Penitents in the Midi throughout the ancien régime have been revealed by the recent studies of Marguerite Pecquet, Marc Venard, and Maurice Agulhon.[64] These authors do not note that the Penitents also expanded into northern France during the period of the League.[65] Confraternities were founded in the second-level cities of Abbeville and Laon as well as in Paris and Rouen, and traces of other groups could probably be found elsewhere in northern France during this period if one searched diligently.[66]

Because Rouen's Penitents disappeared with the fall of the League and left no documents, only fleeting references to their activities and membership remain. They were founded in 1588 by Quintanadoines after Spanish models, with the goal, according to Elizabeth Sanders, "to reforme the people."[67] Their first meeting was held in the chapel of the English nuns of Saint Bridget, which became during these years a center for *ligueur* spirituality, even as the nuns themselves became living symbols of the persecution that befell Catholics under Protestant rulers and were therefore honored in league propaganda.[68] The members of the Penitents, said to include "un grand nombre de personnes, même d'une naissance distinguée," gathered regularly to perform the extremely dramatic ceremonies characteristic of the group, such as torchlit nocturnal processions inside the cathedral.[69] The precise links, if any, between the Penitents and the *ligueur* elements within Rouen are not clear, but elsewhere, in Laon, Bourges, and most probably also in Paris, the ties were so

strong that the Parlement of Paris abolished the confraternities following the fall of the Sainte-Union.[70] It is tempting to hypothesize that one reason the Penitents were found exclusively in the South in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is that these groups had become popular there several decades before the period of the League. Consequently, they were not closely associated with the movement and did not suffer from the opprobrium that fell after 1594 on all things *ligueur*, which explains the disappearance of the Penitents in the North after that date.

The Penitents, like the *oratoire*, may have disappeared from Rouen with the fall of the League, but while each lasted they provided perfect forms of expression for the anguished penitential piety of this period of political crisis. The novel devotional activity of these years has not often been remarked upon except in offhand comments about "fanaticism," but it seems to have accompanied the League in many cities in which the movement was dominant and probably ought to be regarded as an essential element of the Catholic reaction to the specter of Henry IV's succession. Just as evidence is easily found of companies of Penitents created in northern cities besides Rouen, so, too, local studies and published memoirs show that the *oratoire* was introduced in other cities.[71] In Laon, the Penitents, the *oratoire*, the Jesuits, and the league were all inextricably linked. Shortly after the Sainte-Union assumed power in that town, the new *ligueur* authorities petitioned the Jesuit order to establish a college. The Society lacked the personnel to staff an entire college, but a single Jesuit father, Antoine Tholozan, was dispatched to the town. A man of remarkable learning and rhetorical skill, he soon had the entire city in his thrall. Among the activities he championed were the introduction of the *oratoire* and the establishment of a company of Penitents. This group soon included "la plus saine partie des habitans," and, as such, became an essential element in Tholozan's efforts to keep the League in power in the late days of the movement when zeal began to flag. All members of the confraternity were required to confess at least once a month, and Tholozan threatened those whose commitment to the League he feared was slackening with revealing the secrets they had confided to him in the confessional.[72] In other cities, cases can be found where a religious confraternity served more directly as a tool of League political activity. The Parisian *confrères* of the Name of Jesus, for example, pledged in obedience to their statutes both to take frequent Communion and to arm themselves for the defense of the city against the heretic, swearing never to recognize Henry of Navarre as king.[73]

Such direct linkage between League political activity and novel forms of Catholic devotion (here, frequent Communion) was more the exception than the rule. There is no evidence that any of the new confraternities founded in Rouen in this period served directly as cells of anti-

Protestant militancy as the Confraternity of the Name of Jesus and others like it did.[74] Political activism had limited appeal for many thoroughly zealous Catholics. Such was the case for Jehan de Quintanadoines, who, despite his importance on the religious scene, never appears in the political or administrative records pertaining to the period of the League. Other men saw the devotional and political activities of the period as but two aspects of the same struggle. This was true of Michel de Monchy, whose name is found throughout the documents of the period. This nephew of the cardinal of Pellevé was the man who invited the Jesuits to Rouen in 1588. He also directed the League's provincial *conseil de l'Union* and sat in the Parlement as a *conseiller-clerc*, until his extremism ran him afoul of the governor, the duke of Villars, who expelled him from the city in 1593. As archdeacon of the cathedral, Monchy toured the parishes under his charge "assisté de personnages de rare doctrine et piété pour confuter les héréticques, instruire le peuple, et corriger le clergé."[75] He was apparently linked to the Penitents in some manner, since it was he who announced to the other canons when the company desired to hold a procession in the cathedral.[76] The contrast between de Monchy and de Quintanadoines reflects the broader split within Catholic religious currents of the time between those encouraging activism in the world (here de Monchy's link with the Jesuits is surely more than fortuitous[77]) and those for whom retreat and contemplation were the highest possible forms of service to the community.

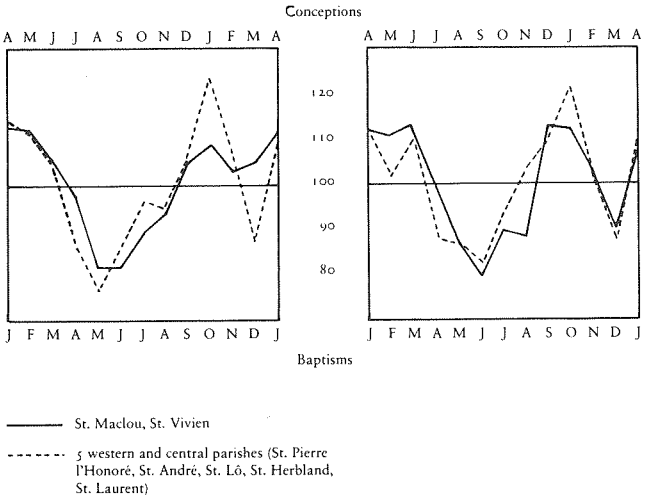
All of the activities so far discussed, from the creation of the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament in 1561 to the establishment of the Jesuit college in 1593, were the work of a relatively small number of men drawn almost exclusively from the upper strata of Rouennais society. Occasionally, when the documents speak of "mervelous devotyon" or inform us that thirteen hundred members rapidly enrolled in the Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament, there are indications that the new institutions or devotional forms struck a receptive chord among the anonymous mass of the Catholic population. It is a persistent temptation of religious history to seize upon such indications and proclaim triumphantly that they show that the new forms voiced the aspirations of that elusive entity, the people. But even a confraternity of thirteen hundred members, while undoubtedly having considerable mass appeal, represents less than 5 percent of Rouen's adult population. For surer evidence about the attitudes of the bulk of the population, quantitative tests that chart the opinions of the otherwise voiceless must be employed. Only on such a basis can more confident statements be made about whether the sorts of activities so far discussed truly influenced and represented something that might fairly be called popular religion.[78]

In recent years, many French historians and sociologists of religion have recognized the importance of devising quantitative tests of mass religious belief and have devoted a great deal of energy to searching for sources that permit the construction of reliable indices of popular fervor.[79] Sources for many of the indices they now use, such as the degree of abstention from Easter Communion, number of individuals entering holy orders, or frequency with which testators left money for masses for their souls, do not exist for the period of Rouen's history studied here.[80] Nonetheless, it is possible to calculate two measures of popular attachment to Catholic religious practices. Neither of these provide what might be called "panoramic" measures of religious opinion—measures that survey each and every member of a community (or at least a representative sample) and therefore indicate the full spectrum of belief and unbelief within it. The "great unknown" in the religious history of this period—the percentage of the population thoroughly indifferent to organized religion and to the confessional struggle of the era—must remain an unknown insofar as Rouen is concerned.[81] The indices available are diachronic measures. They reveal changes in the degree of fervor among the city's nominal Catholics. They therefore can provide some indication of whether or not the pattern of piety discernible among the elite responsible for the highly visible expressions of religiosity also characterized the evolution of mass religious concern over the course of the wars of religion.

During the early Middle Ages, the church rigorously forbade all believers to engage in sexual relations during Lent. This requirement was softened into a pious recommendation over the course of the later Middle Ages, but confessors continued to encourage abstention from sex during Lent through the sixteenth century and beyond. The extent to which a dip in conceptions appears during Lent on a graph of monthly fluctuations in the number of baptisms provides a rough indication of the extent to which the mass of the faithful heeded these counsels.[82] It can thus serve as an approximate guide to popular fervor, and perhaps is particularly apt for indicating the extent to which Rouen's inhabitants shared in the privacy of their beds the impulse toward communal purification which the public religious ceremonies of the period of the League paraded so ostentatiously.

Rouen's Catholic parish registers are numerous from the 1560s onward, so the seasonal movement of baptisms and conceptions during the final forty years of the sixteenth century can be computed easily. Figure 1 sets forth the results obtained for the periods 1563–77 and 1580–94 for two contrasting groups of parishes: five small, well-to-do parishes in the central and western sections of the city; and two large, poorer parishes in the east of town, St. Maclou and St. Vivien.[83] (The index must be calculated for intervals of at least fifteen years to eliminate the influence of

Figure 1. Monthly Movement of Conceptions



random annual fluctuations in the pattern of births.) The graphs reveal a clear difference between the two groups of parishes. The curves of the five western and central parishes show an equally deep drop in conceptions in March in each of the fifteen-year periods. An equally large percentage of the population clearly practiced sexual abstinence during Lent throughout the Wars of Religion in these parishes. In St. Maclou and St. Vivien, on the other hand, the March trough does not appear at all in the first period but is quite marked in the second. The inhabitants of these popular parishes apparently began to follow this practice only in the later years of the civil wars, around the period of the League.

Because it must be calculated in fifteen-year segments, this first measure does not permit a very close analysis of changes in popular fervor, although it does suggest a certain growth in religious concern around the period of the League. The second index permits finer discrimination. This is based on the sums collected in the basins that were placed in several locations in each parish church to receive the offerings of the faithful. Each church had several basins, most commonly one dedicated to the Virgin and one, the "bassin de l'oeuvre," for the upkeep of the church. A few parishes also maintained a basin of the relics. The sums collected annually in these receptacles are noted in the accounts of the parish treasuries. Relatively complete sets of these accounts have survived from the early sixteenth century onward for thirteen parishes, permitting a

study of the volume of pious offerings in a representative sample of the city's parishes.[84]

The adoration of the Virgin was, of course, one of the most violently contested and most passionately defended Catholic practices, so the donations to the basin of the Virgin would appear an excellent test of the popular response first to Erasmian and, especially, Protestant critiques of the cult, then to the Catholic counterattack. The significance of gifts to the *bassin de l'oeuvre* is more difficult to interpret, but such donations probably reflected an interest in the physical adornment of the parish church, again a point of contention between Catholics and Protestants. In any case, the curves of the *bassin de l'oeuvre* parallel almost exactly those of the basin of the Virgin in parishes where both were recorded separately in the account books.

Figure 2 is a cumulative index arrived at by combining figures for all of the basins in the thirteen parishes.[85] It shows, first, a marked drop in the amounts collected in the decades prior to the outbreak of the Wars of Religion. The decline is evident from the 1540s on and is particularly dramatic in the years just preceding the civil wars. As the city's overall population was stable or expanding throughout these years, this decline clearly must represent changes in religious sentiment rather than in the city's economic situation. The diffusion of Protestantism has to be accounted the chief reason. Significantly, two parishes proved exceptions to the general trend, the semiagricultural faubourg St. Gervais and the cloth-working parish of St. Nicaise, the poorest parish in the city proper. This suggests that the poorest and least educated people of the city remained relatively untouched by the new ideas. Both St. Gervais and St. Nicaise remained strongly Catholic throughout the century, and the drapers of St. Nicaise distinguished themselves in a number of the violent

Figure 2. Cumulative Index, Bassins de La Vierge, de l'oeuvre, et des reliques Combined, All Parishes

clashes that were common between members of the two confessions.[86]

Following the iconoclasm and the banning of Catholic services that accompanied the period of Protestant domination in 1562, the reestablishment of the mass and the work of reconstructing the defaced churches might have been expected to lead to a larger number of gifts offered by the Catholic faithful, who were thankful to be able to worship once more as they pleased. But in fact, following the gap in the curve caused by the outlawing of Catholicism, the cumulative index falls to its lowest point of the century in the later 1560s. It then rises slowly for the next two decades, the rise being most marked in the poorer parishes. This slow increase, totaling approximately 40 percent, is difficult to interpret. The city declined a bit in size during these years, and inflation was rampant. Grain prices almost doubled in Paris between the five-year periods 1563–67 and 1583–87, and only in the parishes of St. Godard, St. Gervais, and St. Nicolas did gifts rise as rapidly.[87] The effect of inflation on the level of donations is not at all clear. On the one hand, people had more spending money in their pockets; on the other hand, somebody who was used to giving four sous to the Virgin every Easter may not have felt that, with the rising cost of living, a larger gift was necessary to gain Her patronage. It is impossible, therefore, to state with assurance whether the rise in giving in these years ought to be considered the product of inflation or the reflection of a slow reawakening of Marian devotion. All that can be declared with certainty about the period 1562–67 is that there was no dramatic trend in either direction.

The jump in donations coincident with the early years of the Holy League is subject to no such ambiguities. In nine of the twelve parishes for which the registers exist, the amounts collected reached their highest level of the entire period of the religious wars between 1587 and 1591. In three, they more than doubled the amounts collected in the surrounding years. Clearly, the dramatic public manifestations of religious fervor were part of a deeper upsurge of concern during these troubled years.

A sharp drop in donations followed quickly on the heels of this upsurge that must be attributed to the severe economic crisis of the period of the League and growing popular disaffection with the movement. A new upsurge occurred after the return of peace and prosperity under Henry IV. This rise seems to continue strongly until at least the middle of the seventeenth century, at which point the parish accounts began to be maintained differently, making further comparison impossible.[88] The great flowering of the Counter-Reformation is reflected here, as well as in the extraordinary spate of new religious foundations that resulted in the creation of seventeen convents and monasteries in the city over the course of fifty years.[89]

In 1589, the parishioners of St. Michel brought a suit against their parish priest. They alleged that Sunday mass was never celebrated at any fixed hour; instead, the curé held it whenever it suited him, often so late in the day that the parishioners missed the afternoon sermons at the cathedral or the city's monasteries. They urged the ecclesiastical authorities to make sure that the curé carried out his duties more punctually in the future.[90]

The concern shown by these ordinary churchgoers lest they miss the afternoon sermons seems characteristic of the early years of the League. These were the years that, to recapitulate, most clearly witnessed an upsurge of Catholic fervor. The rapid advances made by Protestantism in the late 1550s and early 1560s had provoked some early defense of the elements of the faith under attack, most notably Mariolatry and the doctrine of the Real Presence. But these seem mostly to have involved the already deeply committed Catholics, for the parish account books reveal that devotion to the Virgin declined among the population as a whole in the years just prior to the outbreak of the Wars of Religion. In the ensuing years of the civil wars, the church hierarchy demonstrated little concern for the revitalization of Catholic religious life within the city. The exception was the new religious orders. The Jesuits in particular were prominent because of their sermons and catechetical work; they clearly deserve their reputation as the spearheads of the Counter-Reformation. But their efforts had encountered considerable opposition and were slow to bear fruit until the specter of a Protestant successor to the throne jolted the population from its complacency and the Day of the Barricades swept the Catholic League into power. The highly emotional atmosphere of the ensuing years bred unusual religious ferment, in which the introduction of new religious orders and devotional forms went hand in hand with the multiplication of traditional pious gestures among the mass of the people.

Until further research has been done on this period, it will be impossible to say just how representative Rouen's experience was compared to France as a whole. Richard Gascon's work suggests that Lyon witnessed some vigorous efforts to counter Protestantism by reinvigorating Catholic devotional life as early as the 1560s, with the Jesuits playing the critical role[91]; the first decades of the religious wars may not have been a period of inertia everywhere in France. Certainly the ferment of the years of the League was shared by a number of other major French cities.

Such activity indicates that the origins of the French Counter-Reformation cannot be cut off as completely as they have been from the political struggles of the wars of religion. There is, in particular, a fascinating duality about the religious initiatives of the period of the League. In many ways, they point backward to the late Middle Ages; the spate of processions and devotions can be interpreted as an attempt at com-

munal self-purification—the sort of mass breast-beating in the face of natural and political calamities that occurred often from the Black Death onward. Yet many aspects of the initiatives of the period suggest the Counter-Reformation: the *oratoire*, very like the devotion of the Forty Hours; the often central position of the Jesuits; the attempt to establish the Carmelites. Furthermore, it is possible to see how, through a process of mobilization and disillusion, the combination of political and religious activism awakened by the crisis of the League could have become transmuted into the more inward-directed and less overtly political Catholic activism of the early seventeenth century. The alarm caused by the possible accession of a Huguenot king undoubtedly provoked an intensification of religious activity by many members of the urban elite, as well as a political movement challenging the power of the monarchy. The subsequent excesses of this political movement could then have served to discredit mass politics among this group, prompting a retreat toward, on the one hand, mysticism, and, on the other, secret underground pressure groups such as the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement.

More detailed research will be needed before any confident statements can be made about specific links between the League and the development of the Counter-Reformation. In particular, we need investigations of whether or not those active in the new confraternities that accompanied the Sainte-Union also were involved in the early centers of Counter-Reformation spirituality.[92] It may well turn out, however, that the wellsprings of the Catholic religious revival included more radical sources than earlier generations of church historians have liked to admit. The case of Rouen shows clearly that violent intolerance and little else dominated Catholicism's initial reaction to the Protestant challenge, but it also suggests that the movement of internal revitalization that subsequently developed received a strong boost from the crisis awakened by the threat of a Protestant king. The movement may truly merit the title "*Counter*-Reformation" to a greater degree than most work of the past several generations would seem to indicate.