

Jacques Bongars

(1554–1612)

Gelehrter und Diplomat im
Zeitalter des Konfessionalismus

herausgegeben von

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French Protestants in the Service of the Crown, 1554–1612

Philip Benedict

The diplomat and humanist Jacques Bongars was at once a member of the Calvinist International, that network of learned diplomat-activists dedicated to promoting pan-Protestant political and military solidarity across Europe, and an envoy to the Holy Roman Empire who served two kings of France, Henry III (briefly) and Henry IV. This second aspect of his biography prompts the questions that are at the heart of this essay. Was it common for the French crown to employ members of the country's Protestant minority during the period of the wars of religion and its aftermath? How typical of other Protestant crown servants was Bongars' life course and form of royal service? Surprisingly, to the best of my knowledge, nobody has previously tried to offer an overview of the place of France's Huguenots within the different branches of the royal administration during the later sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

Bongars provides an apt figure on which to hang such a study, since the dates of his life, 1554–1612, coincide almost perfectly with the time span from the first concerted growth of organized Reformed churches in France, from 1555 to 1562, to the death of Henry IV in 1610. Let us therefore begin with a brief reminder of the pertinent aspects of his life and career.¹ Whereas several of Jacques' ancestors had occupied positions in the councils of Charles VIII and Louis XII, his father Girard, seigneur de La Chesnaye et de Bauldry, a resident of Orléans, was not a royal officeholder, appearing instead amid the category of *bourgeois et marchands* on the list of Orléans Protestants condemned to death by the Parlement of Paris in February 1563

¹ The fundamental works on Bongars are HAGEN, HERMANN: *Jacobus Bongarsius. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der gelehrten Studien des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, Bern 1874; KOHLNDORFER-FRIES, RUTH: *Diplomatie und Gelehrtenrepublik. Die Kontakte des französischen Gesandten Jacques Bongars (1554–1612)* (Frühe Neuzeit 137), Tübingen 2009; and now BURGERBIBLIOTHEK BERN (ed.): *Jacques Bongars. Humanist, Diplomat, Büchersammler (Passepartout. Schriftenreihe der Burgerbibliothek Bern)*, Bern 2012.

for their role in the insurrection of 1562.² The family nonetheless remained closely linked to the milieu of royal officials, since Jacques' sister Esther would marry a *secrétaire du roi* and his brother Isaac would become a financial official under Henry IV. Given the Old Testament names bestowed upon his younger siblings, we can guess that the family joined the Reformed church soon after Jacques' birth in 1554. The Reformed church of Orléans was one of France's most important in the initial years of the movement. The city became Protestantism's chief stronghold in the First Civil War (1562–1563), and the Huguenots secured it once again in 1567 at the outbreak of the Second Civil War, but Catholic political and military control was forcefully imposed in the aftermath of this conflict and the Protestants would never again control the town.³ During the often troubled years between 1564 and 1571, the young Jacques was sent to Germany for much of his schooling. He enrolled at Bourges to study law with Jacques Cujas and François Hotman in 1577, and made subsequent study tours to the Farnese library in Rome and to Leiden to visit Justus Lipsius before setting out on his great voyage to Constantinople in 1585. By that time he had probably already entered the service of Henry of Navarre and was undertaking information-gathering missions for him. He subsequently became a secretary and interpreter for Navarre's chief plenipotentiary to the Protestant princes of Germany, François de Ségur-Pardaillan, assisting him in raising troops in Germany to come to the aid of the Huguenots and finally replacing him in these negotiations when Ségur-Pardaillan fell ill in February 1589. The alliance made between Henry of Navarre and Henry III two months later meant that for the last months of Henry III's life Bongars collaborated closely with the French king's own envoy in Germany and had effectively entered royal diplomatic service. He continued in this service after the accession of Henry IV and was accredited as the permanent envoy of the French crown to Germany in 1593, a post he continued to hold until 1610.

The title chosen for this essay, *French Protestants in the service of the crown*, is admittedly ambiguous. In one sense, virtually any form of Protestant political activity in France during these years, including the raising of troops and the waging of civil war, could fall under this rubric, since, with the partial exception of a brief moment in the wake of the Saint Bartholomew's Massacre of 1572, Huguenot manifestos always insisted that their cause was composed of the king's loyal subjects who only took up arms to defend the crown and its edicts against those evil advisors, especially of the house of Guise, who acted contrary to the genuine royal will. Our subject here is not the Protestants' self-proclaimed crown service. It is how prominent a role

² LACOMBE, BERNARD DE: *Les débuts des guerres de religion (Orléans, 1559–1564): Cathérine de Médicis entre Guise et Condé*, Paris 1899, p. 309.

³ LACOMBE: *Débuts des guerres de religion*, *passim*.

Protestants actually played in filling different kinds of royal offices over the course of the years from 1554 to 1612.

Initially, we will see, France's new Reformed churches attracted a not insignificant fraction of those in certain royal offices. Once the Protestants took up arms and even sought several times to seize control of the king's person, however, their insistent proclamations that they were the crown's most loyal servants were inadequate to staunch the growing suspicion of the monarch himself, the queen mother, and the Catholic majority within the sovereign courts that they were in fact anything but that. For the Protestants themselves, too, it was far from simple to reconcile attachment to the cause and attachment to the crown. From 1562 to 1589, their place in royal service consequently dwindled, except in Protestant-controlled towns or in institutions in which spots were specifically reserved for them. But reconciling loyalty to the cause and loyalty to the crown then became less of a dilemma once the leader and protector of the Protestant party, Henry of Navarre, became the heir apparent to the throne in 1584. Furthermore, not only did reconciling these two imperatives now become easier; many Protestants, like Jacques Bongars himself, were well placed to occupy important roles when Navarre came to the throne in 1589, since so many of Henry's most faithful and important advisors and councillors prior to that date had been Huguenots. Yet Henry of Navarre could only become Henry IV if he convinced France's Catholic majority that his reign would not bring about a Reformed state church or Protestant hegemony. Strategically it became unwise for him to rely too heavily on his Huguenot comrades-in-arms. Protestants moved back into royal service during the reign of Henry IV, but the trend was less important and more confined to specific sectors of the administration than one might have predicted in advance.

The remarkable speed with which Protestant churches multiplied in France between 1554 and the outbreak of the First Civil War in 1562 is well known. When Bongars was born, Protestantism in France was little more than a matter of isolated individuals and small groups drawn to heterodox ideas chiefly of Genevan origin. By the time he was eight, more than 800 formally structured Reformed churches had been created and federated into a nationwide movement, with a total number of members that has been estimated at around 1.5 or 2 million people out of a total population of about 18 million. The raw numbers are impressive, yet Protestantism's presence in French society seemed even more impressive yet to contemporaries, for the converts to the new faith were disproportionately drawn from the ranks of the town-dwellers and the nobility. In the widely scattered regions that have been studied to date, anywhere from 10 to upwards of 40 percent of the nobility embraced the

cause.⁴ The Protestant presence in such major provincial cities as Bordeaux, Rouen and Lyon ranged from 7.5 to 33 per cent of the total urban population.⁵ In a number of small or midsized cities in the Midi including Nîmes, Montpellier, Montauban and Castres, the Protestants had even established numerical and political supremacy by late 1561.

Evidence about the number of Protestants within the different branches of royal service at the end of this first period of dramatic Protestant expansion is spotty, but it appears that there were substantial variations from one branch to another. The judges of France's local royal courts formed a group within which Protestant ideas took particularly deep early root. Bongars' home town of Orléans has been especially well studied in this regard. Here, Protestants made up 4 of 7 judges in the city's *bailliage* court, 6 of 14 in the *siege présidial*, and 4 of 8 in three lesser courts between 1560 and 1572.⁶ Caen, Alençon, Saintes and Béziers are other cities where we have firm evidence that a large number, even a majority, of the judges of the *siege présidial* adhered to Protestant ideas in this same period.⁷ So common was the perception around 1560 that local judges sympathetic to the faith protected accused heretics from prosecution that one Catholic pamphlet charged that the Huguenots had a deliberate strategy to seek converts in this milieu in order to allow the faith to spread unmolested.⁸

⁴ CONSTANT, JEAN-MARIE: The Protestant Nobility in France during the Wars of Religion: A Leaven of Innovation in a Traditional World, in: Benedict, Philip et al. (eds.): *Reformation, Revolt and Civil War in France and the Netherlands 1555–1585*, Amsterdam 1999, p. 70.

⁵ BENEDICT, PHILIP: *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism*, New Haven 2002, p. 138; TINGLE, ELIZABETH C.: Authority and Society in Nantes during the French Wars of Religion, 1559–98, Manchester 2006, p. 62; GOULD, KEVIN: *Catholic Activism in South-West France 1540–1570*, Aldershot 2006, p. 29.

⁶ STOCKER, CHRISTOPHER: The Calvinist Officiers of Orléans, 1560–1572, in: Falk, Joyce Duncan (ed.): *Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History*, Santa Barbara, 1979, pp. 21–33.

⁷ LAMET, MARYELISE SUFFERN: *Reformation, War and Society in Caen, Lower Normandy: 1558–1610*, unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1978, p. 208; ROBERT, BENJAMIN: Alençon protestant en 1562, Alençon 1937, pp. 36–37; GARRISON-ESTÈBE, JANINE: *Protestants du Midi 1559–1598*, Toulouse, 1980, pp. 29–30. On the importance of local judges within the Protestant movement, see also ROMIER, LUCIEN: *Le royaume de Catherine de Médicis*, Paris 1922, vol. 2, pp. 274–278.

⁸ LA VACQUERIE, JEAN DE: *Catholique Remonstrance aux Roys et Princes Chrestiens, a tous magistrats et gouverneurs de Republique touchant l'abolition des heresies, troubles et scismes qui regnent aujourd'huy en la Chrestienté*, Paris 1560, quoted in RACAUT, LUC: *Persecution or Pluralism? Propaganda and Opinion-Forming during the French Wars of Religion*, in: Bonney, Richard and Trim, D.J.B. (eds.): *Persecution and Pluralism: Calvinists and Religious Minorities in Early Modern Europe 1550–1700*, Bern 2006, p. 86.

Within the sovereign courts that stood atop the judicial hierarchy, Protestants were somewhat less numerous. The highest profile early martyr of the faith, Anne Du Bourg, was a *conseiller* in the Parlement of Paris, and important minorities within several Parlements came under suspicion because they advocated leniency for accused heretics, but among those considered soft on heresy only a fraction appear to have formally joined Reformed churches. According to the surest evidence, at most 23 of 143 judges of the Parlement of Paris, 5 of 65 in the Parlement of Rouen and 7 of 40 in the Parlement of Aix did so.⁹

Things were different again among the highest aristocrats occupying strategic royal offices. Here Protestantism once more made surprising inroads. At the outset of the First Civil War in 1562, of the twelve great noblemen occupying major provincial governorships, at least three were Protestant: François II de Clèves, duc de Nevers; Henri-Robert de La Marck, duc de Bouillon; and Louis de Bourbon, prince de Condé. So too were the governors of the smaller regions of Aunis (Guy de Chabot de Jarnac) and the Angoumois-Saintonge (François de La Rochefoucauld).

For those converts to the Reformed church who occupied leading positions in royal service, the outbreak of the First Civil War in 1562 posed a difficult dilemma: could they truly continue to serve the crown if they cast their lot with the Protestant party? Historians are increasingly recognizing that a significant number of high aristocrats who had joined the Reformed church before April 1562 in fact refused to rally to the banner of the Prince of Condé but instead fought with the crown and the Catholic party in the First Civil War: for example, three of the five just mentioned governors, Nevers, Bouil-

⁹ TABER, LINDA L.: Royal Policy and Religious Dissent within the Parlement of Paris, 1559–1563, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1982, esp. pp. 321–322; BENEDICT, PHILIP: Rouen during the Wars of Religion, Cambridge 1981, p. 78; KEMPA, ANNE: L'attitude du Parlement aixois face à ses membres protestants (1550–1572), in: Siècles: Cahiers du Centre d'Histoire des Entreprises et des Communautés 2 (1995), pp. 43–59, here p. 51. See also TABER, LINDA L.: Religious Dissent within the Parlement of Paris in the Mid-Sixteenth Century: A Reassessment, in: French Historical Studies 16 (1990), pp. 684–699; ROELKER, NANCY LYMAN: One King, One Faith: The Parlement of Paris and the Religious Reformations of the Sixteenth Century, Berkeley 1996, ch. 8–10; GARRISON-ESTÈBE: Protestants du Midi, pp. 28–29; POWIS, JONATHAN: Order, Religion and the Magistrates of a Provincial Parlement in Sixteenth-Century France, in: Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte 71 (1980), pp. 180–197; CHAMPEAUD, GRÉGORY: Le Parlement de Bordeaux et les paix de religion (1563–1600). Une genèse de l'Édit de Nantes, Nérac 2008, esp. pp. 374–381; HERNANDO, THIERRY: Un conseiller calviniste au Parlement de Toulouse: Jean de Coras (1515?–1572), in: Poumarède, Jacques and Thomas, Jack (eds.): Les Parlements de province: pouvoirs, justice et société du XVe au XVIIIe siècle, Toulouse 1996, pp. 733–740, here pp. 736–738.

lon and Jarnac.¹⁰ Others who cast their lot with Condé and his party in this conflict did not long remain faithful to the cause. Antoine de Crussol, baron of Uzès, is an interesting example. This favorite of Catherine de Medici, he was given several important missions to pacify troubled regions just before the outbreak of the First Civil War but ended up supporting the Protestant party in that conflict and even being placed in command of the regional armies levied by the cause in Languedoc, Dauphiné and the Lyonnais. After the war he returned to court and regained the Queen Mother's good graces. As he did so, he moved away from attachment to the Protestant faith and finally returned to Catholicism.¹¹ Another leading Protestant military commander of the First Civil War, the redoubtable Baron des Adrets, likewise subsequently recon-verted and fought with the crown in later conflicts.¹² Of course, Protestantism retained a certain number of military champions who at the same time occupied important royal charges and retained at least intermittent influence at court, most obviously the prince of Condé and the brothers Coligny. Of course, too, Condé would be killed in 1569 and the Admiral Coligny in 1572. Their place as great Protestant aristocrats willing to lead Huguenot forces would be filled by Condé's son Henri and by Henri de La Tour, vicomte de Turenne and subsequently duc de Bouillon, a rare convert of the mid-1570s. Neither of these military leaders nor any other Protestant was rewarded with a maréchal's baton under either Charles IX or Henri III, however. Under Henry IV two Huguenots, Turenne and Lesdiguières, would receive this honor. During the reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV, seven Protestant generals would be named *maréchal*, three of them during the regency of Anne of Austria when the crown was particularly concerned to win the political support of the Reformed.¹³

Once the civil wars got underway, it seems that Protestants within the world of the robe found it as hard to serve the king as did those in the world of the sword across most of France, although it must be said that the Huguenot presence in royal courts on the far side of the Saint Bartholomew's Mas-

¹⁰ CARROLL, STUART: The Rights of Violence and BENEDICT, PHILIP: Prophets in Arms? Ministers in War, Ministers on War: France, 1562–1574, in: Murdock, Graeme et al. (eds.): Ritual and Violence: Natalie Davis and Early Modern France (Past & Present Suppl. no. 7), Oxford 2012, pp. 127–162 and pp. 163–196, here pp. 135 and 180.

¹¹ There is as yet no good study of Crussol. JOUANNA, ARLETTE: Crussol, famille de, in: ead. et al. (eds.): Histoire et dictionnaire des guerres de religion, Paris 1998, pp. 834–835, offers a brief notice.

¹² VAISSIÈRE, PIERRE DE: Le baron des Adrets (1512–1586), in: Revue des questions historiques, n. s. 49 (1913), pp. 389–422, 50 (1913), pp. 38–64.

¹³ EL HAGE, FADI: Les nominations de maréchaux de France protestants et l'évolution politique de la monarchie française à l'époque moderne (XVIe–XVIIe siècles), in: Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français 158 (2012), pp. 685–701, esp. p. 686.

sacre in 1572 has not been well studied. Already amid the First Civil War of 1562–1563, the *parlementaires* who ceased attending sessions of the courts that continued to meet in Catholic-controlled towns or who failed to flee Protestant-controlled towns to join the recomposed Parlements in exile established in nearby royal and Catholic strongholds were suspended from the court on suspicion of Protestantism. Many had a difficult time gaining readmission after the edict of pacification of 1563, even though this edict specified that all royal office holders no matter what their religion had the right to resume their old positions with the return of peace. Early in the Third Civil War in 1568, a royal measure barred Protestants from holding any royal office whatsoever, from the most distinguished positions in the sovereign courts right down to the post of royal herring inspector in the market of Dieppe. We have traces of this measure's careful implementation. The edict of pacification of 1570 once again restored the suspended officers to their prior positions. Once again they often found considerable resistance when they tried to resume them. Finally, the Saint Bartholomew's Massacres witnessed the lynching of several Protestant *conseillers* in the Parlement of Toulouse, including the celebrated Jean Coras, a renewed prohibition of Protestant worship that would last for four years in most of the kingdom, and a massive wave of abjurations of the faith. The legal impediments to Protestant office-holding would once again be removed in the edicts of pacification of 1576, 1577, 1593 and 1598, but by later phases of the wars of religion and during the reign of Henry IV it appears that mistrust of the Protestants was such that most courts in Catholic majority areas were able to put enough impediments in the way of Protestants who wished to acquire a seat within the court that Protestant members of these courts became far rarer than previously. Jacques Pannier's detailed study of the Reformed church of Paris during the reign of Henry IV suggests that none of its members remained in the main chambers of the Parlement of Paris by 1598, when a secret article of the Edict of Nantes mandated the immediate appointment of four new Protestant judges and the subsequent nomination of two more when offices fell vacant in order to reassure the Huguenots that access to the bench of this most important tribunal had not been completely cut off for them.¹⁴

¹⁴ PANNIER, JACQUES: *L'Église réformée de Paris sous Henri IV*, Paris 1911, *passim*, esp. pp. 178–187, 546–547, where the author discusses the most prominent members of the church. On the appointment of the new Protestant judges of 1598 and the hostility they continued to face from their Catholic colleagues see MARGOLF, DIANE: *Religion and Royal Justice in Early Modern France: The Paris Chambre de l'Edit, 1598–1665*, Kirksville Mo. 2003, pp. 53–57. For the difficulties of Protestant office-holders in holding onto their positions over the course of the civil wars: *Archives Départementales de la Seine-Maritime*, Rouen, B, Parlement, Arrêts, novembre 1567–février 1568, arrêt of December 10, 1567, décembre 1568–juin 1569, *passim*; DEWALD, JONATHAN: *The Formation of a Provincial Nobility: The Magistrates of the Parlement of Rouen 1499–1610*, Princeton

Two important exceptions nonetheless existed to the general trend that saw Protestants pushed out of judicial offices over the course of the civil wars. First, in the handful of second-level administrative towns that became Protestant strongholds such as Nîmes, Montauban or Castres, the local royal tribunals would have been staffed overwhelmingly or exclusively by Protestant judges throughout the period. Second, beginning with the peace of Beaulieu or peace of Monsieur of 1576, the edicts of pacification ending each successive civil wars all specified the creation of bi-confessional chambers within those Parlements with the most Huguenots in their jurisdictions to handle cases involving parties from the rival faiths. Where these so-called *chambres mi-parties* actually came to be established, notably in Languedoc, Guyenne and Dauphiné, a specified number of posts that could only be filled by Protestants came into existence. The *chambre mi-partie* of Languedoc, which functioned from 1579 to 1585 and from 1595 to 1679, is particularly well documented and well studied.¹⁵ Its initial Protestant members were appointed through a process in which the political assemblies of the Reformed churches, Henry of Navarre, and the politique governor Henri de Montmorency-Damville all had a say.¹⁶ Of the initial ten judges, five had earlier served as judges in regional *séries présidiaux* (three cases) or the Parlement of Bordeaux or Toulouse. Four were lawyers who had not previously held royal judgeships. One was the *maître des requêtes* of Henry of Navarre.¹⁷

At least two of these ten men are figures of enough local notoriety for the arc of their careers and behavior in the civil wars to be known. The first is Guichard de Scorbiac of Montauban, the *maître des requêtes* of the king of Navarre. A notary's son trained as a lawyer, Scorbiac was elected consul of his home town in 1552, 1563 and 1573. He was also an early elder of the Reformed church and undertook several missions in late 1561 and early 1562 to plead with the king's representatives in the region to treat the city and the church with leniency. During the First Civil War when Montauban came under siege, Scorbiac sided with the city's military governor and the minority faction within the church that was prepared to consider a negotiated surrender. Despite this, he clearly retained the respect of his fellow townsmen and

1980, p. 82; CHAMPEAUD: Parlement de Bordeaux, pp. 373–381; HERNANDO: Jean de Coras, pp. 733–740.

¹⁵ See especially CAPOT, STÉPHANE: Justice et religion en Languedoc au temps de l'Edit de Nantes: la chambre de l'Edit de Castres (1579–1679), Paris 1998; MARGOLF: Religion and Royal Justice; MENTZER, RAYMOND A.: Bipartisan Justice and the Pacification of Late Sixteenth-Century Languedoc, in: Friedman, Jerome (ed.): *Regnum, Religio et Ratio: Essays Presented to Robert M. Kingdon*, Kirksville Mo. 1987, pp. 125–132; MENTZER, RAYMOND A.: Blood and Belief: Family Survival and Confessional Identity among the Provincial Huguenot Nobility, West Lafayette Ind. 1994.

¹⁶ CAPOT: Justice et religion, pp. 52–53.

¹⁷ Figures derived from the biographical dictionary in *ibid.*: Appendix 1.

church members, for he represented Montauban at the Protestant political assemblies of Millau and Nîmes in 1574 that were so important in organizing the military and political recovery of the cause after the blow of the Saint Bartholomew's Massacre. When the Protestants set up their own regional appeals court in 1574 because they felt they could not receive justice at the hands of the Parlement of Toulouse, Scorbiac was named to that court. He likewise was named to the political council established to work in tandem with the regional military protector Turenne. The skills he displayed in these capacities were what brought him to the attention of the leading Protestant noblemen with links to the region and finally to a trusted position as Navarre's chief agent and correspondent in the region, a member not only of the *Chambre de l'Edit* but also of the *sénéchaussée* court of Montauban, the *surintendant des finances* for the generality of Montauban, and the man Henry turned to when he wanted somebody to have tracts defending his right to the throne printed in Montauban.¹⁸

The second member of the *Chambre de l'Edit* whose actions over the preceding years of the wars of religion are well known was its Protestant co-president, Guillaume Roques, Sieur de Clausonne. A lawyer from Nîmes, Clausonne spoke out for the Protestant cause as deputy to the Estates of Languedoc and the Estates General of 1561 and was one of the initial members of the political council that the city's Protestants set up in late 1561 soon after taking over several churches in the town for worship. Amid the First Civil War his intervention as a delegate from the allied province of Languedoc to the meeting of the Protestant-controlled provincial Estates of Dauphiné that was discussing the possibility of a negotiated settlement with the royal governor Nemours was critical to the defeat of that initiative. He participated in the massacre of leading Nîmes Catholics known as the Michelade that followed the Protestant reseizure of political and military control at the outbreak of the Second Civil War. When Nîmes vacillated about what course to follow in the wake of the Saint Bartholomew's Massacre, his call to disobey the royal order to cease assembling for worship and to forbid the king's lieutenant from entering the city was critical in swaying the city to follow the path of armed resistance. In brief, at every critical moment of decision in the early wars of religion, Clausonne was a partisan of militant resistance and even a participant in revenge killings of the city's leading Catholic political and ecclesiastical figures. He would subsequently play an important role in the Protestant political assemblies of the next five years and was among the

¹⁸ CONNER, PHILIP: Huguenot Heartland: Montauban and Southern French Calvinism during the Wars of Religion, Aldershot 2002, pp. 33–34, 160, 163, 174–177, 180–186, 189, 205; CAPOT: Justice et religion, pp. 389–390; BAUM, G. / CUNITZ, E. (eds.): Theodore Beza: Histoire ecclésiastique des Eglises réformées au royaume de France, Paris, 1883–1889, vol. I, p. 932, vol. III, pp. 73, 127.

negotiators of the 1577 peace of Beaulieu that led to the establishment of the *chambre mi-partie*.¹⁹ Here was a rare Protestant whose uncompromising militancy in the party's proclaimed service to the crown led to an actual royal office thanks one presumes to his reputation as a fearless defender of the rights and interest of the cause. It need hardly be said that this was a very exceptional case.

Another exceptional case of a different sort illustrates the other side of the coin: the hesitancy that many of those charged with important responsibilities who were drawn to Protestant ideas felt about espousing those ideas openly between 1562 and the very end of the reign of Henry III. This is the case of Arnaud Du Ferrier, the learned *parlementaire* who was one of the seven judges of the Parlement of Paris in addition to Anne Du Bourg whom Henry II sought to arrest after the famous *mercuriale* of June 1559 in which a number of judges of the high court urged leniency for heretics in the king's presence. Whereas Du Bourg subsequently made a forthright confession of Reformed faith and admitted to having attended Reformed services, the other seven judges including Du Ferrier all made confessions of faith that were judged to absolve them of suspicion of heresy. Closely linked to the chancellor Michel de l'Hospital, Du Ferrier quickly returned to the crown's good graces and not only rejoined the Parlement but was sent to Italy first as the crown's ambassador to the Council of Trent and then to Venice, where he served with one brief interruption from 1563 to 1582. While participating outwardly in the rites of the Catholic church, Du Ferrier became a secret Protestant by 1570 if not before, or at least so Philippe Duplessis-Mornay would later claim. When Du Ferrier subsequently returned to France and took up a position as chancellor of Henry of Navarre at Duplessis-Mornay's urging, Duplessis-Mornay urged him at the same time to make a public profession of the faith. He refused to do so, however, and it remains uncertain to this day if he ever formally joined the Reformed church.²⁰

¹⁹ MÉNARD, LÉON: *Histoire civile, ecclesiastique, et littéraire de la ville de Nismes*, Paris 1750–1758, vol. 4, pp. 265, 287, 326–327, 339, 361, vol. 5, pp. 219–221, 244, Preuves, pp. 27, 29–30, 32–33, 37–40, 177; [GOULARD, SIMON]: *Mémoires de l'Estat de France sous Charles neufiesme*, [Geneva] 1578, vol. 2, fol. 21v; BENEDICT, PHILIP / FORNEROD, NICOLAS (eds.): *L'organisation et l'action des Eglises réformées de France 1557–1563. Synodes provinciaux et autres documents*, Geneva 2012, pp. 255, 259, 261; CAPOT: *Justice et religion*, pp. 387–388; HAAG, EUGÈNE and ÉMILE: *La France protestante*, Paris 1846–1859, vol. 8, pp. 524–525.

²⁰ PATRY, RAOUL: *Philippe Du Plessis-Mornay. Un huguenot homme d'État (1549–1623)*, Paris 1933, p. 60; TALLON, ALAIN: *Diplomate et ‘politique’: Arnaud Du Ferrier*, in: Wanegffelen, Thierry (ed.), *De Michel de L'Hospital à l'Edit de Nantes. Politique et religion face aux Eglises*, Clermont-Ferrand 2002, pp. 305–333, surtout p. 310; *Dictionnaire de Biographie Française*, vol. 11, coll. 1393–1394.

Open profession of Protestantism was not incompatible with forms of royal service that required the direct extension of the king's trust when diplomatic service in a Protestant country was involved, but a difficult balancing act was required. Witness the career of Charles Quissarme de Danzay (1515–1589). Born in the same year that Francis I came to the throne, Danzay, the son of a mayor of Saint-Maixent, began carrying out diplomatic missions for the French crown in Germany and Scandinavia as early as 1547. Quickly drawn into the orbit of Protestantism, he remained in the region for the better part of his life, developing such extensive contacts – among other things he was a close enough friend of Tycho Brahe's to lay the first stone for the construction of Uraniensborg castle – that both Charles IX and Henry III named him ambassador to Denmark and used him as their man in Copenhagen and principal envoy to the entire Baltic region despite his heretical opinions. In his role as ambassador he faithfully transmitted the crown's version of the Saint Bartholomew's Massacre throughout the region after that event even though this cast much of the blame for the event on the Huguenots and was angrily refuted from Geneva. Concurrently, however, he was active in the common cause of international Protestantism. He corresponded with figures such as Francis Walsingham, Thomas Bodley, Hubert Languet and Pierre Loiseleur de Villiers and worked during the 1580s to form alliances that could be mobilized against the Catholic League. Prudently, he chose not to mention these activities when writing to Henry III and his secretaries of state.²¹

Another Protestant who carried out a number of diplomatic missions for Henry III was Nicolas de Harlay, sieur de Sancy (1546–1629), part of a family that would remain religiously divided for three generations.²² The son of a *conseiller* in the Parlement of Paris, Harlay de Sancy, like Bongars, received much of his education during the 1560s in Germany. After being named *maître des requêtes* in 1577 and *conseiller du roi* in 1581, he undertook numerous missions to Switzerland for Henry III, finding himself on at least one occasion raising troops there for the king at the same time that his brother Robert, sieur de Monglat, was doing the same for Navarre.²³ It seems telling that Danzay and Sancy both served the crown as envoys or resident ambassa-

²¹ DAUSSY, HUGUES: Un diplomate protestant au service d'un roi catholique: Charles de Danzay, ambassadeur de France au Danemark (1515–1589), in: Pitou, Frédérique (ed.), *Elites et notables de l'Ouest, XVIe–XXe siècles. Entre conservatisme et modernité*, Rennes 2004, pp. 277–294.

²² The son of a Protestant mother and a Catholic father, Harlay de Sancy was raised as a Protestant but married a Catholic. His sons were raised in the Reformed faith and his daughters as Catholics.

²³ SCHRENCK, GILBERT: Nicolas de Harlay sieur de Sancy (1546–1629), l'antagoniste d'Agrippa d'Aubigné. Etude biographique et contexte pamphlétaire, Paris 2000, surtout ch. 1.

dors in Protestant lands and that Sancy almost never attended the royal council after being named *conseiller du roi*. Especially during the reign of the very Catholic Henry III, Protestants in the most trusted circles of advice and command close to the king became as rare as hen's teeth.

The pendulum would swing in the other direction from 1589 onward, and Bongars, Guichard de Scorbiac and Arnaud Du Ferrier have already shown us the route that would lead a significant number of Protestants back to royal office. It passed through the entourage of Henry of Navarre before he came to the throne. Before becoming king, of course, the Béarnais acted for more than a decade as the military protector of the Protestant cause. This Protestant connection brought him many of his most faithful and able servants. Sully, the great finance minister who came from a sword family of ancient noble lineage, was Navarre's boon companion in arms in many of his military campaigns from 1577 to 1596. The *maréchal* Lesdiguières, 'prince of the Alps', was in Navarre's service with the title *lieutenant général sous l'autorité du roi de Navarre en Dauphiné* from 1579 onward. Many of the less famous Protestants who also served Henry IV as ambassadors, financial officials, or in other positions of trust also entered his service when he was simply king of Navarre.

But the path from good service to Henry of Bourbon, king of Navarre, to high royal office under Henry IV, king of France, was anything but smooth. Amid the struggle for the Bourbon succession that followed the assassination of Henry III, Navarre had to bend over backward to reassure Catholic opinion, and especially the Catholic nobles who rallied to his cause, that his accession would not engender a Protestant regime. Two days after Henry III's death, he vowed in a public declaration that he would not name a Protestant to a royal charge or governorship for six months anywhere else but in the minority of towns specifically placed under Huguenot control by the terms of his April 1589 alliance with Henry III.²⁴ After these six months were up, many Protestants were named to the royal council, so many that they formed the clear majority of its formal members in early 1592. Most, however, were kept busy on special missions far from court, with the result that the councillors actually attending the meetings of the *Conseil du Roi* were overwhelmingly Catholic.²⁵ Even after Henry's conversion to Catholicism in 1593, the

²⁴ Déclarations et serment du roi à son avènement à la couronne, suivie de l'adhésion des princes, ducs, pairs et autres seigneurs présens, sous condition de maintenir la religion catholique, in: Isambert, Jourdan and Decrusy (eds.), *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises*, Paris 1821, vol. 15, p. 4.

²⁵ During the first four months of 1592, Catholic members of the Council attended meetings 38 times, Protestants five. VALOIS, NOËL: *Le Conseil du Roi aux XIVe, XVe et XVIe siècles*, Paris 1888 (repr. Geneva 1975), pp. 218–229, esp. pp. 223–224; DAUSSY, HUGUES: *Les Huguenots et le roi. Le combat politique de Philippe Duplessis-Mornay (1572–1600)*, Geneva 2002, pp. 428–431.

sincerity of his conversion and his worthiness for the throne remained in doubt among much Catholic opinion. It was not until the reduction of Paris and Rouen in the summer of 1594, and even more importantly until his absolution and recognition as king by Pope Clement VIII in September 1595, that he could really feel comfortable rewarding his key Protestant councillors with favors, offices and responsibilities commensurate with their services and competence.

As a result of these tactical considerations that made Henry IV unwilling to reward outstanding service if it came from a Protestant, Sully spent the years from 1589 to 1594 alternatively risking his life for the king in daring military exploits and retiring to his lands in a snit when subsequently passed over in favor of a Catholic for a command or office that he believed his actions merited, with the result that he withdrew to his *terres* no less than five times in these years.²⁶ He only began to attend meetings of the *Conseil d'État* regularly in early 1594 and entered the *Conseil des Finances* in 1596. Lesdiguières likewise played a critical military role in defeating the League in Dauphiné and in thwarting the duke of Savoy's incursions into France, but for all his local power (and for all that he profited financially from that power), he too did not get the first formal office commensurate with his services until 1597, when Henry named him his lieutenant general for the province, a role he had effectively been filling since 1590.²⁷ His elevation to the rank of *maréchal* only came at the very end of Henry IV's reign in 1609.²⁸

Meanwhile, if many of Henry IV's leading Protestant servants were slow to get their just reward, Henry's conversion to Catholicism in 1593 also cost him the service of those Protestant companions such as Agrippa d'Aubigné who believed that only unwavering loyalty to God's church could bring divine protection and favor. Between disapproval of the king's conversion and the disappointment many Protestants felt at not being compensated for their service while Catholics who had been less faithful were promoted or welcomed back into high positions, a significant number of Protestant governors and military men who initially served Henry in the 1580s moved into opposition to him between 1593 and 1598.²⁹ Others of his most important Prot-

²⁶ BARBICHE, BERNARD / DAINVILLE-BARBICHE, SÉGOLÈNE: *Sully: l'homme et ses fidèles*, Paris 1997, ch. 2, esp. p. 50.

²⁷ DUFAYARD, CHARLES: *Le connétable de Lesdiguières*, Paris 1892; GAL, STÉPHANE: *Lesdiguières. Prince des Alpes et connétable de France*, Grenoble 2007. He had been named governor of Grenoble in 1591.

²⁸ Still further rewards and titles would come under Louis XIII, especially after he converted to Catholicism in 1622: the title of duke and peer in 1611, of connétable in 1622, and of governor of Picardy in 1623.

²⁹ Relations between the Protestant nobility and Henry IV are surveyed in ZUBER, ROGER: *La noblesse protestante (1584–1598). Histoire politique des rapports entre Henri*

estant councillors such as Harlay de Sancy and Philippe Canaye de Fresnes followed him back into the Catholic church.

The result was that, despite the high profile of a Sully and a Lesdiguières, Protestants in royal service under Henry IV were less numerous than one might initially expect and were concentrated primarily in a number of specific sectors. Perhaps the most important was the royal finances. The key financial officials in place when Sully entered the *Conseil des Finances* were all Catholics, but as Sully rose to dominate the council he placed Protestants in many key subordinate positions. Service under Sully became so strongly linked to the Reformed faith that one *auditeur des comptes* with a family name destined to live on, Gilles de Maupeou, sr d'Ableiges (1553–1641), even converted to the faith when named *intendant des finances* in 1600, only to return to Catholicism just before his death in 1641. Financial administration would remain a domain of royal service in which Protestants were relatively well represented under Louis XIII as well.³⁰ Also Protestant was the famous proto-mercantilist *contrôleur général du commerce*, Barthélémy de Laffemas, a former *valet de chambre* of Henry's from his days as king of Navarre.

Another domain of royal service in which Protestants came to be numerous was the milieu of court artists, engineers, doctors and secretaries. The *ingénieurs du roi* Claude Chastillon and Jean Errard, the painters and architects Jacob Bunel and Salomon de Brosse, and the royal librarian Isaac Casaubon are only the most famous of the Huguenot artists or intellectuals who gained formal positions in the king's service.³¹ In all, twenty individuals who served the Béarnais as administrators or officers of his domains before his accession received the title of *secrétaire du roi* after 1589.³²

IV et les grands réformés, in: Henri IV le roi et la reconstruction du royaume. Avènement d'Henri IV. Quatrième centenaire III Pau-Nérac, Pau 1989, pp. 73–91.

³⁰ BARBICHE / DAINVILLE-BARBICHE: Sully, ch. 12, esp. pp. 478–483 provides a detailed examination of Sully's web of clients and the extent to which it was a Protestant network. For a list of Protestant financial officials Paris under Henry IV and Louis XIII: DOUEN, Orentin: La Révocation de l'édit de Nantes à Paris, Paris 1894, vol. 3, pp. 395–399.

³¹ On this milieu see MOUSNIER, ROLAND: L'assassinat d'Henri IV, Paris 1964, pp. 138–140; PRESTWICH, MENNA: Patronage and the Protestants in France, 1598–1661: Architects and Painters, in: Mousnier, Roland and Mesnard, Jean (eds.), L'âge d'or du Mécénat (1598–1661), Paris 1985, pp. 77–88, here pp. 82–84.; BUISSERET, DAVID: Les ingénieurs du roi au temps de Henri IV, in: Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques: Bulletin de la Section de Géographie 77 (1964), pp. 13–84; TREVOR-ROPER, HUGH: Europe's Physician: The Various Life of Sir Theodore de Mayerne, New Haven 2006, ch. 8.

³² MARTIN, CLAIRE (ed.): Mémoires de Benjamin Aubéry Du Maurier, ambassadeur protestant de Louis XIII (1566–1636), Geneva 2010, p. 32.

Finally, ambassadorships, especially to Protestant courts or countries, were other posts in which Huguenots often served the crown, as had already begun to be the case under Henry III. Among Protestant ambassadors serving Henry IV were Paul Choart, sieur de Buzenval, envoy to the United Provinces from 1590 to 1607; Philippe Canaye de Fresnes, envoy to the German Protestant princes from 1589 to 1593 and then, after his conversion to Catholicism, ambassador to Venice from 1601 to 1607; and Jean de La Fin, sieur de Beauvoir-la-Nocle, ambassador to England from 1589 to 1595.³³ In all, according to Claire Martin, ten of the 122 individuals holding ambassadorial posts between 1589 and 1643 were Protestant, and seven of these began their career under Henry IV.³⁴ Once again most of these men were veterans of Navarre's service prior to 1589. Often too they were celebrated *érudits* like Bongars. Beyond these Protestants at the heart of royal service, we also need to recall the positions reserved for Protestants in the *Chambres de l'Edit* of the various Parlements or as governors of the Protestant *places de sûreté*.

If in conclusion we think back to Bongars' biography, we can see that in several ways his life was a fairly typical illustration of the broader pattern of Protestant royal service over the course of the years from 1554 to 1610. The Orléans where he was born was a city whose local judicial elite would be especially strongly drawn to Protestantism, but after an early period of Huguenot political domination, the ranks of its Reformed church, like the Reformed churches of so many other major cities in northern France, would be dramatically thinned by defection and death amid the Third Civil War and the local reenactment of the Saint Bartholomew's Massacre. Access to local judicial office for those who remained true to the Reformed cause also became far more difficult after this heady early period, except where special tribunals were set up with spots reserved for members of the faith or in the minority of towns, chiefly in the south, that continued to be dominated politically by the Protestants. Amid the turmoil of the 1560s and 1570s, elite Protestant families with educational ambitions for their children, especially once again those of northern France, were well advised to look to Germany if they wished their children to study in a Protestant milieu. So we find the pattern of Bongars' education repeated not only in the case of Danzay, but also in that of another future ambassador of Henry IV's to Germany, Philippe Canaye de Fresnes, born in Paris and educated at Heidelberg. The skills and connections obtained abroad then opened up a route leading to preferment in the entourage of the Protestant cause's chief protector, Henry of Navarre. Because of the missions that Bongars undertook for the Béarnais before 1589 he was able to move into royal diplomatic service first for Henry III in the

³³ Ibid., ch. 1; *Dictionnaire de Biographie Française*, vol. 7, col. 1025–1026, vol. 8, col. 1178–1180.

³⁴ MARTIN (ed.): *Mémoires d'Aubéry Du Maurier*, p. 59.

brief period just before his assassination when he was allied with Navarre, then for Henry IV. And diplomatic service, we have seen, was one of the sectors of crown service in which both Henry III and Henry IV found it especially useful and politically cost-free to rely on Protestant agents. No one life, of course, can encapsulate all of the various paths that led France's Huguenots first away from and then back toward limited sectors of royal service. Bongars' career nonetheless seems unusually revealing of broader patterns.

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