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## The Politics of Religion in Early Modern France, by Joseph Bergin (Book Review)

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Joseph Bergin is no stranger to the politics of religion in early modern France with his substantial publications, including *Cardinal Richelieu: Power and the Pursuit of Wealth* (1990); *The Making of the French Episcopate, 1589-1661* (1996); *Rise of Richelieu* (1997); *The Seventeenth Century: Europe, 1598-1715* (2001); *Crown, Church and Episcopate Under Louis XIV* (2004); *Church, Society, and Religious Change in France, 1580—1730* (2009). Bergin's new study carefully tracks the complex struggle between French monarchs and the papacy through the reigns of Henri III (1574-1589), Henri IV (1589-1610), Louis XIII (1610-1643), and Louis XIV (1643-1714), along with the many competing forces within France during the period.

Following the Great Schism (1378-1417), while France lost the Avignon papacy to a restored Roman pontiff, it continued to assert its independence and Gallican liberties. For centuries French monarchs were recognized as the "most Christian king," and the myth of France hinged on whether the monarchy could maintain a sacralization, which argued that the king alone was privy to God's secret designs for his subjects beyond the powers given to the papacy. Thus, kings and popes played a carefully choreographed game of threat and compromise to ensure a balance of power. Henri III was not successful in his goal to sacralize the monarchy, nor could Henri IV offer a solid foundation since he had been raised Protestant and did not convert to Catholicism until age forty. Bergin makes the point that Henri IV was successful, however, in negotiating the complex forces at work. "What is increasingly clear is that the inherited notion of Henri IV as a cynical opportunist or hard-nosed realpolitiker does not fit the case, but that for him religious choice and political obligation as king of France created acute dilemmas of decision and action which could not be easily or quickly reconciled" (40). Bergin makes a very good case that Henri IV was finally accepted by the French Catholic Church and was able to bring peace to France until his assassination in 1610.

France was one of the states where the struggle for the balance of power between Catholics and Protestants endured the longest. While the number of Huguenots was never great— only one-tenth of the population in 1562— what gave them power was that many nobles— up to 40 percent at one point— had converted in the sixteenth century. With substantial wealth and international connections, foreign mercenary armies and protection from Protestant states made it difficult to defeat them. On the other hand, Bergin also shows that most Huguenots were very loyal to the king when not embroiled in religious wars. Yet they were certainly not the king's only problem. He struggled continually with the *gens de roi* (royal jurists), and with the Paris parlementaires who displayed their Gallican liberties. It was the political intrigue of the Guise family and the Catholic League (backed by Spain) that kept politics within Catholicism in flux. With far more interest in reform of the church, the Paris theology faculty demonstrated a variety of opinions, but generally supported the role of the monarch in ecclesiastical affairs. They were often pitted against the ultramontane opinions of some Catholic hierarchy, with great support from the Jesuits who had to make some compromises to remain in France. While these debates alone kept things off-balance, the development of the devots (who supported the Habsburg monarchs and opposed Richelieu), the Jansenists and Port Royal (who were bitter opponents of Jesuit theology), and the quietists— all contributed to a political and religious imbalance.

No study of seventeenth-century France would be complete without an understanding of the role of Richelieu. Bergin points out that he stood between king and pope since he accepted the papacy's spiritual authority over the church but was reluctant to allow intervention in the political sphere. Thus Richelieu developed a "reason of state" based on rational principles for the preservation of France, while also protecting the Jesuits who had both a religious and a political agenda.

One of Bergin's most important points is his claim that what finally broke the stalemate in Catholic-Protestant theological debate came after the 1660s with a more substantial reform of the Catholic Church. Bossuet redrafted the Gallican Articles in 1682, in which he linked the French church to Rome. While Catholics had sustained a "'naive' evocation of what we might call the 'societyreligion compact'" (25)— a complete unity of religion and society—without great acknowledgement, most of the French hierarchy understood that the church needed reform. Yet whatever Protestants did to reform the church was incomprehensible to Catholic theologians, who viewed them as merely the "religion pretendue reformed' In the second-half of the seventeenth century Catholic apologists began to claim that "Catholicism had by now been so successfully reformed that the original cause— and continuing excuse— for the Protestant Reformation was no longer valid, and that a refusal to return to the true church was henceforth unjustifiable" (242). While the Jansenists were contesting French Catholic theology, their interpretation rivaled the Huguenot's use of Augustine. Bergin shows how the Jansenists became the worst enemies of Protestants since they forced Louis XIV to take more direct action against all challenges to his authority. The final blow for Protestants came in the 1685 Edict of Fontainebleau which revoked the Edict of Nantes. After 1685 French kings and church would not recognize Protestantism. Protestants could not emigrate legally and were forcibly converted with the persuasion of the dragonnades, becoming "New Catholics." New Catholics remained on probation, however, and could establish little trust that they might not continue their subversive practices; they remained with fewer civil rights than nascent Catholics until the 1787 Edict of Tolerance.