Nancy Lyman Roelker. *One King, One Faith: The Parlement of Paris and the Religious Reformations of the Sixteenth Century.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996. xi + 543 pp. $65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-520-08626-5.
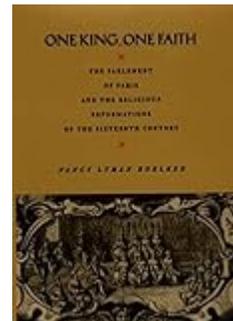
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This is a long book, long in the making, and long anticipated by early modern historians as a magisterial capstone to the brilliant career of the late Nancy Lyman Roelker. Roelker intended to base this book on exhaustive archival research, but advancing years and declining health curtailed those ambitions. As the reader moves through the book, it becomes increasingly apparent that the author has become reliant upon published, more readily accessible, and more familiar sources like the *Memoires-Journaux* of Pierre de l'Estoile, the *Histoire universelle* of Jacques-Auguste de Thou, the writings of Guillaume Du Vair, and the correspondence of Etienne Pasquier. These men Roelker holds as the most representative of the socio-juridical group–the judges of the *Parlement* of Paris–whom she seeks to track across the tumultuous terrain of the sixteenth century and whose *mentalite* she seeks to understand and explain. L'Estoile, de Thou, Du Vair, Pasquier–this is a familiar roll-call of the *politiques* about whom all *seiziemistes* have long known seemingly all there is to know. But if Roelker's treatment of these leading men (and many more) is more extensive than novel, she nonetheless gives us a book that, as Barbara Diefendorf stresses in her introduction, is a powerful work of synthesis and one, I would add, of almost encyclopedic dimensions.

Synthetic sweep, however, is not the book's only

virtue, for, as Diefendorf also rightly observes, this book is a work of interpretation based on a lifetime of reflection about the sixteenth century. The noisy voices of parlementary ultra catholics and of Huguenot sympathizers have often crowded the pages of books about the French Wars of Religion, but Roelker contends that such attention has been disproportionate to their numbers and even to their importance. She seeks to redress that distorting imbalance by shifting the focus away from this vocal minority to the silent majority of *parlementaires* who toed a consistently "moderate" line. While one may counter that this majority was not so silent, one must applaud Roelker's objective and her central thesis. She seeks to determine the "elements of the mind-set of the elite leadership of the *gens de robe*", and her central point is that this *mentalite* was steeped in religion and legal tradition, and thus, from the Pragmatic Sanction of 1438 well into the seventeenth century, religious issues cannot be isolated from the "constitutional complex".

The mainstream, steadfast loyalty of the *parlementaires* to religious and legal tradition was wrapped up in Gallicanism, but when such loyalty was mixed with the explosive religious and constitutional issues of the sixteenth century, these judges found themselves immersed in a confounding and troubling paradox. Indeed, during the sixteenth century–especially its second half–

the *Parlement* saw two mounting threats to its juridico-religious identity loom before it. One threat was the reforming Roman church; the other, the French crown and royal court. The Church of Rome challenged the autonomy of the French church and, thus, the stance taken by the *Parlement* as the Gallican church's leading champion. Indeed, Roelker emphasizes that the *Parlement*'s role as "standard-bearer of Gallicanism dates from the Pragmatic Sanction... and it was never lowered" (p. 91). The "moderate-conservative mainstream" *parlementaires* were in a bind because they felt compelled to denounce the Huguenot heresy, and they stated publicly that the cause of heresy and its consequence, the civil wars, was "the delinquency of the clergy." With this position, however, they were confronted with defending an institution that they came to believe was the root cause of the fundamental disorder plaguing the century. Short of destroying the very professional identity they had constructed for themselves for over a century, how was the French church to be reformed but kept out of the grasp of Rome, especially the post-tridentine version which was especially intent upon bringing all catholics under the tutelage of the Pope?

One alternative was to turn to the French crown. Roelker recounts a "reprise of the song which *parlementaires* never tired of singing"–the tenth clause of the court's remonstrance against the royal orders issued in January and February 1561 which modified the repressive Edict of Romorantin of 1560 and allowed a modest degree of religious toleration to the huguenots: "...'to put an end to all seditions and troubles... may it please the king to bring about a reformation of the ministers [sic] of the church... because... the disorder and diminution of the ecclesiastical estate has steadily increased'..." (p. 254). The *Parlement* had supreme confidence in the "superiority and uniqueness of French institutions for France" (p. 107), and so were consistently opposed to ultramontanism, the threat and fear of which runs like a red thread through this history of *parlementaire* thought, and is capped by the triumphant definitive rejection of the decrees of the Council of Trent in 1607, those decrees which since the conclusion of that epochal council in 1563 demanded the supremacy of the Church of Rome over all catholics of whatever kingdom (appropriately, the chronological end to Roelker's book). However, inviting the crown to clean the Augean stable of clerical corruption introduced a different threat to the *Parlement*, for if the reforming Church of Rome posed a threat to *Parlement* identity from one side, the crown and the royal court did from the other.

According to Roelker, among the salient adjectives describing mainstream *parlementaire* thought were, besides "Gallican", "*legiste*", "*royaliste*", and "*conservateur*". All of these adjectives, in one way or another, trumpeted the importance of the law. Displaying a juridical mindset, these "conservateur" judges were "oriented to past ideals", and the constitutional tradition that they embraced linked the crown and this royal court in a double relationship. Wedded to the notion that "the joint product" of crown and *Parlement* is justice, the judges viewed themselves simultaneously as partners to the king in meting out justice, but also as his bridle restraining the arbitrary exercise of authority. Forever committed to such a balance of power, they were deeply troubled by the "new conditions" of the sixteenth century which seemed to violate the "ancient constitution"–the increasing power of the crown and the influence of the court.

In Part I, "The Mainstream Parlementaire Mentalite", Roelker notes two "revolutionary factors" which affected the *Parlement* and its history in the sixteenth century–and her history of it: venality and the dramatic increase in the numbers of judges (from forty-three in the beginning of the century to over two hundred at its end). The court became unwieldy, and buffeted by the religious and constitutional crises of the period, became increasingly factionalized. She divides her analysis of these men generationally. The "early generation" (in office from the mid-1520s to the mid-1530s) faced the "initial challenge of the reform movement." They were followed by what Roelker calls the "transitional generation" which was in office from the early 1540s to the mid-1550s. It was during this phase that venality accelerated and the factional lines became increasingly drawn. Part of the court shared the crown's drift toward repression, its more vocal proponents staffing the *Chambre ardente*, that special court for heresy cases created by Henri II in 1548. The other group, led by Pierre I Seguier, was more "moderate" though increasingly open in its opposition in the early 1550s to the advances of the "ultras." This riven cohort was followed by the "crisis generation" who staffed the court from the mid-1550s to the early 1580s. During this time divisions in the court crystallized into open factions as judges sided with rival noble houses which squared off in civil war. Finally, the "later generations" take center stage during the period of the League and the decade of Henri IV's consolidation of power, the mid-1580s to 1605. During this time we see factionalism at its most extreme, and then the unifying of the *Parlement* under the moderate, mainstream banner, personified by Achille de Harlay. This first President of the *Parlement* from 1583-1611 stands like a colos-

sus, silent but imposing, the "climactic and most authentic spokesman of the parlementaire mainstream in the entire period of this study" (pp. 39-40).

Given the drift toward faction and increasing polarization around religious ideas, it is hardly surprising that about half of the book deals with the *Parlement* and the Wars of Religion. Though Roelker employs the terminology of "civil war" (two chapters on "The Road to Civil War", followed by one entitled "The Crisis Generation in Civil War"), her book is fully in step with current historiography which has quite convincingly "Put Religion Back into the Wars of Religion" (see Mack Holt's review article of that title in *French Historical Studies* 18:2 [Fall, 1993], 524-51). Indeed, Roelker's key to unlocking access to the *mentalite* of the *parlementaires* is understanding their religious views, for these framed their constitutional identity. Gallicanism, in a word, and Roelker never lets us forget that "the Gallican issue was stronger than any other consideration in Parlementaire thought" (p. 302). Thus, in Part II, "Religion in the Parlementaire Mentalite", Roelker argues that the *parlementaires*, always dedicated to constitutional equilibrium between crown and *Parlement*, blamed the Queen Mother Catherine de Medici for letting it swing out of balance in the early 1560s. Dedicated to their credo "one king, one faith", they found Catherine's policy of limited toleration as sanctioning two religions, and so opposed it. Roelker calls these men "moderates", and in the context of religious politics of the early years of the Wars of Religion, they were, for they were flanked by the increasingly ascendent ultra Catholics who were dominated by the Guise clan (there were no *parlementaire* spokesmen corresponding to the Huguenot nobles).

Of course, centering *parlementaire* thought squarely upon Gallicanism is not new, but what Roelker does better than anyone is show in extensive detail how the tumultuous conditions of this century challenged the judges' commitment to Gallicanism and forced them to confront seeming paradoxes in their most cherished assumptions and constitutional beliefs. Guided by the slogan "one king, one faith", the *Parlement* nonetheless tacked this way and that as the stormy historical winds of heresy, civil war, and counter-reformation blew the court in directions which exposed the paradox of its fundamental constitutional foundations. At issue was the relationship between civil peace (traditionally guaranteed by the joint administration of justice by crown and court) and religion. Clearly the *parlementaires* were committed to an indissoluble bond here, and one, if anything, that was becoming even tighter during this century as judges

everywhere increasingly sacralized justice (a reflection of what John Bossy so felicitously called the "migration of the holy" (John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* [Oxford, 1985]). But what if this dedication to "one king, one faith", instead of securing civil peace and order, in fact fanned the flames of its opposite? What then? Could civil peace and religion be separated, as the Queen Mother seemed to think? But how could the *Parlement* embrace such a solution when it meant abandoning half of its credo, "one faith", and cut the heart out of Gallicanism and the very historical identity of the court and its members?

After the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572, the storm of heresy subsided, but the rise of the League in the 1580s posed the continuing problem for royalist, moderate catholic *parlementaires*: how to "separate the one true church from the grasp of the League and heal the breach between it and the crown" (p. 352)? As the royalist cause hit bottom in the summer of 1588 when Henri III did the bidding of the League by signing the Edict of Union which barred Henri of Navarre from the succession, the grasp of the League was indeed a tight one. The League loudly proclaimed that religion was "the only cement of the state and that the defense of religious uniformity must have top priority." The problem with the League for the *Parlement* was not so much an open challenge to "one king, one faith", but rather, first, to the cherished independence of the French church from Rome (the League's ultramontanism was intolerable), and second, to the *Parlement*'s constitutional vision of equilibrium between crown and *Parlement*. The seizure and execution of first President Barnabe Brisson in 1591 demonstrated to all that the court's independence–and its members–were dangerously in jeopardy.

So long as Henri of Navarre still laid claim to the throne by rightful succession but remained a Huguenot, a wedge continued to be driven between the two elements of the mainstream *parlementaire*'s credo of "one king, one faith." So, it would seem that once Henri abjured and rejoined the Catholic faith, the wedge would be removed and the dilemma facing the *parlementaires* would dissolve. But in fact, with the controversy over papal absolution of Henri's former apostasy, "papal encroachment" on the autonomy of the Gallican church again was perceived and resisted. The battle lines between ultramontanism and Gallicanism were drawn over the reception of the Tridentine decrees for France, for one of the pope's stipulations for absolution of the king was the acceptance of the decrees into France (owing largely to *Parlementaire* resistance, they never were). And lines hardened

with the assassination of Henri IV in 1610. Thereafter "everything with a Roman stamp became anathema to the French" (p. 456).

Roelker may exaggerate when she asserts that this final ultramontane assault prompted the leading "spokesmen of our last generation virtually [to] reinvent both gallicanism and traditional constitutionalism in their concern to defend and preserve them" (p. 415). But she is directly on the mark when she notes that the seventeenth-century *parlementaire* embraced and refined the model of the "perfect magistrate" who obeyed a "codified ideal produced by legists concerned... to place it on a pedestal as the model for a reformed society" (p. 464). She looks to "the threat of national annihilation in the 1590s [as] the fire that fused" (p. 482) this vision, but whatever brought them together, make no mistake, law and religion undergirded the vision of these neo-stoic magistrates of the *Grand Siecle*, perhaps even more clearly than they had their forebears. Only in the union of law and religion could civil peace be secured. Roelker thus shares the view held by several contemporary historians (Bossy, Denis Richet, William Bouwsma, Ralph Giesey, and this reviewer) that it was the nobility of the robe and not the sword which framed the most important issues of state-building of the next century and a half, and that the basic constitutional trajectories were those hammered out in the crucible of disorder and paradox which religious difference injected into the lives of sixteenth century people.

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