

1) Penny Roberts: 'Political' Conversion in sixteenth-century France

Odet de Coligny, Cardinal of Châtillon, to Charles IX at the time of his precipitous flight to England, September 1568:

To my very great regret, I have been forced at my age (he was 51) to abandon my house, my homeland and your realm, where I have always been honoured to have been well treated by its kings, in order to conserve my life and to keep myself from injury and oppression from those who have always shown themselves to be enemies of the public peace, and particularly of my whole House.

He went on to assure the king that:

no plots, intelligence or sharp practice have led me to this country where I had never even thought of coming three hours before my departure from my house and the warning I received that I should move out immediately.

In particular, he emphasised that he remained the young king's loyal servant:

believe that, in whatever place I am, I would never fail in any way to uphold the obedience, fidelity, subjection and loyalty I owe you, (that his only purpose was) to serve God, pray for your prosperity and health, and to deliver your kingdom from the miseries, calamities and desolation (it was facing).

2) Mark Greengrass: Deathbed Conversions and Confessional Strife in Seventeenth-Century France

Despite the superficial accord of the Edict of Nantes (1598), Catholic and Protestant conflict continued and was pursued by other means than civil strife. Polemical publications ('libelles') were a focus of engagement in which religious conversion was a subject of highly charged theological, political and strategic significance. Among the issues that the example below raises are: the significance of deathbed conversions; the role of female conversion narratives in polemical strategies; and the relationship between the public debate to which the pamphlet in question was a contribution, and the increasingly problematic application of the edict of Nantes, which it highlights:

The true account of the conversion to the Catholic faith of Anne Violette, at Poitiers 29 July 1638

It is a well-known truth that, among the works of the almighty hand of God, the highest and most excellent is the conversion of a sinful soul. That is where he meets resistance, not in creating (if it is his will) a million worlds, for sometimes the most powerful obstacles are found emanating from our perverse and damnable will which most often opposes his laudable designs. But notably when it is a matter of recalling a soul to the bosom of the Church which formerly had been infected by the venom of heresy, as will be seen manifestly in this little tale which makes public the true and sincere conversion of a young girl, aged around 13 to 14, who all her life had made profession of the RPR and lived in the town of Poitiers, with her sister in Regreterrie street, which happened in the form and manner as follows:

(I'll summarise the rest in the session)