



2020

God Is King, but so Is Louis XVI: Royalist Tendencies among Protestants during the Early Stages of the French Revolution

Brandon Smith
bgsmith1789@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/thetean>



Part of the [European History Commons](#), and the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Smith, Brandon (2020) "God Is King, but so Is Louis XVI: Royalist Tendencies among Protestants during the Early Stages of the French Revolution," *The Thetean: A Student Journal for Scholarly Historical Writing*. Vol. 49 : Iss. 1 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/thetean/vol49/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *The Thetean: A Student Journal for Scholarly Historical Writing* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Article

God Is King, but so Is Louis XVI

Royalist Tendencies among Protestants during the Early Stages of the French Revolution

Brandon Smith

FROM ITS INCEPTION, THE FRENCH REVOLUTION (GENERALLY accepted as occurring between 1789 and 1799) has received a great deal of attention from historians. Riding on the heels of the Enlightenment earlier in the eighteenth century, it was an era of not only political but also social and even religious innovation and revolution. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that a great number of studies have been done concerning various aspects of the Revolution. Notable among these topics is that of religion. Historian Jeffrey Merrick has studied at length what he termed the “desacralization of the French monarchy,” or the increasing separation of religiosity from the role of the French king in the years leading up to the Revolution.¹ Though his terminology might be foreign to the casual student of late eighteenth-century France, many are familiar with the dechristianization that the country experienced, culminating in Robespierre’s famous “festival of the Supreme Being.”² Scholars such as Nigel Aston and Dale Van Kley have contributed to the study of Roman Catholicism prior to and during the Revolution through their respective works

1. See Jeffrey Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

2. Nigel Aston, *The French Revolution, 1789–1804: Authority, Liberty, and the Search for Stability* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 42; David A. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680–1800* (London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 194.

on the political involvement of the episcopacy, and on the Jesuits and their theological rivals, the Jansenists.³ Van Kley has also worked extensively to illuminate the role of Protestantism leading up to the Revolution, while other scholars have similarly strived to elucidate the situation of other minorities in France during the eighteenth and on into the nineteenth century.⁴

Despite this bounty of scholarship dealing with the influence of various religions' broad ideas and theories on the unfolding of the Revolution, there is a comparative lack of discussion concerning how French Protestants presented themselves in the early stages of the Revolution. As will be seen, Catholics sought to portray Protestants as radicals who were eager to dethrone the king. After all, regardless of theological differences, the various branches of Protestantism rejected the notion that a single, overarching ecclesiastical authority was necessary; some branches even prided themselves on their lack of a widespread organization. The natural assumption, then, was that Protestants were inherently disinclined to support a single political leader. If God alone was their Lord and ruler, who was the king that they should obey and honor him? Indeed, among the many complaints voiced by Catholics against the "so-called reformed religion" was that its adherents, along with their pastors were "treacherous, tainted by republicanism."⁵

Such a claim was a severe one, for even after the Third Estate had declared itself to be the National Assembly, after the Tennis Court Oath had been sworn, and after the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen had been produced (all of which happened in the summer of 1789—the traditional beginning of the Revolution), common opinion held that the "most suitable" government for France was a monarchy.⁶ While there is, of course, a degree of validity in these

3. See Nigel Aston, *The End of an Elite: The French Bishops and the Coming of the Revolution, 1786–1790* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Dale Van Kley, *Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France, 1757–1765* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975).

4. See Dale Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560–1791* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715–1815* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).

5. *La religion prétendue réformée* (often *R.P.R.*) was the official term applied to Calvinism; Nigel Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe, 1750–1830* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 143.

6. Jean-Joseph Mounier, "Thoughts on Governments and Principally the Government Suitable for France," in *Social and Political Thought of the French Revolution, 1788–1797*, edited and translated by Marc Allan Goldstein (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1997), 171.

Catholic fears, a study of the early revolutionary rhetoric of Protestant leaders such as Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Étienne reveals a surprising amount of staunchly royalist ideas. By examining Rabaut Saint-Étienne's ideas, we will be better able to appreciate why he and his fellow Protestants sought refute Catholic claims to radicalism. Indeed, it will become apparent that despite God's unquestionable role as King of all Creation, France's Protestants held that Louis XVI's role as King of France was just as incontrovertible.

Early Protestantism and France

To understand why the French Protestants—often called Huguenots—portrayed themselves as supporters of the monarchy, however, and why the Catholics sought to depict them as the king's enemies, we must first understand France's experience with the “so-called reformed religion.” The history of Protestantism in France is a long and storied one, and that of Protestantism in general is longer and more complicated still. Without neglecting the work of early Christian humanists and other influencers of Martin Luther, for simplicity's sake we can say that the Reformation began in 1517 when the German monk posted his *Ninety-Five Theses* on the door of his church in Wittenburg.⁷ Thanks in large part to the advent of printing technology, Luther's ideas and theology began to spread throughout the German states and across Europe. By the early 1520s, Luther's writings had reached French humanists, including the influential sister of King Francis I, Marguerite de Navarre.⁸ Although Francis I and members of the reform-minded Meaux Circle originally “looked favorably upon the intellectual activities of the reformers,” the infamous *affaire des placards* of 1534, when thousands of anti-Catholic tracts were posted throughout Paris and other major French cities, quickly soured public opinion.⁹

Despite persecution and repression, the Calvinists of the Reformed church somehow managed to maintain footholds throughout the country, though they were under constant threat of annihilation. Some thirty years later, during the regency of Catherine de' Medici, armed conflict broke out between

7. De Lamar Jensen, *Reformation Europe: Age of Reform and Revolution* (Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1992), 59.

8. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 131.

9. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 132; Gérard LaBrune, *L'histoire de France* (Paris: Nathan, 2014), 50.

royal Catholic forces and rebel Huguenot armies, embroiling most of the 1560s in civil war.¹⁰ While France knew intermittent periods of peace, the armed conflict came to a head at the infamous Massacre of Saint Bartholomew's day, which the renowned French philosopher Voltaire would later call "a crime without equal in the annals of man's wickedness."¹¹ In May of 1572, Henri de Navarre, a Protestant prince from France's southern border with Spain, married Marguerite de Valois, the Catholic sister of France's king. Designed to achieve peace between the two factions, Catholics and Protestants alike gathered in Paris for the celebration. When the opportunity arose, however, to assassinate Coligny, a prominent Protestant leader, Catherine de' Medici consented to take it. The ultimately unsuccessful attempt on Coligny's life gave rise to a new wave of contention, resulting in thousands of deaths in Paris on that night alone.¹²

And so, the civil war dragged on, with Huguenots declaring that it was now the monarchy itself that they were fighting. By the end of this tumultuous period, however, France found herself with a formerly Protestant king on the throne. Henri de Navarre, having married into the royal family, declared himself Henri IV and, in the 1590s, took his place as king of France.¹³ Although the "Good King Henri" had converted to Catholicism in order to solidify national support for his reign (Paris is worth a Mass, after all), he maintained an attitude of toleration and open-mindedness that eventually resulted in the production of France's official policy regarding Protestantism, the Edict of Nantes.¹⁴

The Legal Question of Protestantism

Issued in 1598, the Edict of Nantes established the basis for the treatment of Protestants in France for the next eighty-seven years. Although it was not a sweeping acceptance of Protestantism as a viable alternative to Catholic worship, Henri IV's edict provided the Huguenots with several liberal concessions. They were gifted a number of fortified towns, wherein they were free to practice

10. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 241. King Charles IX was but nine years old at his accession to the French throne.

11. Voltaire, *Treatise on Tolerance*. Translated by Brian Masters (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 16.

12. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 242–43.

13. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 246.

14. The apocryphal phrase "Paris is worth a mass" was allegedly uttered by Henri IV when he elected to leave the Protestantism of his family in order to guarantee his place on the French throne.

their religion. Likewise, this free exercise extended to areas that had previously permitted their worship in former treaties, as well as any land held by Protestant nobles. In addition to granting these religious liberties, the Edict of Nantes guaranteed a degree of civil equality between the Huguenots and Catholics, ensuring both groups access to public facilities such as schools, allowing both groups to hold public offices, and establishing bipartisan courts that would fairly judge both groups before the law.¹⁵

Finally, it seemed, the Huguenots had found the simple recognition that they had so long desired. Not only had the monarchy acknowledged their existence, but it had allowed them to practice their religion freely, albeit only in prescribed cities. There was even a former Protestant on the throne of France! Of course, such good fortune could not last forever. Twelve years after the creation of the Edict of Nantes, a Catholic fanatic named Ravaillac took the life of the “Good King Henri.”¹⁶ Although the defender of Protestantism was no more, at least the rights of this minority were guaranteed by the late king’s edict! These victories, however, were to be reversed by Henri IV’s grandson, Louis XIV. After several years of increasing, not to mention illegal, persecution, the eminent “Sun King” saw fit to revoke the Edict of Nantes, claiming that it had only ever been meant as a temporary measure designed to bring peace, with an edict of his own.

The Edict of Fontainebleau, issued in 1685, forbade Protestant worship services, banished Protestant pastors who refused to convert to Catholicism, and prohibited former Protestants from leaving France.¹⁷ This did not, of course, put an end to the whole affair, for “illegality should not be understood as absence.”¹⁸ Once again, the Reformed church survived underground during this political exile in the metaphorical *désert*. And, once again, as with the previous eras of persecution, open conflict between Protestant and Catholic forces was brewing. Starting in 1702, Protestants in the region of Cévennes broke out in open rebellion against Catholic dominance. These *Cévenols* resurrected recent fears of a France rife with civil war.¹⁹ As such, after fighting in what

15. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 248.

16. LaBrune, *L'histoire de France*, 56–57.

17. LaBrune, *L'histoire de France*, 62.

18. Bryan A. Banks, “The French Protestant Enlightenment of Rabaut Saint-Étienne: *Le Vieux Cévenol* and the Sentimental Origins of Religious Toleration,” *French History* 32, no. 1 (March 2018), 28, <https://doi.org/10.1093/fh/crx069>.

19. Timothy Tackett, *Religion Revolution, and Regional Culture in Eighteenth-Century France: The Ecclesiastical Oath of 1791* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 206–7.

became known as the Camisard Wars until their submission in 1715, Protestants once again found themselves “simultaneously policed and persecuted.”²⁰

Despite the official policy of oppression and nonrecognition, many Protestants found a tacit acceptance in several French societies.²¹ The preeminent *philosophe* Voltaire worked to further this cause by publishing his *Treatise on Tolerance*. In noting the proportionate dominance of Catholicism, he presents the following situation: “Let us suppose for a moment that there are indeed in France twenty Roman Catholics for every one Huguenot; I am not about to suggest the single Huguenot should gobble up the twenty Catholics; but, conversely, on what grounds should those twenty Catholics devour the lonely Huguenot?”²² Although perhaps somewhat begrudgingly, many Catholics began to look the other way, recognizing, for example, the legitimacy of Protestant marriages.²³ Especially in areas of higher Huguenot concentration, some bishops even ignored the rebaptism of children as Protestants and turned a blind eye to common prayer.²⁴ On such implicit toleration, however, Nigel Aston sagely notes that the wealthier Calvinist families were typically the ones to enjoy such peace: “It was the Protestants of little substance who were the most vulnerable to the authorities imposing the full rigours of the law.”²⁵

Continued Conflict

The conflict between Catholics and Huguenots was not entirely resolved, however. Notable among the incidences that typify the strong albeit dwindling resentment against the Protestants was the infamous Calas affair, which showed that even as late as 1762, “it was possible for a Protestant to be tortured and broken on the wheel for the falsely attributed murder of his Catholic-convert son.”²⁶ In the light of such a rushed and unjust trial, Voltaire took up his pen and excoriated the officers who had allowed such an oversight. Comparing the

20. Banks, “The French Protestant Enlightenment,” 31.

21. Jack Alden Clarke, “A Protestant *Philosophe* at the Constituent Assembly,” *The Historian* 20, no. 3 (May 1958), 292.

22. Voltaire, *Treatise on Tolerance*, 95.

23. Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy*, 34.

24. Aston, *The End of an Elite*, 27.

25. Aston, *The End of an Elite*, 28.

26. Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe*, 110.

country to a crowded ship in danger of sinking, Voltaire advised that regardless of individual opinions and practices, all the passengers ought to work together to prevent leaks.²⁷ He cautioned, however, that “the contagious disease of fanaticism still thrives,” prophetically warning that despite the improvements made thus far, there remained much to do.²⁸ If nothing else, however, the Protestants had gained a powerful ally in the *philosophes* as they steadily worked to achieve social, political, and religious acceptance.²⁹

With all that turmoil in mind, it is not difficult to understand why Catholics saw their religious rivals as rebellious and even revolutionary. The Wars of Religion of the sixteenth century had become a point of reference for understanding Protestantism.³⁰ Indeed, during those wars the Calvinists had “openly denounced and attacked the decadent Valois monarchy.”³¹ Also fresh in Catholic memory was the War of the Camisards, and even the potential for Huguenots to ally with Protestant England during the Seven Years’ War caused fear and suspicion.³² In addition to these overt acts of sedition, imagined or otherwise, Protestants were accused of “harboring theological justification for treason.”³³ Thus, members of the “so-called Reformed religion” were portrayed as a social and political threat just as much as a religious one.³⁴

Protestantism vis-à-vis the King

The Huguenots were, of course, eager to prove such Catholic claims to be false. Theologically, it is worth noting what Luther and Calvin said regarding one’s civic duties. Seeing as a civil leader was necessary for preserving peace, Luther wrote that “the Christian submits most willingly . . . pays his taxes, honors

27. Voltaire, *An Address to the Public Concerning the Parricides Imputed to the Calas and Sirven Families*, Translated by Simon Harvey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 134.

28. Voltaire, *An Address to the Public*, 125.

29. Clarke, “A Protestant *Philosophe*,” 291–92.

30. Bryan A. Banks, “The Limits of Religious Liberty: Rabaut Saint-Étienne and the French Revolution.” *On Age of Revolutions*. Posted April 18, 2016. <https://ageofrevolutions.com/2016/04/18/the-limits-of-religious-tolerance-rabaut-saint-etienne-and-the-french-revolution/>.

31. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 243.

32. Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe*, 20.

33. Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews*, 162.

34. Aston, *The End of an Elite*, 91; Van Kley, *Religious Origins of the French Revolution*, 363.

those in authority, serves, helps, and does all he can to assist the governing authority, that it may continue to function.”³⁵ Although Calvin did not agree with Luther on every matter, their thoughts on government were similar in that they both accepted that the role of the civic authority was to maintain public order. Indeed, Calvin insisted that “rulers must be obeyed, regardless of their faults and failings.”³⁶ Despite underlying principles that could in some contexts be used to justify revolution, Calvinism’s political philosophy was one of “cautious conservatism.”³⁷ Thus, Protestants could argue that their rebellion during the Wars of Religion and under Louis XIV were due to the wicked actions of those rulers. But seeing as Louis XVI behaved virtuously, there was no way to justify establishing, heaven forbid, a republic!

With the question of theological justification for republicanism laid to rest, it now remained to be seen whether the Huguenots would be able to adhere to these principles. They were indeed loath to forget the suffering and persecution that past French kings had caused them. It must be remembered, however, that the king was not always their enemy. As the monarch, Henri IV had ushered in an era of peace that the Protestants had never before enjoyed, nor had they since. And although tensions ran high under Louis XIV, Protestants defied Catholic accusations of treason under his great-grandson, Louis XV, “show[ing] themselves to be such loyal patriots during the disastrous Seven Years’ War.”³⁸ Under Louis XVI, who took the throne in 1774, Protestants were eager to demonstrate their loyalty and hopeful to receive the formal recognition that they had so long been denied.

Protestantism on the Eve of the Revolution

Some ten years after the accession of the new king, Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Étienne wrote that “the Protestants have place to hope for a change under Louis XVI.”³⁹ A Protestant pastor and champion for the rights of adherents

35. Martin Luther, “Concerning Governmental Authority.” In *The Protestant Reformation*, edited by Hans J. Hillerbrand (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 76.

36. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 145.

37. Jensen, *Reformation Europe*, 146.

38. Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe*, 143.

39. As quoted in Catherine Bergeal, *Protestantisme et tolérance en France au XVIIIe siècle: de la révocation à la Révolution (1685–1789)* (Carrières-sous-Poissy, France: La Cause, 1988), 140.

to the “so-called reformed religion,” Rabaut Saint-Étienne worked tirelessly to achieve what Huguenots had for so long hoped for, and had for so long been denied. Throughout his sermons, though, he maintained that the “Church of the *Désert*” had always supported the monarchy and lamented the possibility that France be ruled without one.⁴⁰ Even as the Estates General were gathering, he himself having been elected as a representative of the Third Estate, Rabaut Saint-Étienne wrote to those he represented, Protestant and Catholic alike, offering the following counsel: “Remain devoted to the glory of your king, for the king is the rallying point of all good Frenchmen. The king and the nation: two indissolubly linked ideas, for their interests are one.”⁴¹ The pastor evidently believed that there could be no nation without a king, and that the duty of all “good Frenchmen,” regardless of religion, was to support the monarch.

The next question to consider is what Louis XVI had done to earn the approbation of Rabaut Saint-Étienne and his fellow Calvinists. He was, after all, a deeply Catholic king who “took Christian piety and morality as seriously as any French monarch of the early modern period.”⁴² Seeing as Protestants were being implicitly accepted prior to and during Louis XVI’s reign, many of them felt that the time had come to be explicitly accepted. In seeking to achieve royal recognition, the Huguenots “described themselves as loyal as well as useful subjects.” They denounced radicalism, denied accusations of treason, deplored the rebellion of the Camisards, displayed their willingness to submit to taxation, and demonstrated their devotion to the crown.⁴³

Their efforts eventually paid off in the form of yet another royal edict. Thanks to lobbying from the Marquis de Lafayette, Lamoignon de Malesherbes, and Rabaut Saint-Étienne, Louis XVI issued what came to be known as the Edict of Toleration in 1787. Through this edict, Protestants hoped to officially receive the civil rights that they had long since unofficially enjoyed, not to mention the professional and above all religious liberties that they had so long been denied.⁴⁴ Such hopes were shaken when the preamble of the edict declared in

40. Clarke, “A Protestant *Philosophe*,” 292–93.

41. Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Étienne, “Considerations on the Interests of the Third Estate, Addressed to the People of the Provinces by a Landed Proprietor.” In *Social and Political Thought of the French Revolution, 1788–1797*, edited and translated by Marc Allan Goldstein (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1997), 81.

42. Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight* (London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 29.

43. Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy*, 143.

44. Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy*, 142.

no uncertain terms that “we will always favor with all our power the means of instruction and persuasion that will tend to link all our subjects by the common profession of our kingdom’s ancient faith.”⁴⁵ Despite clearly giving Catholicism the preeminence, the edict did indeed give Protestants the civil and political rights that they had been seeking.⁴⁶

While the gains that it granted Calvinists were impressive, the Edict of Toleration “continued to deny Protestants the right to celebrate their ‘cult’ in public.”⁴⁷ Naturally, Protestants throughout France felt that it left much to be desired.⁴⁸ Rabaut Saint-Étienne was among those who felt that the edict did not grant enough liberties to a people who had for so long been oppressed. Despite this disappointment, however, neither he nor the Protestants at large took offence with the king. Indeed, he notes how through this edict Louis XVI “manifested his good dispositions towards us,” and invites his fellow Huguenots to “wait with a confidence mixed with discretion and wisdom.”⁴⁹

Protestantism during the Revolution

Rabaut Saint-Étienne heeded his own advice and waited patiently for the opportunity to improve the plight of his co-believers. When, during the gathering of the Estates General, the Third Estate declared itself to be the National Assembly, he joined his fellow representatives in discussing a new Constitution.⁵⁰ Despite the shortcomings of Louis XVI and Catholic claims of Protestant Republicanism, never once did Rabaut Saint-Étienne propose a system of government without the monarch.⁵¹ He did, of course, propose religious liberty for France’s citizens: “I demand, gentlemen, for all French Protestants, for all the non-Catholics in the kingdom, the same that you demand for your-

45. “The Edict of Toleration.” In *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, edited and translated by Lynn Hunt (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1996), 40.

46. Bergeal, *Protestantisme et tolérance*, 164; Paul Girault de Coursac, *Louis XVI et la question religieuse pendant la Révolution: Un combat pour la tolérance* (Paris: O.E.I.L., 1988), 26–9.

47. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution*, 342.

48. Valérie Sottocasa, *Mémoires affrontées : Protestants et catholiques face à la Révolution dans les Montagnes du Languedoc* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004), 26–7.

49. As quoted in Bergeal, *Protestantisme et tolérance*, 225.

50. Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution, 1789–1799* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2002), 52.

51. *Archives parlementaires*. Tome VIII. 403–06.

selves: liberty and equal rights.”⁵² He pointed out how several of the *cabiers de doléances* had urged their representatives to ensure freedom of worship for the non-Catholics of their respective regions, and proposed that the tenth article of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen be worded as follows: “All men are free in their opinions; all citizens have the right to freely profess their faith, and none may be troubled because of their religion.”⁵³ Ultimately, when the Declaration was adopted on August 26, 1789, the tenth article instead read: “No one may be harassed because of his opinions or religious beliefs *as long as they do not disturb public order as established by the law.*”⁵⁴ Despite the addition of the caveat in the final draft, by the end of 1789 Rabaut Saint-Étienne could rest knowing that Protestants had finally received their long-awaited recognition, thanks to “a decree of Christmas Eve 1789 ending every legal distinction between Protestants and Catholics.”⁵⁵

The rest of the French Revolution is, as they say, history. Studies abound on the various stages of the Revolution, the atrocities of the Terror, and the rise of Napoleon. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen has been dissected, imitated and debated throughout the world. The question arises, what became of the Protestants as they gained greater recognition? As the Revolution became increasingly radical, so too did the Calvinists. Ultra-royalists saw the left wing as “the principal enemies of the Church and of the Monarchy,” consisting of “Jews, Protestants, Deists.”⁵⁶ Indeed, one scholar commented that “not surprisingly, Protestants had few problems about accepting the creation of the first Republic in 1792.”⁵⁷ But what of the eminent Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Étienne? Backing the king became increasingly unpopular following his flight towards Varennes in 1791. Rabaut Saint-Étienne therefore rejoiced that Louis XVI’s attempted escape had failed,⁵⁸ and later expressed frustration when

52. Rabaut Saint-Étienne, “No Man Should Be Harassed for His Opinions nor Troubled in the Practice of His Religion.” In *Tolerance: The Beacon of the Enlightenment*, edited and translated by Caroline Warman, 70–71 (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2016), 71. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt19b9jvh.34.

53. *Archives parlementaires*. Tome VIII. 478, 480.

54. “The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.” In *Social and Political Thought of the French Revolution, 1788–1797*, edited and translated by Marc Allan Goldstein (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1997), 162. Emphasis added.

55. Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe*, 194.

56. McPhee, *The French Revolution*, 85.

57. Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe*, 195.

58. Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 130

rivals accused him of complicity with the king.⁵⁹ Yet when the time came to put Louis XVI on trial, he maintained that the deputies of the Convention did not have the right to judge the king. He would ultimately be executed for voting in favor of the king.⁶⁰

Conclusion

The political legacy of French Protestantism in the aftermath of the Revolution “ensured that Protestants would support left-wing, secular political parties.”⁶¹ It would seem as though the early Catholic accusations of Republicanism were not unfounded after all. But it is important to understand that these accusations evolved into reality throughout the course of the Revolution. In its early stages, the Protestants found an ally against Catholic oppression in Louis XVI, much as the Third Estate saw him as an ally against the Second. The example of Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Étienne must be remembered as typical of Huguenots leading up to the Revolution, who “remained faithful to the monarchy as long as there was a chance of saving it.”⁶² The division depicting Catholics as conservative and Protestants as radical throughout the entirety of the Revolution is simply false. Although the Huguenots came to reject the notion of a king, they were, at first, as supportive of Louis XVI in his role as King as they were of God in his as Lord of all.

Brandon Smith graduated from Brigham Young University in April of 2020. He is from Salt Lake City, Utah, and is looking toward a career in Public History.

59. Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 206.

60. Sottocasa, *Mémoires affrontées*, 155.

61. McPhee, *The French Revolution*, 180.

62. Clarke, “A Protestant *Philosophe*,” 304.