Foreword

One King, One Faith has been more than twenty years in the writing and still longer in the making. To paraphrase one of the readers for the press, it represents “a lifetime of reading and thinking” about the central issues involved in France’s response to the religious crisis of the sixteenth century. Sadly, the book’s author did not live to see the completed work. Nancy Lyman Roelker died at her home in Rhode Island on November 27, 1993, just three months after she learned that her manuscript had been accepted for publication by the University of California Press.

Nancy Roelker’s friends took comfort in the joy she experienced at having the manuscript accepted and knowing the work would appear. Still, her untimely death left many questions unanswered and many tasks undone. Everyone who has published a book knows how much work remains—and how many decisions need to be made—before the final product comes off the press, out of the bindery, and into the bookstores. In this case, the process was complicated by the fact that no one was certain just how far Nancy had gotten with her intended revisions. She had been working on the bibliography on the day that she died, and yet there were enough incomplete notes and bracketed comments in the manuscript to suggest that she intended to return to these passages to make more changes as well.

As the friend and colleague whose own research borders most closely on the subject of this book, I have assisted Nancy’s sister, Helen Kessler, and the editors at the UC Press with the editorial tasks that remained. We have tried to proceed delicately, with a lighter editorial hand than might have been applied to a manuscript whose author could still be queried on intentions and shades of meaning. Nancy Roelker has a distinct and vibrant authorial voice, and we wanted that voice to speak unimpeded. I have accordingly tried to limit my own role to checking citations, filling in

missing references, and clarifying the occasional passage where mechanical or other errors obscured what seemed to be a clearly intended meaning. I have been assisted greatly in this process by a former student, John McGrath, who recently completed a dissertation in sixteenth-century French history. We used the same New England libraries where Nancy Roelker did the bulk of her research and also went back to earlier drafts of the manuscript, which Helen Kessler was able to supply. It has not been possible to check French archival citations or references to certain rare books; nor has it proved possible to identify conclusively several passages that appear in quotation marks in the text. I beg the readers' indulgence and hope they will agree that the book has been held up long enough.

It is important that the book be published, not only as the culmination of Nancy Roelker's distinguished career, but also as an unparalleled synthesis of recent research on sixteenth-century France. Nancy Roelker's tribute to the younger scholars whose work has contributed to her own is characteristically generous. Indeed, she has dedicated this book to some twenty-two "younger *seizièmistes*" who sent her the products of their research while it was still in manuscript form. Much of this research has since appeared in the form of articles and books, but an important part remains unpublished and hence largely inaccessible to other scholars. Several of the historians whose research has contributed most to this study have left the profession; their work in particular risked disappearing but for Nancy Roelker's recognition of its worth. Thanks to her efforts, their key findings can now be integrated into our changing picture of sixteenth-century French politics and society.

I stress the role of synthesis here; I would stress the role of interpretation as well. *One King, One Faith* does not just summarize recent scholarship, rather it mines this work thoughtfully yet critically, in order to integrate it into a broader and more penetrating vision of the past. The same is true of the primary sources on which Nancy Roelker relies. When she began her work, she clearly intended to do very extensive archival research in the unpublished and underutilized records of the Parlement of Paris. Declining health made it impossible for her to complete the original, ambitious plan for archival research, and careful readers will notice that archival references diminish in number as the book progresses, while an increasing proportion of the footnotes cite such familiar published primary sources as the *Mémoires-Journaux* of Pierre de L'Estoile, the *Histoire universelle* of Jacques-Auguste de Thou, and the correspondence of Étienne Pasquier. At first glance this focus may appear ironic, for these are the very same sources that have traditionally dominated historians' interpretations of France's

civil and religious wars, the same sources whose authors' social and political biases Robert Descimon has accused of obscuring a true understanding of this complex period.¹ And yet, this is precisely where Roelker excels, for if she narrates events in the words of—and, seemingly, through the eyes of—L'Estoile, Pasquier, or de Thou, it is not to present their views as impartial truth but rather to probe more deeply, to explain just why they saw things the way they did. She empathizes with the men who emerge as her spokesmen but never loses sight of her real quest, which is to understand their *mentalité*, to uncover the unique constellation of social, political, and intellectual values that gave shape to their views.

One King, One Faith: the phrase is a shorthand for the longer French saying, *un roi, une loi, une foi*, and encapsulates the essential values that Nancy Roelker attributes to the core of Parlement's magistrates, as it summarizes their most profound understanding of the constitutional bases of monarchical authority in France. The political, ecclesiastical, and legal unity of the monarchy were all wrapped up in this phrase, and in allegiance to a monarch who was simultaneously king, priest, and judge. As Roelker argues, the magistrates of Parlement saw themselves as essential guarantors of this constitution, and this belief indelibly shaped their attitudes toward both politics and religion. Indeed, as she further argues, at the most profound level they could not separate politics from religion. This book is the story of the complex positions they staked out in defense of *One King, One Faith*.

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