*Argumentum. Journal of the Seminar of Discursive Logic, Argumentation Theory and Rhetoric* 20 (1): 33-58, 2022

# The Justificative Discourse of Louis de Condé during the Second and Third Wars of Religion (1567-1568)[1]

Andrei Constantin Sălăvăstru
"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași (Romania)
Institute of Interdisciplinary Research
Department of Social Sciences and Humanities

**Abstract:** The French Wars of Religion (1562-1598) posed the biggest threat to the French Monarchy since the darkest days of the Hundred Years War. Not only that the royal authority had, in practical terms, reached its lowest ebb since in more than a hundred and fifty years, but the factions involved, both Catholic and Protestant, developed theories of resistance which advocated for popular sovereignty and the right to depose (and, in some cases, even kill) tyrannical kings. Yet, this radicalism came from the lower ranks of the belligerent factions and was not shared by their leadership, who was more careful to safeguard the prestige of the monarchy. This is most true for the Huguenots princes and their allies, who constantly refused to openly name the king as their enemy, regardless of how much their relationship with the Crown had degraded. At the beginning of the wars, the most prominent political personality amongst the Huguenots, Louis, prince of Condé, insisted, through an extensive campaign of propaganda, that the Protestant rebellion was aiming to actually protect the (underage) king, Charles IX, against a coterie of Catholic aristocrats who was keeping him prisoner and to restore the overall peace and justice of the kingdom, with more specifically Protestant grievances being pushed into the background. But, at the start of the second war of religion, in 1567, the tone of Condé's propaganda started to gradually change, his justificative texts speaking instead of a "moral captivity" of a king instead of him being a physical prisoner and taking a more confessionalized approach, focused on the interests

[1]**Funding:** „This work was supported by a grant of the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitization, CNCS/CCCDI – UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2019-0499, within PNCDI III".

of the Huguenot movement. This paper aims to trace this shift and describe the new kind of discourse employed in Condé's texts, while explaining the possible reasons why this change occurred.

**Keywords:** France, Wars of Religion, Sixteenth Century, Huguenots, Condé

## 1. Introduction

Noble rebellions were not an uncommon event in medieval France: true, in the political tracts of the period, often written at the behest of the monarchy, sedition was treated as one of the worst crimes, but that did not stop the vassals of the king to see their relationship with the French Crown in contractual terms. If the king offended them or did them harm, then, from their perspective, they were no longer bound by their oaths of loyalty and were entitled to seek redress through whatever means necessary. During the Hundred Years War, this often meant joining the English side and acknowledging the Plantagenet claim to the throne of France, but, more often than not, the aims of a rebellion were not that radical: the French monarchy was surrounded by a powerful mystique and its prestige was significant enough that a lot of the discontented nobles who took arms against the king were not willing to consider their relationship with the king as irremediably broken. In fact, the goal of a rebellion was to restore that relationship — on terms which the rebel nobles deemed acceptable. Despite castigating the idea of rebellion, the monarchy tacitly acknowledged this situation, hence the pardons it was willing to give to the former rebels, even after their defeat: whenever a rebel noble ended up on the block, it was usually a result of repeated offences, as in the case of Louis de Luxembourg, count of Saint-Pol and constable of France, or Jacques d'Armagnac, duke of Nemours, both beheaded under the reign of Louis XI, in 1475 and 1477, respectively.

A common argument of rebellious nobles who did not want to be seen as challenging the monarchy directly was to blame the "evil advisors" as the source of their grievances: the king of France, the "most Christian king", by definition, could not be a tyrant (against whom many political theorists were considering that rebellion could be justified), but his advisers most certainly could be. It was an argument which also had the advantage of resonating well with the public opinion of the age, eager to blame the king's officials for the deprivations the people was subjected

to by a strengthening royal state which was enforcing more and more vigorously new tax policies. The importance of such justifications became clear in the second half of the sixteenth century, when the troubles caused by the Reformation led to the outbreak of repeated civil wars in France, after almost seventy five years since the last of such events ("la Guerre folle" which took place during the reign of Charles VIII, between 1485 and 1488). The political ideology of both German Lutheranism and French Calvinism, as expressed by Luther and Calvin themselves, was initially hostile to the idea of revolt, regardless of the reason: true, Luther and Calvin insisted that God must be obeyed before any human ruler and that subjects could oppose the impious commands of persecutor princes, but the resistance which the Reformers originally envisioned consisted of either refusing to execute such commands (and accepting the inevitable punishment which came with such a decision) or exile. Under the pressure of events, confronted with Catholic authorities determined to eradicate the Reformation, they both partially reconsidered their initial position and armed resistance became acceptable, in their opinions, if specific legal forms were observed, in particular regarding the identity of those who were allowed to carry it out. Thus, the Reformation political thought developed the idea of the magistrates who could lawfully defend the Reformed Church against a tyrannical prince, a notion which became the cornerstone of the resistance theories both in France and outside of it. This idea fit well with the traditional noble conception of revolt, because of the easy association between the "magistrate" as imagined by the Calvin and the most prominent members of the aristocratic class: for Calvin and other Reformed theologians, the princes of royal blood and the "officers of the Crown" represented these magistrates who could initiate such actions of resistance. In France, the Calvinists tried their best to entice Antoine de Bourbon, the first prince of the blood, to their cause, but, despite his initial flirtations with Protestantism, in the end, he refused any such commitment and joined the belligerent Catholic faction. The leadership of the Protestant rebellion, which broke out in March 1562 as a result of a massacre of some Protestant worshippers at Vassy by troops from the retinue of the ultra-catholic duke of Guise, was assumed by his younger brother, Louis de Condé. Despite the successes achieved by the French monarchy during the last hundred years in curtailing the power of the high nobles, such a rebellion was possible because it was relying, outside of the traditional noble resources, on the Calvinist churches which sprang throughout France after 1555 and provided the Protestant nobility with the necessary support and cohesion in order to launch a successful

challenge against the central authority. Robert Kingdon pointed out that the Calvinist Churches also offered an important kind of leadership: while "supreme leadership of any enterprise that hoped for political success in the sixteenth century really had to come from the high nobility" because "only they possessed the experience, the training, and the resources to act effectively in the political arena; only they commanded enough respect from people generally, to serve as real leaders", these high nobles like Louis de Condé (or William of Orange in the Netherlands) were not "fanatic or even particularly devout in their Calvinism", but were "directly linked to the Calvinist church organization, however, not by some theoretical Machiavellian calculation, but by the actual presence on their staffs of men who were devoted Calvinists" (Kingdon 1958, 222).

During the first war of religion (1562-1563), in parallel with the military operations, the Huguenots waged an intense propaganda battle against their opponents, claiming that their rebellion was not directed against the king, Charles IX, himself: in this, they were certainly helped by the fact that the king was underage, therefore unable to rule himself, and the royal government under the regency of Catherine de Medici did not take a very active part in the war. On the other hand, the fact that they were not in possession of the king's person was a significant disadvantage, because, in sixteenth-century France, the king was the main source of political legitimacy: at the beginning of the war, the leadership of the ultra-Catholic faction, the so-called "triumvirs", consisting of François de Guise, the constable Anne de Montmorency and the marshal of Saint-André, had managed to secure the king at Fontainebleau and bring him back to the ultra-Catholic Paris which they controlled. In order to counter this problem, the Huguenots tried to claim that the king was actually the prisoner of an ambitious faction which was constraining his will for its designs: Condé himself issued several manifestos where he repeatedly expressed this idea and insisted that the goal of the rebellion was to free the captive king and defend the laws of the kingdom. To this end, he even pretended that Catherine de Medici had asked for his support in several letters from the spring of 1562, which Condé publicized during his propaganda campaign. This first conflict ended with the peace of Amboise from 1563 — but both the content and the tone of the Huguenot rhetoric will undergo some significant changes several years later, when the king himself, this time of age, would pit himself against the Huguenots.

## 2. Fighting for the Public Good and for the King: Condé's Political Propaganda at the Beginning of the Second War of Religion (1567)

The peace of Amboise lasted only until 1567, when the hostilities resumed as a result of the so-called "surprise of Meaux": suspicious because of the Crown's contacts with Spain and because of the presence of the duke of Alba's army, which was heading at that time towards the Netherlands, near the borders of France, Condé and his associates tried to imitate the action of François de Guise from 1562 and capture the royal family. The attempt failed and sowed the seeds of a deep distrust of Charles IX towards the Huguenots, which the subsequent siege of Paris by the Huguenot army only made worse. In the words of Mack Holt, these actions "only intensified many Catholic fears that Protestantism and rebellion went hand in hand" (Holt 2005, 64-65). As a result, the position of the Huguenots was more precarious than it had been in 1562 and the necessity of justifying their action was even more acute. Just like during the previous war, the Huguenot propaganda of 1567, including here even the texts published anonymously and not just the official ones acknowledged by Condé and his allies, placed the confessional goals, focused on the defense of the Reformed faith against persecution, behind those which could be called purely "political", which concerned the well-being of the whole kingdom. As pointed out by Tatiana Debbagi Baranova, only a single text, at the start of the conflict, in 1567, called *Bref discours contenant les causes & raisons pour lesquelles ceux de la Religion réformée de ce Royaume ont pris les armes*, "presents the defense of the Reformed religion as the sole motive for the take up of arms", and this can be explained by the fact that it was addressed to an international audience: published for the purpose of countering the Catholic propaganda hostile to the Huguenots which was trying to delegitimize their rebellion, this text "put forward a list of crimes committed against the Protestant nobles in order to prove the contraventions against the edict of pacification", designated the Cardinal of Lorraine as the main culprit and it was "the first to hint at an international anti-Protestant conspiracy", while accusing the queen-mother of having made an alliance with Philip II to exterminate the Protestants (Debbagi Baranova 2012, 256). This pamphlet was naturally more radical than the typical noble proclamations, because it openly attacked a member of the royal family (the queen-mother Catherine de Medici), and that was a line neither Condé, nor the lower-ranking nobles were willing to cross: it is true that, at the time, the "black legend" of

Catherine de Medici was starting to take shape, so that it would fully bloom after the massacre of Saint-Bartholomew, but, regardless of any misgivings he might have privately harbored, Condé's propaganda remained respectful towards the royal family. On the other hand, the accusations against the Cardinal of Lorraine were fully embraced by Condé and will loom large in the propagandistic texts issued in his name: if the king and his relatives were untouchable, the Cardinal made a perfect alternative target, the quintessential "evil adviser" which the "loyal subjects" had to protect the king from.

According to Arlette Jouanna, the Huguenots became aware of the political necessity of toleration and started to reflect on the nature of the relationship between the monarchy and the nobility, because a "royal strategy of intransigent Catholicism meant for them complete exclusion from offices and honors" and, therefore, moved from "religious requests to social and political demands" (Jouanna 1989, 152-153). This statement might be true for the lower ranks of the Huguenots, but it is not so for the leadership, as there is a clear continuity between Condé's rhetoric of 1562 and the one from 1567: Condé might resort to slightly different arguments, but their overall substance remains the same. There is no reconsideration of his attitude towards the king, always deferential, of the accusations against the king's entourage or of the nature of his demands, which were, still, mostly political in nature. On the other hand, the thesis of the "captive-king" from 1562 was now replaced by even the more traditional argument of the king deceived by false counselors. Basically, as Jules Racine St-Jacques has pointed out, the image of the king depicted by the justificative writings of the Huguenots changed from one of a captive monarch into one of an estranged king: if it could no longer be claimed that the king was physically kept prisoner by his foreign entourage, then it could only mean that he was misled by them, because under no circumstances could he be blamed for the crimes which occurred in his kingdom (Racine St-Jacques 2012, 97). These false counselors are, again, the Guises and, in particular, the archenemy of the Huguenots, the cardinal of Lorraine, but the Italians from the entourage of Catherine de Medici are also targeted. Another consequence of the changed circumstances is that the king is now the main interlocutor of Condé, to whom the latter's texts are directly addressed.

The main propaganda pieces issued by Condé in 1567 were three "requêtes" sent to the king during the negotiations which took place in early October and which were published later by the Huguenots as part of their efforts to publicize their goals. These texts reiterated Condé's old

professions of loyalty towards the king and the identification of the cause of the Huguenots with that of the whole kingdom. Basically, this association is intended to discredit the goals of their opponents, because the destruction of the Reformed religion, considered by the radical Catholics as a worthy and pious endeavor, is equated with obvious tyrannical acts such as "squandering the assets and finances of the king, burdening the people with new taxes and impositions and committing violence against all the estates of the kingdom" (*Recueil* 1568, 4)[2]. Condé's propaganda draws a sharp contrast between the motivations of the parties in conflict: the Huguenots are driven by their desire to defend the public good, while safeguarding their own lives and honor, while the Guises acted out of a desire for private vengeance against Coligny, whom they considered the instigator of the assassination of François de Guise in 1563. In the first of these "requêtes", the Huguenots' attempt to seize the king at Meaux is depicted as nothing else but an attempt to reach the king safely, with their show of force being necessary in order to protect themselves, since the king was surrounded by their enemies, such as the Guises or Louis de Gonzague, duke of Nevers, who prevented him from hearing the truth (*Recueil* 1568, 12). The charges against the Guises include a significant new accusation, which was absent from the corpus of 1562 and will be repeated later by the Huguenots, especially during the period of the Catholic League, namely that the Guises intended to usurp the Crown (*Recueil* 1568, 10): thus, the image of the "bad counselor" is taken up a notch, to a level which the king could not have ignored. Condé was obviously trying to tap into the traditional image about the role of the monarchy. In the words of Nicolas Le Roux, "lieutenant of God, guarantor of justice and master of the law, the monarch considered himself the incarnation of a natural reason, inspired by providence, which had to regulate the order of the kingdom" and, for him, "the restoration of public peace was the first task", even before the restoration of religious

[2] Condé's three letters were reproduced in a single document called Discours véritable des propos tenus par Monsieur le prince de Condé, avec les seigneurs députez par le roy : contenant les causes qui ont contraint ledict seigneur prince & autres de sa compagnie à prendre les armes and published in 1568 at Orléans by the printer Eloi Gibier and reprinted later in a collection of Huguenot texts called Recueil de toutes les choses memorables advenues, tant de par le Roy, que de par Monseigneur le Prince de Condé, Gentilshommes & autres de sa compaignie, depuis le vingt huitieme d'Octobre, Mil cinq cents soixante sept, jusques à present . Avec le discours des guerres ciuiles du pais de Flandres, 1568. Ensemble, la mort des Sieurs Comtes d'Aigemont, & de Horne, & autres gentils-hommes & marchans. 1568, which the quotations in this article have been taken from.

unity: in this context, the disobedient subjects were deserving of punishment, not just because "they rose against the royal decisions, but also because they persevered in their error" and "blinded by the sin of pride, they refused to open their eyes to the truth" (Le Roux 2004, 134-135). According to this line of thought, rebellion was a consequence of moral turpitude, therefore the Catholic propagandists tried everything in their power to impugn the character of the Huguenots, while the latter tried to prove the lack of substance in such accusations, while launching them back at their enemies. It is for this reason that Condé attacked at every opportunity the moral character of the leaders of the radical Catholics, and, during the period in question, in particular the character of the Cardinal of Lorraine. According to the Condéan rhetoric, a deeply flawed individual such as the cardinal was an (insidious) rebel himself, because he perverted the true will of the king for his own interest and acted as a barrier between the king and his loyal subjects: accordingly, the punishment traditionally meted out by the king against rebels was to be redirected against these evil advisors and, chiefly, against the Cardinal of Lorraine, who was the main cause of the troubles afflicting the kingdom of France. More so, if restoration of public peace took precedence over the restoration of religious unity, then the only logical and just course of action for the king was to acknowledge the lawfulness of the Huguenot military action, since its purpose was congruent with the alleged (according to the Huguenots) goals of the monarchy itself.

What characterizes the Guise clan in Condé's propaganda is "tyranny and violence", directed not just against the Huguenots, but against the whole of France and against the person of the king himself, which is contrasted with the "incredible patience" with which the Protestants endured all the evils they were made to suffer. The hostility of the Guises towards the Huguenots is explained not on religious grounds, but on the basis that the latter constituted the main obstacle to the usurpation of the Crown of France by the former. Just as in 1562, Condé's propaganda insists that the proclaimed confessional justification for the actions of the Guise clan is utterly misleading, a disguise for what were, in truth, selfish and treacherous ambitions. In such circumstances, the Huguenot rebellion appears not just as an action of self-defense, but as the compelling duty of loyal subjects: to not undertake it would mean a betrayal of the entire aristocratic ethos, making them guilty of "disloyalty, treason and cowardice" (*Recueil* 1568, 11). Condé's entire discourse in this first "requête" is developed from the perspective of the relationship between a faithful subject and his monarch: Condé might make repeated

references to "those of the Religion" (meaning the Protestants), but their concerns, for which they are seeking redress, by force of arms if necessary, are secular in nature, not confessional. It is "public peace" and the safeguarding of the king what they are trying to achieve, not, like the pastors' propaganda of 1557-1562, the religious purification of the kingdom.

If the first "requête" was a general justification of the Huguenot rebellion, the second one, instead, addressed to the king on 3 October 1567, contains a much more elaborate political program and lists the specific demands upon whose fulfillment the Protestants could have laid down their arms. Naturally, the first and foremost condition for the restoration of peace and order in the kingdom is the restoration of the trust between the king and his subjects in arms: since this mistrust is the result of the "calomnies" spread by the enemies of the Huguenots, Condé's text makes it clear that it is incumbent upon the king to fix this situation. It might be surprising that the text does not start with the Protestants making another profession of loyalty, but this is explainable, because, from the perspective of Condé and his allies, the Huguenots have never abandoned their loyalty towards the king and their actions were fully in line with the duty expected from loyal subjects in the difficult circumstances of a monarch surrounded by false counselors. What Condé specifically required from the king in his second "requête" was the removal of foreign troops surrounding him and an open endorsement of the Huguenots' actions, together with a formal disavowal of the accusations launched by the radical Catholics. This signified a complete restoration of the relationship between the king and the Huguenots, an indispensable condition for other demands. In some respects, Hugues Daussy is justified to refer to these demands of Condé and his allies as requesting a "change in the mode of the government of the kingdom which supposed the elimination of their worst enemies in favor of the French nobility", thus "politicizing a demand which had its source in an enmity based on an irreconcilable religious disagreement", and he sees in these justifications the evidence that Condé pleaded for a mixed monarchy (Daussy 2015, 655). This is an opinion apparently shared by J.H.M. Salmon, who pointed out a similar instance, shortly after this exchange between the Huguenots and the king, when Condé "declared the ancient constitution of France to be «a monarchy limited from its origin by the authority of the nobility and the communities of the provinces and the great towns of the kingdom»" (Salmon 1979, 170). Condé brings forward one of the perpetual grievances of the Huguenots

during the French Wars of Religion, that of the ineffectiveness of the edicts of pacification, which were always difficult to implement due to the hostility of both the royal bureaucracy (namely, the Parlements) and of the Catholic population. As pointed out by Penny Roberts, "although open defiance of the Crown on this scale was rare, concerted Catholic opposition, in particular to the establishment of sites for Reformed worship, was to be a commonplace of the reaction to royal legislation during the religious wars" (Roberts 2013, 54). Condé's solution to this problem, as indicated in his request to the king, was nothing short of revolutionary: to allow "the free exercise of the said religion, without distinction or limitations of location or persons, just like the emperor Charles, after the wars which he waged against those of Germany, found it good to grant, especially since he was victorious and held the principal princes and leaders in his power" (*Recueil* 1568, 16). Janine Garrisson claims in her book that the demands made by Condé in his declarations from 1567 privileged the interests of the nobility, which displeased the lesser ranks of the Huguenot party, who "complained that these manifestos said nothing about toleration for all" (Garrisson 1995, 347). That Condé put political considerations first and "privileged the interests of the nobility" is perfectly true, but the statement that Condé's manifestos completely ignored the desire for toleration for *all* Protestants, not just the higher ups, is not factually correct. Condé might not have given this issue the same weight as the pastors, nor did he press it with sufficient vigor during the peace negotiations, but requests for general toleration were actually included in the texts addressed to the king. On the other hand, had this particular demand been accepted, it would have upended the whole religious fabric of France, so it is hard to believe that Condé seriously thought it could have even been considered by the king and his council: most likely it was just a nod to the pastors and those within Condé's army more prone to religious zealotry. Of far greater interest for Condé and his noble allies (and more realistic as well) was their request about the distribution of offices within the royal government: under the pretext that offices were granted to people "of low status" or "without experience", the Huguenot nobles were aiming at the removal of the obstacles they faced (due to being of a different religion than the king) for political advancement. This was a sensitive issue during the sixteenth century, because it was difficult to imagine a loyal subject belonging to a different faith than his prince: this was one of the main arguments used by the radical Catholics to accuse the Protestants of seditious intent. With the Edict of Saint-Germain of 1562 and the peace of Amboise of 1563, the

Crown may have resolved, however grudgingly, to separate the two issues, to accept that religious differences might not impede upon the loyalty of its subjects and to provide freedom of conscience and a limited freedom of worship to the Huguenots. But, for the Protestant nobles, equal access to royal favors and state offices were just as important, because their social relevance depended very much on this. Finally, Condé's last request was for the king to ease the general burden on the people, which was not justified by war or other "reasonable cause for expenses": these burdens were placed on the people by "the foreigners & same Italians, through the credit and favor they have in this kingdom, to the great prejudice of the nobility" (*Recueil* 1568, 17). But such an expansive political program could not be, in practice, carried out by the king alone, nor did the traditional conception about the role of the monarchy allow him to: such sweeping changes were the preserve of the king *and* the Estates General. There was an almost blind confidence during the second half of the sixteenth century in the capability of the Estates General to provide redress for whatever troubles the kingdom was facing and this confidence is reflected in the majority of the Huguenot political texts until 1576: the fall of 1567 is no exception and Condé ended his second "requête" with an appeal to the king to summon the Estates (*Recueil* 1568, 18).

The third of Condé's "requêtes" combined the demands of a Calvinist bend with others of a more secular nature, but it is worth pointing out that the substance of this text was more attuned to the sensitivities of the pastors than the previous two. In particular, the threat to the Reformed faith, namely the possible "abolition of the ministry and the exercise of the Reformed religion and the extermination or the expulsion out of the kingdom of those belonging to it" (Recueil 1568, 20), now takes center stage amongst the reasons listed by Condé and his associates for their military actions. But, at the same time, the justification of Condé is based on the principle of self-defense derived from natural law and not on the Calvinist interpretation of the Scripture: this goes to prove that, for Condé and his noble allies, armed resistance was to be justified on aristocratic terms, derived from the feudal tradition of the contractual relationship between king and vassals, and not necessarily explained as a religious obligation, as Calvin, Beza and other pastors envisioned. Robert Kingdon correctly points out that there is "a distinct ambiguity in the public manifestos and formal demands which were issued from Saint-Denis in Condé's name, to justify the Protestant recourse to arms", with only one of the latest making "the religious issue

central, devoting itself largely to demands that toleration of public Protestant services be extended by law and protected by government", and explains these recurring shifts in Condé's arguments on the basis that Condé "in the beginning at least, did not want to rely solely on Protestant support in the approaching hostilities" (Kingdon 1967, 166). In this third text, just as in the previous two, the king is absolved of any direct blame for this unfortunate situation: it is only the plots of the enemies of the Huguenots, who surrounded the king and obscured the truth from him, which created this danger for the Reformed faith and compelled the Huguenots to resort to arms. Since the designs of these "enemies" are unjust and malicious, they could not have proceeded from the will of the king who was supposed to be the "fountain of justice" in his kingdom: on this basis, the Huguenots constantly reassure Charles IX of their loyalty, although the text includes one allusion that "the first recognition and obedience was due to God" (*Recueil* 1568, 20). The first demand made in this text was, once more, the freedom of conscience and of worship for the Reformed faith, but now, it becomes the central issue of Condé's request, and, despite their profession of loyalty, there is a clear hint that the Protestants were prepared to keep fighting for this purpose regardless of the cost. But religious freedom was not the only demand in this text, nor it could have been, having in mind the efforts made by Condé to emphasize that his actions were not actually a Calvinist revolt. Condé was undoubtedly aware that Calvinist demands were not likely to attract any support from outside the members of the Reformed Church, on the contrary, they could have alienated those (and these represented the majority) that could not imagine the free exercise of two religions in France. Therefore, Condé's second demand was the diminution of the fiscal burden, a goal which could have had much more appeal to non-Protestants and was a powerful propaganda tool for all rebels who tried to disguise their personal ambitions under the mask of the public good. In the opinion of Jules Racine St-Jacques, "the conspiracy of Amboise of 1560 and its pathetic failure had shown Condé the importance of keeping his partisans within the strict framework of the ritualized noble action: therefore, the justificative texts were not written just to convince the moderate Catholic nobles of the national character of the Huguenot cause, but also to limit the radicalism which could emerge within the Protestant party and make it subject to the decisions of the grands, the only ones entitled to act for the king and the kingdom" (Racine St-Jacques 2012, 109). The instrument for the implementation of these policies, as envisioned by Condé, was, again, the Estates General. Despite the fact

that many proponents of the nascent absolutism, such as the chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital, insisted to see in this institution merely a channel of communication between king and people, without any power of decision for itself, the tradition which considered the Estates a partner in governance for the monarch, based on the principle that all the important political decisions must receive the consent of the people through the Estates, was still strong in the second half of the sixteenth century. It is not an empty rhetorical exercise that Condé refers to the participation of the Estates General in the major acts of governance as anchored in the historical past of the monarchy: when Condé points out that previous kings "have made use of the Estates either to satisfy their subjects, or to strengthen their state", it reflects a widely held belief that the Estates had always been a fundamental part of the political fabric of the kingdom, belief which will be reiterated later in the Monarchomach tracts of the 1570s. In the opinion of Jules Racine St-Jacques, "the call made by Condé for the summoning of the Estates General was actually a call for the regeneration of the French monarchy, a regeneration for which the Estates were both the goal and the agent, because the purpose was not merely easing the fiscal burden, but the resurrection of an ancient institution which had been a means the kings had made use of and a remedy for the kingdom's troubles" (Racine St-Jacques 2012, 139-140).

During this propaganda battle, Condé and his troops continued to besiege Paris until the royal army forced a sortie which resulted in the battle of Saint-Denis, on 10 November 1567, which broke the siege, but also caused the death of the constable Anne de Montmorency, the last member of the Catholic triumvirate still alive in 1567. The subsequent military operations failed to provide any decisive outcome and it would be the financial pressure brought up by war which forced both sides into negotiations, concluded with the peace of Longjumeau on 23 March 1568. In theory, this peace renewed most of the terms of the previous peace of Amboise, but, in the opinion of Robert Knecht, "no one regarded the peace as a lasting settlement" and "it was almost certainly a trap designed to bring about the destruction of the Huguenot leadership" (Knecht 2010, 40). This peace was just as bitterly resented by the Catholics as the previous one: the Parisian preachers predicted dire consequences for the king if he did not cease to support false prophets, with priests like Claude Haton insisting that the preachers did not urge the people to rebellion, but warning that the Huguenots would destroy France if they were not exterminated by force of arms (Diefendorf 1991, 82). And, this time, the Crown was much less committed to the enforcement

of this peace than it was five years before after the peace of Amboise: the Chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital was about to fall out of favor, the cardinal of Lorraine was actively trying to undermine it and both Charles IX and the queen-mother, resentful due to what they perceived to had been a Huguenot aggression at the start of the war, were more and more inclined to a violent solution.

### 3. Defending the King in the Name of the Faith: The Confessionalization of Condé's Propaganda at the Start of the Third War of Religion (1568)

The religious issues became more and more central in the Huguenot noble propaganda especially during the third civil war, which started in 1568, after only several months of fragile peace. The resumption of the war had both international and domestic causes. Regarding the former, the policy of repression instituted by the Duke of Alba in the Low Countries, which culminated in the execution of several prominent nobles, such as the counts of Egmont and Horne, in June 1568, triggered the concern of the Huguenot leaders that a similar fate could be awaiting them. Domestically, the previous policy of conciliation of the French Crown, whose main advocate was the chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital, was starting to be abandoned in favor of the more belligerent one supported by the Cardinal of Lorraine. N. M. Sutherland argues that the Crown embarked in 1568 on a policy of exterminating the Huguenot leadership, in particular Condé and Coligny, and claims that the Cardinal of Lorraine was the driving force behind this change (Sutherland 1984, 167-168). Robert Knecht does not give the same weight to the alleged influence of the Cardinal, pointing out that "it is by no means proven that he [the Cardinal of Lorraine] ousted her [Catherine de Medici] from policy-making", nor "can we assume that Lorraine was virtually running the government": in the opinion of professor Knecht, the queen-mother had equally good reasons to decide upon a solution to the Huguenot problem which involved the deaths of Condé and Coligny and he provides convincing statements of the queen which would indicate as much (Knecht 2014a, 119-122). Regardless who was responsible for the hardening of the Crown's policy, Condé and Coligny felt sufficiently threatened to flee from Noyers, in Burgundy, where they were in residence in August 1568, to the safety of La Rochelle, the fortified city on the Atlantic coast which will become during the Wars of Religion and

afterwards the main Protestant center in France, until his reduction by Louis XIII in 1629.

The goals and motivations of Condé and his associates at the beginning of this third war are expressed in three main documents, two of them, a letter and a remonstrance to the king, sent from Noyers on 23 August 1568, and a third, *Déclaration et protestation de Monseigneur le prince de Condé des causes qui l'ont contraint de prendre les armes*, issued at La Rochelle and dated on 9 September 1568. Both Hugues Daussy and Tatiana Debbagi Baranova indicate similar reasons for the change of tone from these documents. Hugues Daussy refers in this regard to "the failure of Condé's attempt to mobilize the Protestants and the moderate Catholics around some common political values" and to the "necessity of awakening a wave of solidarity amongst the German Protestants, always reluctant to intervene when there was not a matter of religion only" (Daussy 2015, 661). In her turn, Tatiana Debbagi Baranova argues that the cause of the public good was pushed into the background so that the Huguenot argumentation could look more persuasive to the German Protestant princes or the nobility of the Netherlands: in Debbagi-Baranova's opinion, the sixteenth-century noble code of honor and the idea of solidarity between princes, which frowned upon the notion of giving help to rebellious subjects, represented a major obstacle to a foreign Protestant intervention in favor of the Huguenots, but "coming to the rescue of their brethren in Christ, whom their sovereign, a prisoner of evil advisors, could no longer protect, was a completely different thing" (Debbagi Baranova 2012, 261). Obsessed by the possibility of a pan-European Catholic alliance directed against Protestantism, the Huguenots saw presumed hints of possible Catholic conspiracies in all the diplomatic maneuvers of the French Crown. According to Hugues Daussy, "this idea that the conflict which opposed Catholics and Huguenots in France was only the reflection and the manifestation of a larger one, pitting an international papist conspiracy against the Reformed powers, leads the members of this political network to integrate their local action within a global effort of resistance and struggle against the Catholic aggressor" (Daussy 2004a, 28-29).

Condé's letter is an appeal to the king in the name of the Reformed community from France, for whom Condé speaks. The more confessionalized tone of the new texts is betrayed from the very beginning by Condé's evocation of the patience with which the Huguenot had born all offences and injuries, a theme always present in the propaganda of the Calvinist pastors, who saw in the sixteenth-century

Protestants the contemporary equivalents of the Christian martyrs from the times of pagan Rome. Patience in face of adversity was one of the main traits of the Christian faithful, but also, at the same time, the trait of the faithful subject, which is an image of the Huguenots which Condé's strives to build with his allusion that this attitude was a choice freely assumed and it was not due to lack of military strength or possibility for defense. The letter goes to great lengths to keep absolving the king for the misfortunes which had befallen the Huguenots and pushed them (again) to the brink of war: it is the king, Charles IX, from whom Condé, in the name of the Huguenots, expects relief, especially more so since, according to the Huguenots, the troubles afflicting France and the Reformed Church were the result of the Cardinal of Lorraine subverting the royal will. In Condé's text, the interests of the Huguenots and those of the Crown are depicted as equally threatened by the Cardinal of Lorraine and his acolytes: the destruction of the Protestants is, for the Cardinal, merely a first step towards usurping the Crown of France. According to Condé, both honor and self-preservation should determine the king to take action against this "treacherous" servant, who conspired with Spain to further his "malicious" designs.

The remonstrance, addressed to the king at the same time as Condé's letter, was intended to describe the contraventions carried out in violation of the terms of the peace of Longjumeau, while rejecting the accusations made against the Huguenots in an "instruction" handed earlier in the name of the king to Charles de Teligny, a Protestant nobleman from the inner circle of the Huguenot leadership. The remonstrance starts once again with a profession of loyalty towards Charles IX, while any rebellious intent is denied. Condé is basing his argument on the fact that the king could not contradict himself without besmirching his own honor: therefore, since the previous peace of Longjumeau had recognized the prince of Condé as "the good and loyal relative, subject and servant [of the king] and, likewise, those beside him, as his good and loyal subjects and servants" (*Lettres et remonstrance* 1569, 11-12), it was unconceivable for the king to go back on his word and suddenly consider Condé and the Huguenots as rebels. The only conclusion which Condé could draw in his text was that such a statement (the declaration of the Huguenots as rebels) did not reflect the king's true will, but was inspired by their archenemy, the cardinal of Lorraine. For Condé, the falsity of the accusations against the Huguenots should have been proved by their behavior during the peace negotiations, when, in his opinion, they did not demand anything which did not concern "the

freedom of their consciences", and by the fact that they always agreed to lay down their arms relying solely on the king's promises (*Lettres et remonstrance* 1569, 17-18). Condé's next words testify to the feeling of acute insecurity of the Huguenots during this period[3], listing all the alleged abuses against the Protestants in defiance of the peace of Longjumeau. Condé's accusations become quite ominous for the monarchy, because they put into question the royal justice, which was seen as the first and foremost duty of the king. It would not have been particularly difficult to trace the failure of royal justice to the king himself, which is something the monarchomach theorists will do. Condé did not go there, but, even if the king was not acting with evil intent, could he not be considered a *rex inutilis* for not adequately protecting his subjects? There are two major grievances which Condé, in the name of his coreligionists, points out: first, the attacks against the personal security and the freedom of conscience of the Huguenots, second, the blocking of their access to state offices. These grievances were the outcome of the public hostility to the edicts of pacification favorable to the Huguenots. For instance, in some remonstrances from May 1568, as pointed out by Sylvie Daubresse, the Parlement of Paris declared that it was tied "not just to the body of kings (...) but also to God, this God who commands the judges not to pass anything which they did not consider in their conscience to be just and reasonable", but, at this time, it was difficult to reconcile the duty of obedience to law and king, responsibility towards God and the concern for one's own salvation (Daubresse 2004, 107). As a result, the Parlements (and not just the one of Paris) tried their hardest to obstruct the inclusion of Protestants amongst their members, and this remained a very painful issue for the Huguenots during this troubled period. And if these were the Parlements' feelings, citadels of royalism as they were, it can easily be imagined what was the mood amongst the Catholic population and how easily outbursts of anti-Protestant violence could be triggered. In the words of G. Wylie Sypher, "silent acceptance of Catherine's policy of religious toleration entailed acquiescence to advancing moral degeneration and impending

[3] This feeling of insecurity was increased by the events in the neighboring Low Countries, where the Spanish repression was in full swing in 1568, but also by the apparent inefficiency of the peace agreements with the monarchy. The consequence will be that the future negotiations between the Huguenots and the Crown will always include (something which was not considered in the peace of Amboise from 1563 or in the peace of Longjumeau in 1568) demands for so-called "places de sûreté", fortified towns controlled by the Huguenots which could serve as refuges for them.

insurrection, as well as disobedience to God", something which to many Catholics "seemed intolerable, and the polemicists provided justification for them to assume the role of cleric and magistrate in defending the faith and the community from heresy", acting thus in their stead (Wylie Sypher 1980, 79). For Condé, this attitude of the Catholics, which, in his opinion, represented a blatant disregard of the king's own edicts, constituted the most obvious proof than the Huguenot military action was lawfully and morally justified and that the Catholics were, in truth, the seditious party (*Lettres et remonstrance* 1569, 25). Ceasing such persecutions against the Huguenots was, according to Condé's text, the only way to ensure a solid peace, because they were the staunchest supporters of the Crown and their demands were anchored in the principles of justice.

The defiance of the Catholics was, for Condé, emphasized by the unlawful associations which they were forming and which he describes as "illicit and pernicious to the king's state", thus representing a "pure and manifest rebellion and disobedience" (*Lettres et remonstrance* 1569, 36-37). The reason for Condé's attack against the Catholics "associations" lies in the fact that these were the most militant Catholic organizations and, therefore, the bitterest enemies of the Huguenots. Here, Condé's words were prophetic, because these associations represented the first manifestations of the sentiments which led later to the formation of Catholic League, the most dangerous adversary of the monarchy during the last years of Henry III. Clearly, Condé did not see that far into the future, but, still, for him and the Huguenots, discrediting the legitimacy of these Catholic organizations was paramount and, in this, one could say that the interests of the Crown and those of the Huguenots coincided. Penny Roberts correctly points out that "royal power and the exercise of justice were dependent on the continuing status of France as a sacred monarchy" and that "there was evident tension between the coronation oath expressing the traditional obligation to protect the Catholic Church and eradicate heresy, and the policy of conciliation pursued on and off by the French crown from 1560", because "the royal strategy for the simultaneous accommodation of confessional difference and reinforcement of respect for the crown was problematic, if not inherently contradictory" (Roberts 2004, 10-11). The Catholic associations formed for the defense of the faith against the Protestants had the potential to become the main deniers of the king's sacredness if the latter proved himself unworthy in their eyes by his failure to vigorously prosecute heresy — and this is exactly what will happen during the times of the Catholic League.

The contradiction between the duty to eradicate heresy and the policy of conciliation was most acutely felt by the French Parlements: as the main enforcers of royal justice in the provinces under their authority, it fell to them to register the royal edicts — edicts which many members of the Parlements felt they ran contrary to their consciences and to the traditional royal duty. In consequence, the Parlements often resorted to procrastination, trying to postpone the registration as long as possible. Condé described this situation in his remonstrance by referencing the example of the Parlement of Toulouse, a bastion of radical Catholicism. This was a major problem not just for the Huguenots, but for the Crown as well, because the Parlements' obstruction undermined royal authority. The delayed registration was an excuse for the Huguenots not to execute, in their turn, some of the provisions of the edicts of pacification, something Condé alluded to (*Lettres et remonstrance* 1569, 40-43). But the remonstrance, even though it dedicates most of its space to the specific grievances of the Protestants, does not claim to protect only their interests: the notion that the Cardinal of Lorraine and his clan intended to usurp the throne of France is brought up once more, together with the suggestion of an alleged conspiracy of the Cardinal to assassinate even Catholics who could have opposed his designs. Condé's words refer directly to the nascent faction of the "politiques", which will fully emerge in the aftermath of the massacre of the Saint-Bartholomew and will become extremely active during the last of the wars of religion, after 1585. The text reveals the extreme hostility which the radical Catholics coalesced around the Guise family felt towards these religious "traitors", who prioritized the reestablishment of peace in France over the destruction of heresy. At the same time, the king is reminded of the previous attempts of the Guises against his person, such as his seizure at Fontainebleau in 1562 by François de Guise. The implication is that the Guises have acted feloniously towards the king in the past and they will continue to do so in the future: their guilt was made worse by the fact that, according to Condé, they were acting in concert with Spain in order to weaken the French monarchy, and, in his opinion, all the violations of the previous agreement had their roots in the machinations of the Cardinal of Lorraine (*Lettres et remonstrance* 1569, 52-55). In the words of the remonstrance, the evil advices of the Cardinal could lead to an open breach between the king and his whole people: according to Condé's rhetoric, this is not an issue between the king and his Protestant subjects only. On the contrary, the king recruiting an army "against those who only wish and ask solely to obey and serve the king" could result in "an

unbearable expense", leading to the "oppression of the people and the ruin and the desolation of the state" (*Lettres et remonstrance* 1569, 56). More so, the actions of Cardinal threatened to make the Crown's policy of reconciliation impossible, even in the long-term, as they would have created long-lasting antagonisms between the two faiths. The example of Scotland, where Mary Stuart had just been overthrown, is brought up to illustrate the pernicious consequences of the Cardinal's influence, the remonstrance attributing the downfall of the Scottish queen to the malignant advises of the Cardinal. The cause of the Huguenots thus becomes blended with the cause of the king himself: while excessive taxation might be regarded by the nobles as an insufficient justification for a rebellion, a threat against their "consciences, their honor and their lives" represented lawful ground for resistance, but this resistance was equally meant to save the king from the threat posed by the Guise family. In the opinion of the Huguenots, there was a fundamental incompatibility between the royal duty of providing justice and peace for the subjects and the instigations of the Cardinal of Lorraine, which ran contrary to the interests and the honor of the Crown.

At La Rochelle, Condé issued a new declaration, much shorter this time, which reiterated his previous arguments, with an even stronger religious undertone, likely under the influence of the Protestant pastors gathered in the city, as the text himself alludes when mentioning the "holy assembly" present there (*Lettres et remonstrance* 1569, 68). The first goal of the rebellion is "the conservation of the freedom of conscience and the exercise of the Reformed religion"; the second, to safeguard the "lives, honor and goods from the tyranny and oppression which the Cardinal of Lorraine and other enemies and disturbers of the public peace and of the public good of this kingdom have exercised & continued daily over those of the religion, against the will & intention of his majesty" (*Lettres et remonstrance* 1569, 69). The charge of "tyranny" leveled against the Cardinal shows again the radicalization of the conflict, as it could well represent an invitation to tyrannicide: if traditional political theory hesitated to recommend this solution against a lawful prince turned tyrant, it had no hesitation when an illegitimate tyrant was concerned. Once more, the king is depicted as much of a wronged party as the Huguenots, since the actions of the Cardinal impugned on his honor and damaged his sovereignty.

An intense propaganda campaign was also carried out in September and October 1568 by Jeanne d'Albret, which echoed many of the ideas of the Condéan propaganda: while Condé provided the military

leadership of the Huguenot movement, the queen of Navarre became extremely active on the diplomatic front and asserted herself as one of the political leaders of the movement. Unlike Condé, the queen of Navarre's involvement in the Huguenot propaganda took place mainly through letters. In the opinion of David Bryson, Jeanne's letters reflect two major trends, namely the "apparent obsession with the cardinal of Lorraine as the principal cause of the wars [...] in order to avoid naming directly the king and the queen mother as the real enemy, with all the conflict that would entail with feudal obligations to, and benefits received from, the king" and a „quadruple justification for Jeanne's decision to take up arms and prepare for battle: for the service of my God, my King, my country, and my blood", each words acquiring a „different meaning, depending on the position of, and Jeanne's relation to, the person to whom the letter is addressed" (Bryson 1999, 197).

The texts addressed to the king by Condé, obviously, had no effect. While the royal army, commanded by the duke of Anjou (the future Henry III) engaged the Huguenots in the field, two new royal edicts were issued on 28 September, directed not just against Condé and his rebellious allies, but against the Reformed faith as a whole: one banned "all Protestant worship and ordered all pastors to leave the kingdom within a fortnight", while the other "forbade Huguenots holding any offices and charges", and are described by Robert Knecht as a "a complete reversal of the policy of peaceful coexistence inaugurated at Amboise in March 1563" (Knecht 2014b, 35). These were the exact opposite of the demands made by Condé in his justificative texts and can explain why disillusion was starting to creep in within the lower ranks of the Huguenots. This also meant that the Crown was willing to deploy a scorched-earth policy in dealing with the Huguenot leaders: if Condé had been well-treated and, in the end, released when taken prisoner during the first war of religion, his capture at the Battle of Jarnac, on 13 March 1569, was followed by his immediate assassination, right on the field of battle. Despite this, the Huguenot leadership was still not willing to openly proclaim the king as their enemy, but, at the same time, the change of tone in their propaganda witnessed in the texts of 1568 continued: a new declaration, issued this time in the name of the young king of Navarre and the new prince of Condé, Henry, stated that the goal was to ensure "the free and entire exercise of the Reformed religion" (Daussy 2015, 662). Freeing the king obviously remained the purpose of the Huguenot rebels, but it was a precondition of obtaining true religious freedom.

## 4. Conclusions

From a certain perspective, the rhetoric of Condé and the other Huguenot leaders remains rather conventional during the years 1567-1568, despite the changed political circumstances. As mentioned already, the king could no longer be depicted as kept physically prisoner by a cabal of evil advisers, but the Huguenot leadership still had the option to argue that the king was deceived by their enemies: attacking the king directly was never considered. Kristine Wirts is perfectly correct when she points out that "Condé and his fellow pamphleteers employed and reemployed a rhetorical strategy and specific device, «droit divin et humain» , derived not from the Calvinist theology of the Reformation years, but, it seems, from a late Medieval, early modern popular cosmology and political theology", strategy which "resonated with those individuals most familiar, in concrete terms, with the consultative functions and traditions of the Renaissance monarchy – principally Protestant nobles who wished to end the religious and political violence by restoring the Renaissance monarchy to its original, and, hence, natural state" (Wirts 2006/2007, 158). Additionally, there was another reason why Condé would insist so much that the military actions of the Huguenots were not directed against the monarchy, but were merely actions of self-defense against enemies of equal status, — the latter driven by personal ambitions and enmities and not by religious goals — or, even better, that they were actions taken in the service of the monarchy whose rights and safety were threatened by those same enemies: as pointed out by Kathleen Parrow, accusations of treason led not just to death penalties, but to wholesale confiscations of property, and "in a society in which status was based largely on land ownership and titles, losing the family estate was a greater threat to the continuation of the family than the death of any individual member and did not carry the same heavenly reward as martyrdom" (Parrow 1991, 709). Condé might have been (rightfully) accused that, during peace negotiations, he did not defend the interests of the Reformed Churches with sufficient vigor and abandoned them too easily, but, on the other hand, he was compelled to protect his noble supporters if he wished to preserve his political influence, which depended, in a large measure, of the extent and solidity of his noble affinity. While confiscating the lands of princes like Condé himself or the queen of Navarre, Jeanne d'Albret, was not an easy thing to do (although the Crown tried to do that during the period in question), the lesser nobles were much more vulnerable to this sort of retaliation from the monarchy.

Condé's rhetorical strategy of continuously professing loyalty towards the king was meant to gather some Catholic support, if possible, but, just as important, to preserve the legitimacy of his actions and shield his supporters from losing their family assets.

On the other hand, and this is particularly visible in the texts of 1568, Condé stopped insisting too much on the concept of "public good" and on integrating the redress sought by the Huguenots for their grievances in a plan for a general political reform of the whole kingdom. By the end of this period, the specific defense of the Reformed communities takes center stage in Condé's discourse. This reversal has several main causes: first, the internationalization of the conflict, as was often remarked in historiography, with Condé seeking the active support of the German Protestant princes and cooperation with the rebels from the Low Countries, who might had otherwise been reluctant to intervene in a conflict whose main goals concerned exclusively the French polity. But a second cause, equally important, was the increased hostility of Charles IX and of Catherine de Medici towards Condé, which made it unrealistic for him to try to impose on the monarchy a political program which involved major political changes at the scale of the whole kingdom. Finally, one could add the failure to gain any meaningful support amongst the Catholic nobility and population: if Condé's original propaganda, insisting on the idea of the "defense of the public good", was meant to allow the cooperation between the Huguenots and those Catholics discontented with the royal policy, it did not yield any significant results by 1568. The most important voice in the king's council arguing for concessions to the Huguenots, the chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital, was sent into retirement, the Parlements were just as hostile as ever to the Huguenots and the anti-Protestant feeling amongst the general population remained as vivid as before.

Despite the attempts of the rebel leadership to pretend otherwise, the events of the second (1567-1568) and third religious wars (1568-1570) had caused a major breach in the trust between the Protestants and the Crown, The attitudes towards the Valois monarchy had hardened especially amongst the lower ranks of the Huguenots. Unlike in 1562, the progress of radicalism within the grassroots of the Huguenot movement is much more visible, as several tracts were published addressing the issue of lawful disobedience and these had not shared the fate of a similar text published at Lyon in 1562, and destroyed by the order of the Huguenot governor of the city. Such tracts were *La Question politique: s'il est licite aux subjects de capituler avec leur prince,* written by Jean de Coras,

chancellor of Jeanne d'Albret, which „introduced the idea of a contractual monarchy where the obedience of the subjects depended of the king observing his own obligations", or the *Declaration de ceux de la religion reformee de La Rochelle* which asserted, reiterating the idea put forward by Calvin in some of his sermons, "that the prince who gives commands against God is *de facto* deprived of all his authority" (Daussy 2004b, 61). The Huguenot anonymous pamphlets directed their verbal violence not just against the evil advisers, but also against the queen-mother herself, now personally held responsible for the bad policies implemented by the Crown. While not taking up center stage yet, the ground was thus prepared for the monarchomach theories of the post-Saint-Bartholomew period.

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**Funding:** „ This work was supported by a grant of the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitization, CNCS/CCCDI – UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2019-0499, within PNCDI III".