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Une question de confiance ? Le parlement de Paris et Henri IV, 1589-1599

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Résumé de la thèse

From 1589 to 1599, the relation between Henri IV and the Parlement of Paris was a tumultuous one. Some parlementaires associated with the Catholic League refused at first to recognize Henri of Navarre as their king. These magistrates met in Paris until April 1594. Meanwhile, their royalist colleagues congregated in Tours where, in March 1589, Henri III had transferred his sovereign court. From there, the royalist councillors helped Henri IV reconquer his realm. This, they did in spite of his religion, although they frequently asked him to convert to Catholicism. After the reunification of the two rival courts in April 1594, the parlementaires seemed to work as one and blocked the verification of numerous edicts presented by the king. Their opposition was so strong that it has led some historians to claim that it was endangering the State's survival. It slowly faded away after the verification of the Edict of Nantes in February 1599. In a pacified France, the conflicts between a king finally in control of his realm and his parlementaires became rare. The magistrates finally had confidence in the government which seemed to take adequate measures to stabilize France after more than thirty years of civil wars. The difficult relationship between Henri IV and the Parlement of Paris between 1589 and 1599 was not created by the egoistic nature of the magistrates or their incompetence as claimed by numerous historians. If some of the Parlementaires—we will call them the "opportunists"—put their own interests before those of the realm, a majority of their colleagues had a very high idea of their political role within France, an idea based on centuries of relation between the kings of France and the Parlement as well as on the political role of the court as defined by theorists of the time. Confronted to a king they hardly knew, these "traditionalists", on whom this work will be centered, tried to make sure that the interests of the kingdom, its king and its inhabitants were protected. They would not give Henri IV's government the leeway it sought but would scrutinize and frequently block the edicts presented to them, and this until Henri IV proved that he could be trusted as the head of the realm.

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