

Following his three highly acclaimed monographs on Cardinals Richelieu and La Rochefoucauld, Joseph Bergin, a leading scholar of the French Catholic Reformation and Early Modern patronage, has written the definitive study of the bishops of early seventeenth-century France. Where previous studies have primarily examined exemplary individual bishops, dioceses, or provinces, Bergin analyzes the royal appointments and papal confirmations of all 351 bishops in all 113 dioceses across seven decades from the reign of Henry IV to the death of Mazarin. Written with clarity and wit, the work will be of interest not only to scholars of ancien régime France, but also to those engaged in the broader study of patronage and elites.

The work skillfully combines social and political history, examining both the general structure of patronage and the particular calculations of the crown, papacy, and nobility. The first of four sections describes the range of size, wealth, and prestige of the French dioceses, the complicated process by which episcopal nominees were selected and confirmed, and the frequent exaction of pensions from episcopal revenues. While intended for the assistance of retired or disabled bishops, pensions were paid to a variety of clerical and lay patrons with more than the occasional hint of simony. The second section considers the bishops as a group. Instead of the exclusive focus upon ancestry, status, and social mobility common to many studies of elites, Bergin in addition devotes incisive chapters to the geographical origin, education, pre-episcopal clerical career, and tenure of office of the bishops. The third section integrates the preceding corporate analyses into a close political narrative which shows the priorities, decisions, and actions of the French monarchs and regents from the turbulent end of the Wars of Religion to the Fronde's aftermath. The fourth and final section is a biographical dictionary of the 351 bishops which in itself makes the volume essential to specialists.

The work demonstrates a mastery of French and Vatican archival manuscripts as well as the printed sources. Numerous case studies, an abundance of maps and tables, and comparisons of the French episcopate to those of England, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire enhance the arguments of each chapter. As Bergin declares in his introduction, this work does not discuss episcopal administration, theology, or individual piety, that is, how a bishop acted after attaining his office. Nonetheless, the work is an indispensable reference for research in those topics. As a significant contribution to the history of France, religious institutions, and patronage, Bergin's study deserves a wide readership.  
James Guba

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### **The Philosophy of History**

**Frykenberg, Robert Eric. *History and Belief: The Foundations of Historical Understanding*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.**

**Southgate, Beverly. *History: What and Why?: Ancient, Modern and Postmodern Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 1996.**

Why do we study history? Two scholars explore the reasons why historians do what they do, by discussing the intellectual currents which have affected their perspectives. Southgate seeks to explain where the field of history is going, in light of recent philosophical developments, while Frykenberg is more interested in explaining the significance of history as a discipline. Although the two authors go in different directions, the books do overlap and complement each other. Frykenberg demonstrates how historians establish and interpret a collective past, while Southgate provides a frame of reference for understanding contemporary ideological debates within the discipline, based upon the vision of the collective past held by ancient, modern and post-modern historians.

Frykenberg proposes that various interpretations of history determined historical inquiry: history can be seen as simply those events which took place in the past, or as explanations of those events. History can also be defined as one's memory, story, or an anecdote. History as antiquity comprises those mythical legacies in the "search for beginnings and origins" in ancient civilizations. Classicity points to those ancient "high" cultures which provided a model for subsequent generations to follow, a foundation from which the latter developed, such as those civilizations of ancient India, China, Greece, and Rome. History viewed as theodocity relates to our means of understanding religion, God, and personal redemption.

Once Frykenberg starts to define history as description, destiny, and rhetoric, the intersections with Southgate become more apparent. Historians describe events through their own perspectives, and through the eyes of their subjects; thus, the information and documentation they use has been tainted: there is no objectivity and no pure history. Because explanations of causality can never be certain, history is an ambiguous science, explains Frykenberg, and thus follows the debate on the purpose of historical inquiry, proposes Southgate.

Southgate argues that postmodernists recognize that history "can never be one single privileged position from which the story of the past can finally be told." Historians have constantly struggled with determining the ultimate "facts" and "objective truth." But the problem, as demonstrated by the Marxists, Feminists and Post-colonialists, is that history has always been written by the winners in the struggle for position, influence and resources. Postmodernists are only broadening the discourse by adding the stories and interpretations of the losers in the battle, because they perceive it to be the only means of finding a more comprehensive understanding of events. History, in the eyes of Southgate, is ultimately a hypothesis. For Frykenberg, historical understanding is rooted in "those structures and systems of belief which some individual or some larger aggregate of persons hold dear." Current historical debates reflect the rhetorical struggles which inevitably ensue when belief systems clash.

For the reader who is interested in the intellectual history of historical inquiry, Southgate offers an overview of the attitudes historians have taken towards their discipline over time: what historians said they were doing, and why they were doing it. External forces, such as developments in the psychology of perception, the problems of language, as explained by linguistics, or the issue of scepticism in philosophy, all impacted upon history from the outside, by questioning the methodology historians had always taken for granted. Marxism, feminism and post-colonialism impacted the discipline from the inside, by disputing the core beliefs traditionally held by members of the discipline. Frykenberg is more interested in the philosophy of history; he argues that history is intertwined with faith and religious belief, but in a broader sense. Frames of reference define the viewpoints and approaches individuals bring to historical understanding, and historical perceptions underlie the belief systems individuals adhere to. Southgate looks at some of those "faiths," the frames of reference in the political, social and intellectual movements which have affected historical inquiry.

Bernie D. Jones

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**Jules R. Benjamin. *A Student's Guide to History*, 6th edition. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.**

Jules R. Benjamin has written the sixth edition of his introduction to historical study for undergraduates. It is a good step-by-step guide for the student who has no history background, or for those who might have already taken one or two classes. Although the book is meant to be used by a