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*The Wrecking of La Salle's Ship Aimable and the Trial of  
Claude Aignon (review)*

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the Spanish King: 1643," "The Spanish Inquisition Interrogates the Lady in Blue: 1650," and "Fruits of a Mystic's Labor: 1650." At the end of the book are seven appendices treating various historical aspects of the study of María of Agreda and her apparitions in Texas and New Mexico and their legacy.

Beyond any doubt, this book by Dr. Fedewa is an outstanding contribution to the researching of the Catholic heritage of the American Southwest, especially that of Texas and New Mexico. This work is one that should bring the author many accolades.

*Catholic Southwest: A Journal of History and Culture*

PATRICK FOLEY,  
EDITOR EMERITUS

*The Wrecking of La Salle's Ship Aimable and the Trial of Claude Aignon.* By Robert S. Weddle, translations by François Lagarde. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009. Pp. 148. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 9780292719408, \$50.00 cloth.)

With this short book, Robert Weddle demonstrates why historians must do their own primary source research. Ever since Francis Parkman's publication of *La Salle and the Discovery of the Great West* in 1879, most historians of Spanish Texas have accepted Robert Cavalier, sieur de La Salle's version of the events surrounding the sinking of his cargo ship while it attempted to enter what is now Matagorda Bay in 1685. For *The Wrecking of La Salle's Ship Aimable and the Trial of Claude Aignon*, Weddle went to the French court records of the various proceedings and other official documents and found that the story was more complicated than it first appeared. While the full story may never be known, Weddle shows that La Salle's blaming of Claude Aignon for the wreck may have been based more on personal hostility than actual fact.

In part one, Weddle traces the history of the *Aimable* from before it was leased by La Salle in France to its loss in Texas. He also tells of Captain Claude Aignon and his abilities at sea. From the time La Salle leased the ship and hired its crew, there was trouble. Not only was the *Aimable* carrying cannons and supplies, it was also carrying twenty-two crew members and dozens of passengers. The journey to the New World saw many difficulties. La Salle's four ships, *The Aimable*, the *Saint François*, the *Belle*, and the *Joly*, sailed through storms, and crew members defected at the first port, the ships got separated, and La Salle missed the Mississippi River. The landing was a disaster.

The ships had to sail through a narrow pass to get into Matagorda Bay. The *Belle* crossed without incident and the crew sounded the pass and the bay to ascertain whether the *Aimable* would be able to do the same. Much of the heaviest part of *Aimable's* cargo was offloaded but the ship was still too low in the water to cross safely. La Salle ordered the ship into the bay, then went ashore himself to greet Indians who lived nearby. The *Aimable* ran aground on a sandbar. More of its cargo was offloaded but the ship did not float free. La Salle's report blamed Captain Aignon and the other seamen for the loss. The *Joly* returned to France with the Captain and reports from eyewitnesses. Aignon was then turned over to French authorities for trial.

The majority of the book concerns the trial itself and the evidence presented. Weddle does a good job of unraveling the intricate proceedings, the overlapping accusations, and the eventual judgments. These still-extant records are translated here, including La Salle's official reports, the charges themselves and Aigron's rebuttal, the transcription of the actual hearing, and the written arguments of complainants and defendants. Aigron apparently won his case. At the end of the work, Weddle recounts the search to find the *Aimable* at the bottom of Matagorda Bay. While this search was unsuccessful, he hopes that new technology will be more effective in future searches.

Weddle successfully overturns the traditional interpretation of this event, which had been based solely on La Salle's official report. He reveals the complicated interpersonal relations that resulted in conflicting testimony and concludes that Aigron should not be blamed for the loss of the *Aimable*.

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*The Mexican Wars for Independence.* By Timothy J. Henderson. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009. Pp. 270. Illustrations, map, notes, further readings, index. ISBN 9780809095094, \$27.50 cloth.)

September 16, 2010, marks the bicentennial of Miguel Hidalgo's *grito* against bad government. As Timothy Henderson's survey correctly points out, it was a premature and improvised call for revolt that did not, in fact, aspire to independence from the Spanish crown but only autonomy within the family of Catholic principalities that made up the quickly disintegrating empire. Hidalgo's failures, particularly his lack of control over the Indian and mixed-race masses, led to atrocities that drove most creoles—the very people Hidalgo and his fellow conspirators wanted to lead the new Mexico—into the arms of the royalists. Defeated and decapitated, the revolution's leadership devolved into the hands of José María Morelos, like Hidalgo a parish priest with a grudge against Mexico's Spanish overlords. It was during the time that Morelos led the revolt that formal independence was declared, but it proved to be a false start as lack of good strategy and infighting among the insurgents eventually led to the capture and execution of this second but, for Henderson, greater hero of Mexico's independence struggles. After Morelos, the royalists gained the upper hand, and the local revolts that continued under the leadership of men such as Vicente Guerrero constitute those other wars of the title. In the end it was one of the royalists' most competent, if ruthless, commanders, Agustín Iturbide, who finessed a deal with the insurgents, talked a newly arrived viceroy into signing a treaty, and proclaimed the three guarantees of the Catholic religion, independence, and monarchical government. As Henderson points out, the plan got the job done but could not last given Mexico's deep social divisions.

In *The Mexican Wars of Independence* the author prosecutes three major arguments. First, the three hundred years of Spanish colonial rule created an intentionally unequal society in which the only unifying institutions were the king and the Church. Racial and social hierarchies and backward economic practices fostered