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Changing Narratives of Martyrdom in the Works of Huguenot Printers During the Wars of Religion.

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“Changing Narratives of Martyrdom
in the Works of Huguenot Printers During the Wars of Religion.”

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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DEDICATION

To my mother, Jane; my father, Richard; my wife, Carine; and my sons, James and Miles. All of you have made sacrifices and endured hardships to make this dissertation a reality – if only by putting up with me.
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ABSTRACT

The aim of my project is to show how the lives, strategies and attitudes of Huguenot printers of the late sixteenth century both reflected and influenced the self-image of Protestant Europeans. Historians of the book such as Roger Chartier and Adrian Johns have argued that the process of printing includes several components which are easily overlooked by historians interested in exploring thoughts and attitudes. My project attempts to put these insights to practical use by demonstrating how printers were as integral to the process of reading as were readers and writers. I investigate the lives, social networks, and business strategies of a pair of successful Huguenot printers of Geneva, Jean Crespin and Eustache Vignon. My investigation shows how they relied on cooperative, international networks to practice their business and that this fostered a practical, cosmopolitan attitude among them. I then examine Jean Crespin’s most famous work, the Livre des Martyrs, showing how it supplied the needs of his readers for a sense of meaning and community. I show how this work changed over time in response to changing needs and circumstances, as seen most dramatically in the version which Eustache Vignon produced after his partner’s death. Finally, I examine how Vignon – along with other Protestant printers of his time – began to produce books about the New World. I argue that these New World Works, reflecting the printers’ cosmopolitan perspective, promoted a more ecumenical vision of Christianity and a universal ethic based on kindness and justice.
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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the lives and works of the Huguenot printers who fled the violence of late sixteenth-century France to build new lives and careers in the friendlier neighborhoods of francophone Calvinist Geneva. I argue that these printers’ pragmatic and cosmopolitan perspective ran as a counter-current to the confessionalization of sixteenth-century Europe, providing a model for tolerance which would become increasingly influential in later centuries. I investigate how they built social and professional networks across Europe, establishing bonds that transcended nation, language and confession. I demonstrate how their work both reflected and influenced the early modern Protestant self-image, and how that self-image changed over the turbulent decades between 1550 and 1590. I argue that the needs of these printers influenced the manner in which they portrayed the New World, in ways that have had very long-lasting influence. They promoted an ethical view that emphasized kindness and fairness as the yardsticks of human behavior, rather than doctrinal correctness.

In particular, this study focuses on the print firm that was established in Geneva by the Arregois printer Jean Crespin in 1548. Crespin produced a number of important works, including John Calvin’s translation of the Bible into French and Theodore Beza’s influential Geneva
Psalter, but he is best known for his Protestant martyrology, the *Livre des Martyrs*. After Crespin’s death in 1572, his protégé and son-in-law, Eustache Vignon, took over the firm. Although Vignon continued aspects of his father-in-law’s printing agenda, including producing another edition of the *Livre des Martyrs* in 1582, he focused more on other works, such as the New World narrative of the Italian merchant Girolamo Benzoni and the story of the Spanish massacre of the French settlers of Fort Caroline in Florida. This study examines these publications as well as the personal records left by both men – especially Vignon’s memoir, which has been little noticed and has never been translated from the original Middle French.

By examining the works that Crespin’s firm published under his tenure and then under that of his successor, this dissertation explores how changes in the French Wars of Religion affected trends in publication. Most specifically, we see the changing mentalities between Crespin and Vignon is in how the two men approached and understood the power of narratives of martyrdom. Jean Crespin’s *Livre des Martyrs* adopted an optimistic approach. The martyr stories had happy endings. The heroes suffered and died, but they never lost their faith, and they were rewarded with eternal life. The narrative weight of these stories resided in the moments of death, when Crespin’s heroes showed their true faith and strength of character. However, Crespin’s model of martyrdom did not fit perfectly all of his subjects. For instance, the Protestants of the sixteenth century identified strongly with the victims of the infamous 1545 massacre of Waldensian villagers in the towns of Mérindol and Cabrières. This massacre was so sudden and indiscriminate that Crespin could not document the individual deaths in the kind of detail that his martyr tales typically did. He did not have even the names of the majority of victims, much less testimony as to each one’s fidelity to his or her faith. To some extent Crespin was able to mask these problems with careful selection and editing, but a certain inconsistency remained. This
problem with Crespin’s narrative approach became a crisis in 1572, the year of the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre. Tens of thousands of Huguenots died because of their faith, but it was impossible to document whether they had died as martyrs, recanted, or proven themselves heretics. Crespin himself died in the same year, and was unable to make any attempt to reconcile this problem. It took ten years for his successor, Eustache Vignon, to publish a new edition of the *Livre des Martyrs* that included an account of the massacre. The new edition preserved much of Crespin’s work, but its changes and additions altered its tone. Vignon’s additions changed the tone of the work: rather than a story of redemption through suffering, they told a story of senseless brutality. The emphasis shifted subtly from the virtue of the victim to the cruelty of the oppressor.

This shift was even more apparent in the works about the New World that Vignon published. Many of these tales, taken from Catholic writers such as Girolamo Benzoni and Bartolomé de las Casas, concerned Spanish cruelty towards Native Americans. The victims could not be martyrs in Crespin’s sense, because they were not even Christian. These texts praised the virtue and innocence of the natives, but mainly in order to make the cruelty of their oppressors stand out that much more starkly. The narrative focus was on condemning the actions of the Christian conquerors. As a further complication in this new understanding of martyrdom and oppression, these tales identified the cruel conquerors less as Catholics than as Spaniards. This new model of martyrdom was as much about nationalist politics as about confessional divisions. Vignon and his colleagues aimed these works at a readership that extended beyond their fellow Huguenots to include moderate French Catholics, appealing to a population wearied by the Wars of Religion and hoping to persuade them that their French nationality was a more important factor than their Catholic faith.
Jean Crespin is today best known as the author of the *Livre des Martyrs*, but the profession that he practiced and the identity he inhabited was that of a printer. In Crespin’s own time the idea of authorship was still being formed. The theologians and humanists who became famous for their own writings in the sixteenth century were doing something quite different from what Crespin did. They gained fame by writing largely prescriptive works of philosophy and theology based on deep study of the Bible and the Classics. By contrast, Crespin’s work – although it qualifies as authorship by modern standards – was less theological than journalistic. The bulk of the *Livre des Martyrs* was written by other people – by the martyrs themselves, by their correspondents, and by witnesses. Crespin edited these accounts, provided context for the reader, and printed them in a single volume. He then produced new editions of his work as he gathered new stories and as his perspective changed over time. All of these actions fell under his professional purview as a printer.

The historiography of the production of knowledge in the early modern era has only recently begun to recognize the importance of the printer in the production of knowledge and the importance of the printing press in spreading such knowledge. Printers, in their efforts to establish the legitimacy of the printed book as a source of knowledge, often acted to erase the extent of their own involvement in the creation of the content of books. Instead, they promoted the idea that every book was created by a single author, a distinguished scholar. Yet printers made many choices that affected the final product, choices about the selection, editing, presentation and distribution of a work. These choices were, in turn, affected by printers’ ideas of what would have appealed to their audiences.

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In the past few years, intellectual and cultural historians have studied the meaning of the printed texts for early modern European people and have argued that they were the product, not of isolated geniuses, but of social networks. Recent works have emphasized the roles of intellectuals, cultural and patronage brokers in the development of scientific knowledge and have recognized how the choices printers made affected the form and substance of this new knowledge. Some have discussed the printer as artisan and have addressed the material conditions of the print shop and the business of printing as they affected the form of the book and the practice of reading. However, such studies have yet to take into account new insights about the lives and strategies of artisans. Recent research has demonstrated the vitality of shared artisanal culture within a community as well as artisans’ development of networks of “horizontal kinship” intended to promote their profession. While showing the importance of print and printers’ impact on the form that knowledge took, this body of work has only begun the task of exploring the lives and strategies of artisans and why printers made the decisions that they did.

By treating printers as artisans who were forced into exile by the conviction of their beliefs, I provide a fuller picture both of artisanal life in the early modern age and of the production of knowledge in that period. I illustrate how they formed communities of their own construction by developing social and familial networks and establishing contacts with patrons and writers. I also show how these printers’ pragmatic and cosmopolitan perspective provided a model for tolerance which would become increasingly influential in later centuries. Printers were influenced by a book’s place in ongoing intellectual conversations; by the need to appease political and religious powers who had the authority to limit distribution; by their cultural and

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4 Mario Biagioli, Galileo, Courtier: The Practice of Science in the Culture of Absolutism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.)


material circumstances; and finally by the need to appeal to and gain the trust of the reader. The Huguenot printers of sixteenth-century Geneva claimed identities that were strikingly new. They practiced a profession that had not existed a century earlier and a religion that they were still in the process of forming, in a city that until their own time had little influence outside its immediate surroundings. I argue that these printers in the process of making sense of their new world also helped create a new understanding of the Reformed faith by laying the ground for a new idea of morality: a universal morality based on kindness and tolerance.

The Historiography of the Book

Early work in the historiography of the book demonstrated the decisiveness of the printing press in European history. In 1958 Lucien Febvre, a prominent member of the Annales school, and Henri-Jean Martin published the influential *L’Apparition du Livre*, in which they argued that the introduction of the printing press allowed for the dissemination of ideas at an unprecedented pace. Febvre and Martin showed how Protestantism, humanism, and classicism were deeply affected by the new ability to produce and communicate knowledge and demonstrated the impact of printing on the development of European languages. In particular, the two authors discussed the role of printed material in the spread of Protestantism and the danger it posed to the Catholic Church and Catholic monarchs who made unsuccessful attempts to control it.

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9 Martin’s later work, *The French Book: Religion, Absolutism, and Readership, 1585-1715* added depth to the discussion of the development of punctuation and paragraphing. Martin argues that the print revolution, state consolidation, and the advent of classicism resulted in the standardization of the French language – not only its dominance over regional dialects, not only the standardization of its spelling, but also the standardization of letters, paragraphing and punctuation. Martin argues that the choice of Roman letters for printing the French language arose out of these movements, with their urge to prove French the equal of classical languages. On the other hand, classicism may have delayed the adoption of paragraphing by the scholarly author. Martin argues that authors tended to write in unbroken streams of prose, in imitation of classical writers, until publishers of the classics began to break them up into numbered capitula. Only then did scholarly writers of French begin to break their work into sections which would eventually become paragraphs. Henri-Jean Martin, *The French Book*, esp. 77-96.
The work of Febvre and Martin did not receive much attention in the United States until 1976 when it was translated as *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800*. In the meantime, in the 1960s, the American historian Elizabeth Eisenstein independently began researching the history of printing. Following a series of articles on the topic which were published in the 1960s, she completed her seminal work *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* in 1979. In line with Febvre and Martin, Eisenstein showed how print organized information and argued that the arrival of print was a “revolution” that swiftly and permanently changed European society. However, while Febvre and Martin credited print with an important role in the Reformation, they also cautioned against “the ridiculous thesis that the reformation was the child of the printing press.” Eisenstein was less cautious, and argued that print was at once the precondition for and the precipitant of the Renaissance and the Reformation. She focused on the intellectual elite, a class that was already literate before the arrival of print but whose habits and practices changed dramatically as a result of it. Print, she argued, allowed humanists to fix details that might otherwise have seemed transitory or evanescent in a permanent, reproducible fashion. Humanists could read more widely and specialize more narrowly than ever before, hence providing a firm foundation for other scholars to build upon and freeing them from the necessity of starting every project from scratch.

During the following decades, the historiography of the book moved away from questions concerning the role of the printing press in fostering the emergence of the two great developments of the early modern world, namely the Renaissance and the Reformation. In particular Eisenstein, as the founding scholars of the history of the printing press, became the

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13 Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. 
target of criticism from scholars who strove to engage with, critique, modify, and nuance her findings. Intellectual historians Michael Clanchy and Anthony Grafton questioned Eisenstein’s view of a sudden and dramatic print revolution, arguing instead for a slower evolution that began in the Middle Ages. In a 1983 article Clanchy argued that European culture already had an unusually high degree of literacy in the late Middle Ages. Clanchy traced four types of medieval literacy: sacred, learned, bureaucratic, and vernacular, and argued that the printing press was developed because of a steadily rising demand for books. More recently, Clanchy’s interpretation of a less sudden impact of printing has been supported by Anthony Grafton, whose essay “The Humanist as Reader” argues that printers merely built on existing networks of book production and distribution. Grafton claims that the cartolai of the late Middle Ages were already mass-producing handwritten books well before Gutenberg and that both mass production and mass consumption of the book grew steadily throughout the fifteenth century, rather than exploding suddenly after 1450.

One of the most severe critics of Eisenstein’s work has been historian of science Adrian Johns, who, in his 1991 prize winning book, accused her of technological determinism in attributing change to the printing press itself rather than to the people who used it. Johns disputed Eisenstein’s claim that printed books gave scholars a more confident place in which to stand, by showing that readers felt a great deal of anxiety about trusting printed material. These anxieties gave rise to a number of techniques for reading and for trusting what was read. In many areas, such as England, scholars formed scientific communities which established standards of propriety that allowed them to trust one another. Johns also argued that the practice of crediting

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the book to a single person, “the author,” was invented in this period in response to these concerns. Authorship was to some extent a reassuring fiction that gave the reader confidence by assigning responsibility for the contents of a book to a single individual whose reputation was known and who could be held accountable for the book’s veracity. According to Johns, the author was a singular, respectable person who created a coherent work from his own mind, but authorship and the practice of printing and disseminating information were much more complex processes, involving many parties. In particular, Johns emphasized the human factors which affected the development as well as the nature of scientific knowledge, such as the relationships between scholars, their printers, their rivals, and their patrons.17

Already in the 1970s, socio-cultural historian Natalie Zemon Davis had departed from Einstein’s interpretation, and by looking at printing from the bottom up had concluded, as Johns and Grafton did later, that the role of print in the popular politics of sixteenth-century France was negligible, and its role in popular religion relatively small.18 Davis also highlighted a contrast between Catholic and Protestant attempts to control reading. Catholic authorities, she argued, had a stronger legal hand which they used to impose coercive power and absolute or partial prohibition of specific works, such as vernacular Bibles. Protestants, on the other hand, allowed the faithful to read the Bible but insisted that the inexperienced reader be guided by one trained in theologically correct interpretation of the text. Despite these differences, however, Davis pointed out that both responses to printed material revealed efforts to control the reader.19

Historians of print have long acknowledged the importance of the printer and have investigated both the physical conditions of the printer’s shop and the culture of printers. In the 1950s, Febvre and Martin devoted a chapter of The Coming of the Book, “The Little World of the

19 Davis, “Printing and the People,” 189-226.
Book,” to both the physical conditions of the printer’s shop and the culture of printers. They provided a basic account of the material, economic, and to some extent the social conditions under which printers worked, especially in France. They portrayed early modern printer’s shops as recognizably modern workplaces, shaped by the need to print quickly and efficiently and in which journeymen worked in repetitive specialized jobs at machines. But printers, even journeymen, were literate, and thus they were intellectuals at the same time they were manual laborers. They disseminated craft knowledge and much like the industrial laborers of later centuries, when disgruntled, they wrote manifestos and organized strikes. The association of printing with literacy and learning gave master printers a bourgeois status, and some even aspired to authorship.  

Martin’s later work built on this picture, refining or adding details. He emphasized the crowded nature of the print shop, the limited space, the frantic pace of production, and the uncertainties of shipping finished goods to the recipient. Naturally, these conditions affected the book. Print runs were small – a press might run a thousand or so copies of a single book in a day, and then print more print if there seemed to be demand. Printers proofread and edited the text during the printing process, so that different copies even of the same edition printed on the same day might be different. Martin also discussed the culture of book distributors, charting the development of printing in European cities and emphasizing the importance of book fairs in establishing booksellers’ networks of social and material exchange.

Natalie Zemon Davis followed up on Febvre and Martin’s discussion of labor unrest among journeyman printers in her essay “ Strikes and Salvation at Lyon.” In this survey of the intertwined labor and religious movements of Lyon around the 1560s, Davis identified several traits common to journeyman printers: loneliness, pride, hearty appetites, a certain independence

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of thought, a keen eye for their interests. She described a world in which printers’ journeymen took collective action to defend themselves against encroachment on their perceived rights by the masters.22

Most of all, however, as French historian Roger Chartier has shown, printers crafted books with an audience in mind. Their choices were designed to appeal to that imaginary reader and affected the book’s form and the reader’s experience.23 By focusing on the relationship between printed texts and their readers, he noticed a discrepancy between prescribed and real behavior, between the printer and the printed text he produced as well as between the printed text and its reception and use by readers. According to Chartier, books written for popular audiences were created with the intent of being read aloud and printers developed ways of to accommodate this practice by breaking up space with such innovations as punctuation, paragraphs, and chapters. Chartier’s work on authorship, written in response to Michel Foucault’s investigation of the topic, points to the artificiality of the concept of the author and the novelty of the concept of intellectual property. Chartier argues that the idea of the book as a way of connecting the reader with the author, as well as that of organizing books by author, was a novelty of the print era.24

Johns also discussed the importance of printers, even as he argued that they tried to erase themselves from the vision of the reader. Indeed, in Johns’s account, this very attempt to become invisible is one of the major ways that printers’ decisions affected the form of the book, the experience of reading, and the development of science. Printers chose to hide their contributions from the reader’s view in order to create the illusion that the book was a transparent means of

22 Natalie Zemon Davis, “Strikes and Salvation at Lyon,” in Society and Culture in Early Modern France (Stanford, 1975), 1-16. Elizabeth Eisenstein also pointed out the competitiveness of the printing industry, one of the factors that led to their high levels of output, claiming that printers “kept an anxious eye on their competitor’s output.” Perhaps as a result, printers often produced more books than they could sell immediately. This had the effect of flooding the market and bringing down prices, which contributed to the revolutionary availability of books in the Early Modern era. Eisenstein, The Printing Revolution, 46-9.
receiving knowledge from a single, authoritative author. Yet Johns made it quite clear that printers played a vital role in book production. They developed intimate partnerships with distributors and authors, in which together with distributors they promoted authors. They even allied with authors in their intrigues as they schemed against each other, tried to gain favor in court, and attempted to avoid Church censorship.25

The importance of the printer implies the importance of the book as a physical object. If the book were really a perfectly transparent medium, allowing the author to communicate with readers in an unmediated way, then printers would be of much less interest. But the physicality of the book mediates the reader’s experience. Roger Chartier focused attention on the book as object. He pointed out that historians had a tendency to look at books as assemblages of disembodied information, as though the physical book were a transparent vessel for the knowledge it contained. Instead, he argued, authors, printers, distributors, and readers made all sorts of choices that influenced how the book was experienced. The reader’s experience was organized and influence by a myriad of decisions made by the printer. These included book size (folio, quarto, octavo); indication of the speaker for each line in a play; abridgement of texts; illustration; the breaking of text into sections with headings; the breaking of sections into paragraphs; and the invention of chapter and verse for Scripture. All these decisions, generally made by the printer rather than the author, and generally taken for granted by the reader, changed the book and thus the reader’s experience.26

26 Chartier, The Order of Books, 1-24. Kevin Sharpe and Stephen Zwicker have also discussed the physical reality of the book in early modern England. They point out the importance of black ink, red ink, and white space. They discuss the importance of binding—early books were typically sold unbound, and it was up to the buyer to leave them unbound or to bind them. Most serious readers preferred to bind their books; works read unbound were generally pamphlets or other disposable texts for the common people. Noble families, on the other hand, might have whole libraries bound with their coat of arms on each volume, expressing ownership. Buyers continued the process of the creation of the book; they wrote in the margins, commentaries and symbols and drawings. Sometimes printers would include their own marginal notes, in an effort to control how the reader read the book. The cover, frontispiece, and title page, they argue, are important framing devices that promote the authority of the author. “Introduction: Discovering the Renaissance Reader,” in Kevin Sharpe and Stephen Zwicker, eds., Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England (Cambridge, 2003), 1-37.
Readers also played an important role for the meaning of printed texts and different readers read, interpreted and used the same texts in different ways. Michel de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life* has been influential on historians of the book such as Natalie Zemon Davis and Roger Chartier. De Certeau investigated consumption in popular culture arguing that that, while elites may impose their cultural forms on the common people, common people resist manipulation and instead make their own use of cultural forms, improvise new uses, and transform them. Following de Certeau, Davis and Chartier Davis argued that print enriched popular culture rather than weakening it, that “the people” were not passive recipients, but used print actively; they interpreted it, organized it, and imposed their own uses. They also owned and read texts not aimed at them as was the case of the miller Menocchio of Carlo Ginzburg’s *The Cheese and the Worms*, who read texts never intended for a reader like him and who interpreted them in ways that authors and publishers could never have anticipated.

The historiography of the book, and of the printed book in particular, has made significant progress over the past half-century in acknowledging the complexity of its subject. It has brought to light some of the assumptions that readers often make about books – a dichotomy between the content of the book, as pure thought derived from the mind of a singular author, and its form, as a transparent window through which that form is made manifest. Scholarship has questioned such assumptions and pointed out a number of ways in which other entities were involved in the early modern book production: the press, the printer, the merchants who supplied printers with paper and the other necessities of their trade, legal and Church authorities, and the

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28 Natalie Zemon Davis, “Printing and the People,” in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975): 189-226. Davis divides readers into elite and popular groups, and then subdivides the popular readers into rural and urban groups. Rural readers consumed books at the veillée, a winter evening gathering. Those who were literate read aloud to the rest as they mended tools and spun thread by candlelight. The reader often had to translate as he read, since most books were printed in French and most rural audiences spoke regional dialects. The exceptions were vernacular Bibles, which were translated into regional languages – but of course such readings were illicit. They were also probably more common in urban areas, where Davis argues that print had a greater cultural impact. There literacy was more common. Urban readers, she writes, probably read more books than wills and inventories indicate, because readers did not hoard books, but passed them on.
customers who bought, read and shared books. Relatively little attention has been paid, however, to the manner in which printers influenced one another, through professional associations and social networks. Furthermore, these breakthroughs, important as they are, have yet to be widely applied to specific printers, works, and historical situations. Few new historical works have been produced which put these insights into practice. 29 This dissertation is one step towards doing so.

By focusing on specific printers and works – Geneva in the late sixteenth century, and more particularly the Crespin/Vignon print firm – this dissertation illuminates key facets of the economic, social, culture and intellectual life of Europe during the Wars of Religion. Huguenot printers reflected the Protestantism of their time, but in turn their own attitudes and conditions changed the way that Protestants saw themselves.

Chapter One offers an overview of the religious and cultural context where Huguenot printers practiced their trade. In Chapter Two I demonstrate how the two main protagonists, Jean Crispin and Eustache Vignon rebuilt their lives once they settled in Geneva. It shows the networking strategies they adapted, which were typical of other artisans and printers of the period. One of my most valuable sources is Eustache Vignon’s little-known memoir, which has rarely been cited. The networks which these printers formed were both personal involving friends and family, and professional including colleagues, collaborators, and suppliers. These networks tended to be international in character. Crespin, Vignon and their Geneva colleagues had friends in France, the Netherlands, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Helvetic Confederation, and even further afield. These strategies led printers to a pragmatic, cosmopolitan attitude which

ran counter to the more vehement aspects of confessionalization. Analyses Jean Crespin’s most famous work, the *Livre des Martyrs* is the main focus of Chapter Three. The *Livre* became the seminal Protestant martyrology, which profoundly influenced successive martyrologies, including John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*. Crespin worked on the *Livre des Martyrs* for sixteen years, continually publishing new updates. The Protestant martyr stories of Crespin served multiple functions for readers: they were role models for the faithful; they created a sense of community in which the Protestant reader felt himself to be a vital part of the regenerated Church; and they showed an eschatological vision of a universe in which God’s divine plan made sense of the suffering of the faithful. The idea of martyrdom in their own time gave sixteenth-century Protestants a feeling of continuity with the early Church of the first and second centuries, making their minority status a proof of their holiness instead of suggesting heresy.

In Chapter Four I examine how Eustache Vignon continued the work of the martyrology after Crespin’s death. In the wake of the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre of 1572, and the increasing violence of the French Wars of Religion, the model of martyrdom strained to encompass the suffering of innocent Protestants. Unlike Crespin’s martyrs, the victims of these mass atrocities often lacked the opportunity to clearly articulate their faith as they suffered. Thus the new chapters, which Vignon included in the new editions, dwelt less on the virtue of the victims than on the cruelty of their assailants. The Huguenots, as they began to be called after 1560, no longer felt certain that the world was ending, nor that their victory was assured. The indiscriminate mass murders of tens of thousands, including children and pregnant women, seemed less like a Divine plan and more like an exercise of human cruelty. Finally, Chapter Five looks at Protestant printers and the works that they published about the New World. These works had broad commercial appeal, due to widespread European interest in newly discovered land.
They also offered avenues for Protestant propaganda. Vignon and his colleagues continued the trend of accusing the perpetrators of cruelty rather than praising the victims, who were often not Christians at all. These printers used tales of Spanish atrocities in America not only to reinforce the determination of their coreligionists, but also to appeal to moderate Catholics, especially in France. I argue that in the later part of the sixteenth century, Protestant printers, informed by their pragmatic and cosmopolitan outlook, attempted to promote a message of tolerance to Christians, Catholic as well as Protestant, who were sick of the violence and cruelty of religious conflict.
CHAPTER ONE

The Changing World of Sixteenth-Century Europe

In the course of the sixteenth century, the manner in which Europeans thought of themselves changed. Notable among the developments of the sixteenth century were new religious identities. Older forms of identity remained: universal Christianity, identification with one’s city or region, allegiance to one’s lord, ethnic and linguistic affinities. However, the political, social and religious division of Europe that arose in this time weakened, shuffled, and mutated these identities. Christians who took part in the expanded intellectual culture found their words scrutinized as never before, and differences of opinion which had always existed became impossible to ignore.

Medieval Christians, however, viewed themselves as part of a “transnational” greater community. Although Christendom most emphatically excluded Jews and Muslims, it had little trouble including Africans and Asians. Medieval Christian identity had little ethnic component; it was based on a perceived cultural and spiritual continuity and it elided any differences between themselves as Roman Catholics and the eastern Orthodox churches, for example. It could also stretch easily to include the Ethiopian church and the mythical kingdom of Prester John. Like all identities, perhaps, the medieval notion of Christian unity was a shared illusion. However, the events of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries made that illusion increasingly difficult to sustain. The world as Europeans of the sixteenth century saw it had become too large
to be encompassed by a single Christendom. The Reformation was not so much the splintering of a hitherto united Church as a growing acknowledgment that deep divisions already existed. In the Christian imagination, the Apostolic Church had been united, with a single mind and heart, but sixteenth-century Christians could no longer pretend that this was true in their own day. Protestantism, then, was possible only because the common Catholic identity had already failed. Europeans began to define themselves as Catholic or “Lutheran.” Eventually, the term “Lutheran” became inadequate to describe the variety of Protestant affiliations, and French Protestants defined themselves as “Reformed,” and more specifically yet, as “Huguenots.”

The sixteenth century was also a new era of mass communications, in which particular printers promoted the new unities and new divisions. Printers, practitioners of a brand-new profession, had their own professional identity and perspective. They profited from the religious debates of the period, as a growing amount of vehement rhetoric demanded to be printed. Yet by the nature of their profession, printers tended to favor moderation and peaceful coexistence. Print allowed people to communicate with greater speed and volume over greater distances than ever before. As businessmen, printers had to maintain good working relationships with people of many nations, languages, and opinions. They also needed their products to appeal to the broadest possible readership. Their perspective was urban, polyglot, tolerant, pragmatic – in a word, cosmopolitan.

Those Protestant printers who found themselves living as exiles in Geneva were in an especially unusual situation. They often portrayed themselves as part of a unified Reformed (or

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“Calvinist”) Church, yet they also grouped themselves by their nations of origin. However, these national groupings were not rivalries. Rather, they represented different areas of responsibility – the members of each nation assuming the charge of purifying that nation. Although independent, they thought of themselves as working together in the same cause. The Huguenot printers who were exiled to Geneva shared an identity that was religious, national, and professional in nature. As Calvinists and French and exiles and printers, they occupied a unique position. All these elements came together to create a distinct group of people who would have an outsized effect on their world.32

The Collapse of the Middle Ground: Intellectuals Forced to Choose Sides

For the first few decades of the sixteenth century, reform-minded scholars were able to claim a middle ground from which they argued for major reforms within the Roman Catholic Church while remaining within it. But this moderate space became increasingly untenable as the Roman Catholic church lost its monopoly over the institutions of Christianity in the west. By the 1530s, even the immensely respected and widely influential Desiderius Erasmus was no longer able to maintain a “Via Media” between rival Christian groups.

Erasmus of Rotterdam, born in 1466, was widely respected among Christian Humanists for his learning and wit. In the early sixteenth century, Erasmus became famous as a satirist who employed his learning and wit to levy harsh criticisms of Church practice without suffering Papal condemnation. His work In Praise of Folly condemned churchmen – from the Pope down to the lowest village priest – for misusing Christ’s words to justify their greed for wealth, power, and

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luxury. According to Erasmus, the result of this behavior was poverty, ignorance and superstition among the common people. Erasmus wrote in Latin, printed the work on a small scale, and intended it to be read only by his fellow humanists. He was reportedly dismayed when the book was published at a much larger scale and translated into vernacular languages. He claimed that he had never intended to subject the Church to mass ridicule, especially not by the common people. Yet such was the effect. By his death in 1536, Erasmus was the subject of harsh criticism from Protestants and Catholics alike for his refusal to choose one side or the other. Many reformers who shared his ideals had separated from the Catholic Church. They now accused him of hypocrisy for failing to do the same. Meanwhile, the vehement supporters of Catholic orthodoxy demanded an end to the sort of intellectual freedom which had been an essential part of his life’s work.

During the early sixteenth century, reform-minded French intellectuals adopted Erasmus as their role model. They wished, like him, to argue for reform from within the Church. Guillaume Briçonnet began attracting reform-minded Humanists after his installation as Bishop of Meaux in 1516. His group, which became known as the “Circle of Meaux,” became famous for advocating reform. Its members included Guillaume Farel, who would become Calvin’s mentor, Jacques Lefèvre, known for his translation of the Bible into French, and Gérard Roussel, who would become a close spiritual advisor to Marguerite de Navarre. Although Briçonnet condemned Luther, some members of his circle (such as Farel) were outspoken in their Lutheranism. Briçonnet was summoned by the Parlement of Paris to answer charges of Lutheranism. He was vindicated, but the damage to his reputation hampered his reform efforts

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and the Circle of Meaux disbanded around 1525. The jurist Charles de Moulin and his circle, which included Jean Crespin, were for some time able to maintain their efforts to reform the church without raising excessive suspicion, even after the Affair of the Placards in 1534. They could condemn the anti-transubstantiation message of the Placards while continuing their arguments for refocusing the Church on the salvation of souls and aid to the poor, rather than the accumulation of wealth and power. Although he had been somewhat unnerved by the Affair of the Placards, the French King Francis I remained receptive to the message of moderate reform and respectful of those who promulgated it, protecting them from the powerful zealots in the Parlement of Paris.  

This protection only lasted as long as reforming voices refrained from criticizing the Sacraments or the king himself. The King ordered that those responsible for the Placards be hunted down and burnt as heretics. Reformers may have been shocked by the 1545 massacre of Waldensians in Méridol, which took place with royal sanction, but those living in France did not dare to say so openly. At least one book was published condemning this murder of hundreds or thousands of Waldensian peasants in Provence – a mass murder which King Francis I permitted and even rewarded. However, this book - entitled *Histoire memorable de la Persecution du peuple de Méridol et Cabrières* - was published without mention of the name or location of any author or publisher.
On the death of Francis in 1547, however, this protection lapsed. Francis’s successor, Henry II, was less tolerant than his father. Siding more firmly with the Church hierarchy and the Parlement of Paris, he demanded orthodoxy and curbed criticism of the Church. No longer was it possible to claim the identity of an educated humanist who remained within the Church but thought that Luther had some good ideas. Now intellectuals and printers of Paris were forced to choose: were they loyal Catholics, or were they Lutherans?\(^\text{37}\) As a result, Henry’s reign saw an increase in emigration from France among educated critics of the Church, including several printers like Jean Crespin (1548), Francis Hotman (1548), and Robert Estienne (1550).

**The Growth of the French Reformed Church and the Formation of Huguenot Identity**

As the unexpectedly broad popularity of Erasmus’s satire demonstrated, scholars were not the only ones who saw a need for reform within the Church. The French Reformed Church grew through the efforts not only of preachers, but of nobles, printers, and common citizens. Especially in urban areas, there were increasingly large numbers of workers (especially artisans) who were willing to meet in secret to discuss “Lutheran” ideas and worship in a “reformed” way which they believed matched more closely that of the early Church. This movement seems to have been substantial in the 1520s. However, as persecution increased and potential leaders were killed or driven out of France, this popular movement seems to have declined. Heiko Oberman has argued that the popular energy empowering this “urban reformation” was exhausted by the 1530s, so that the isolated congregations within each city were forced to turn to exiled...
Francophone theologians for leadership, particularly Calvin in Geneva, Viret in Lausanne, and Farel in Neuchâtel.\(^{38}\)

From 1530 to 1550, these churches continued to exist on the local level, with limited communication with each other and limited guidance from Calvin, Viret and Farel. They thought of themselves as “reformed” or “evangelical” Christian churches, following the example of the primitive Church and meeting in secret to avoid persecution. Their enemies called them “Lutherans,” “heretics,” or even “demon-worshippers.”\(^{39}\) They may have hoped to light a fire which would spread throughout France, but instead their movement seems to have been stagnant or even declining by mid-century.\(^{40}\)

Sometime around 1550, however, the movement began to gain strength again, as Calvin and his organization took a more direct hand in its growth. It was around this time that John Calvin gave up on the prospect of French Royal support and began instead to focus his energies on supporting, expanding, and organizing the existing French Reformed churches. Calvin was in a position to supply a body of courageous, determined and well-educated ministers to France. His powers to do so increased substantially after 1555, the year in which he overcame his political opponents in Geneva and established firm control of the city.\(^{41}\) The years between 1555 and the beginning of the French Wars of Religion in 1562 saw explosive growth in the French Reformed Church.\(^{42}\)

This growth was not the work of John Calvin alone, nor even of Calvin’s formidable Company of Ministers. It owed much to the support of the nobility, such as the powerful

\(^{38}\) Oberman, John Calvin and the Reformation of the Refugees. See also Wanegffelen, Ni Rome ni Genève; Diefendorf, Beneath the Cross; Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints.

\(^{39}\) Gray, “The Origin of the Word Huguenot.”


\(^{42}\) Robert Kingdon, Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France.
Bourbons, Admiral Coligny, and Marguerite of Navarre. These nobles were able and increasingly willing to protect some French Reformed worshippers – in part out of their own religious convictions, and in part due to their conflict with other powerful nobles such as the harshly anti-Reform Guise family. This growth also owed a great deal to the work of Francophone printers. Conrad Badius and Jean Crespin immigrated to Geneva in 1548, Robert Estienne in 1550, Eustache Vignon in 1555. They became highly successful propagandists, and their works contributed greatly to the growth of the French Reformed church. Among French Protestants, Jean Crespin’s martyrology was among the very most commonly owned books. After the Bible, the only work which comes close to matching its popularity is Calvin’s Institutes.

These early communities of French reformed were often called “Lutherans” by their critics, a generic term at the time for what would later be called “Protestants.” The term “Huguenot,” although it has become the most popular name for the followers of the French reformed faith, is of relatively late origin and is only dubiously attested before 1560. Contemporaries such as Etienne Pasquier and Castelneau attribute the origin of the term to the Tumult of Amboise in that year. Other contemporary men of letters noted that the term seems to have arisen and spread very rapidly in the decade of the 1560s. These include Pierre de la Place, Reguier de la Plancha, Vantadour, the cardinal of Lorraine, and Chancellor Michel d’Hopital. Two years before the official beginning of the French Wars of Religion, the Tumult of Amboise was an attempt at a coup d’état by French Protestants, sponsored by the Bourbons and by

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43 Jonathan Reid, King’s sister--queen of dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492-1549) and her evangelical network (Leiden: Brill, 2009.)
44 Gregory, Salvation at Stake, 142-90.
Calvin’s Ministers. Contemporary sources indicate that the word *Huguenot* was applied to the conspirators - whether by themselves or by their opponents is unclear.\(^{45}\)

Some scholars argue for a much earlier origin of the word; Francis Higman, for example, points to Jean Gacy’s 1536 anti-Geneva tract *La Deploration de la Cité de Genesve sur la faict des hereticques qui l’ont Tiranniquement opprimee*, which uses the term *anguenots* to describe the separatists who argued (successfully) that Geneva should declare itself an independent “Lutheran” republic under the spiritual guidance of Froment and Viret (Calvin was not yet so important a figure as to attract Gacy’s personal condemnation).\(^{46}\)

However, the term *Huguenot* is rarely if ever used to describe Francophone Protestants before 1560, when it suddenly became widespread. Janet Gray argues that the term originated in the city of Tours, whose nights were (according to Touraine legends) haunted by a boogeyman named Hugon or Huguet. Protestants, who met in secret at night, were thus derided as a secret cult of Hugon, making them *Huguenots*. Although this term spread rapidly after 1560, it was used more or less interchangeably with *Lutherien* for the next two decades. Although Gray’s theory is not universally accepted, it is bolstered by one of the earliest appearances (perhaps the earliest) of the word *huguenot* in print: the 1566 *Apologie pour Hérodote*, published by the prominent Geneva printer Henri Estienne, an important member of the Crespin/Vignon print network.\(^{47}\) Thus, by the time the French Wars of Religion reached their height, this term – which was used for Francophone Protestants – was firmly established.

\(^{45}\) Gray, “The Origin of the Word Huguenot.”

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Geneva: City of Refugees, Center of the International Reformed Movement

The troubles of the times meant that many would-be reformers were forced to move. They moved to many places, but for Francophone refugees, the city of Geneva was a uniquely attractive destination. Nevertheless, the reformers remained in contact with one another and worked to create a movement which would transcend national borders.

Geneva was an attractive destination for several reasons: it was close by; it was urban and prosperous; it was politically independent; but, most of all, it was the home of John Calvin. Calvin may well have planned to live out his life as a Parisian, but in 1533, the University’s condemnation of his mentor Nicolas Cop forced him to leave the city, and the royal outrage occasioned by the Affair of the Placards in 1534 forced him to leave France entirely. After a brief and unhappy stay in Geneva, Calvin moved in 1538 to Strasbourg. Within a few months of his arrival he was enrolled as a citizen of Strasbourg. Within two years he had married a local widow, Idelette de Bure. It was in Strasbourg that Calvin wrote the first editions of the work which would become famous as *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* and the *Geneva Psalter*. By all accounts he intended to remain in Strasbourg, and it took a great deal of persuasion for him to return to Geneva. Once there, however, he energetically set about establishing a civic power base and building Geneva up as a Protestant rival to Rome. Nevertheless, he retained his Strasbourg citizenship and maintained a network of connections in that city.48

The successful members of the urban elite adapted well to new environments and used them to expand their social and business networks. The Huguenot printers Conrad Badius and Robert Estienne, whom I will discuss in the following chapter, for example, had deep roots in Paris, but when religious persecution obliged them to move to Geneva (in 1548 and 1550

respectively), they quickly established themselves as prominent citizens of their new city and numbered among the first rank of Geneva’s printers.\textsuperscript{49} They supported Geneva in its efforts to govern itself in the face of threats from Savoy and Spain. Yet, despite the vehemence of Parisian Catholicism, they managed to maintain their networks in Paris. Jean Crespin and Eustache Vignon, the main protagonist of my study, both came from families well established in Arras, but were forced by persecution to move to Geneva. They became citizens of Geneva and important fixtures within the city, but they retained roots elsewhere - particularly Paris for Crespin, and Antwerp for Vignon.\textsuperscript{50}

The Protestant refugees who had been arriving in Geneva since 1523 played an important role in the city’s 1536 declaration of independence from its rulers, the Catholic dukes of Savoy: Geneva declared itself not only an independent city, but a Lutheran republic. This declaration of independence did not remove the city from the politics of its day. Geneva’s declaration made dangerous enemies out of the Dukes of Savoy, the Papacy, and the Kings of Spain. It allowed for alliances with the cities of Switzerland, particularly Bern and Zurich. These cities were nearby, militarized, and fiercely independent, making them useful allies against Savoy, even if their power was dwarfed by that of Spain. Jeanne d’Albret, queen of Navarre, and William the Silent, leader of the Dutch Revolt, were natural allies, but neither was prepared to openly resist Spain until 1568. Within France, powerful noble allies such as the Bourbons and the Colignys were sympathetic to Geneva, but they often disagreed over specifics. Only in 1560 were they willing to act against the French Crown, and only with considerable prodding from Geneva (in the persons of François Hotman and Theodore Beza). To the elite of Geneva, relations with powerful

\textsuperscript{49} Renouard, \textit{Imprimeurs et Libraires Parisiens}; Armstrong, \textit{Robert Estienne, Royal Printer}.

nobles were matters of great political and military significance, but these relations were alliances. Geneva remained an independent republic.\textsuperscript{51}

The leaders of the Protestant movement shared a vision of a regenerated universal Church, yet they retained affinities that corresponded with their backgrounds and networks. Huldrich Zwingli dreamed of purifying all of Christendom, but he died for a more limited cause – the military defense of his city of Zurich. Martin Luther wrote in language that any German could understand - an extraordinary feat, considering the variation in German dialects - but he showed markedly less interest in reaching ordinary people who read neither German nor Latin. John Calvin, “minister to the refugees,” had a broader view of his mission.\textsuperscript{52} Calvin’s organization sent missionaries to Germany, the Netherlands, England, Scotland, northern Italy, and even Brazil. Still, Calvin’s greatest effort was spent on his countrymen in France. Yet the Calvinist church faltered in France, while prospering in areas where Calvin was less personally concerned - particularly Scotland and the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{53} As Christ Himself remarked, “No prophet is accepted in his own country.”\textsuperscript{54}

The Calvinist Reformed Church, as it developed, became an entity that crossed political, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries - became, in other words, a transnational entity. Of course, the Catholic Church has already been such an entity, but with important differences. All Catholics were supposed to know and profess their faith, participate in the sacraments, and pray for the souls of all the departed. Yet the Catholic clergy often discouraged their flocks from political


\textsuperscript{52} Oberman, John Calvin and the Reformation of the Refugees.

\textsuperscript{53} Kingdon, Geneva and the Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement; Pettegree, The Reformation World.

\textsuperscript{54} Luke 4:24 (King James Version).
organization. Reformed Christians, on the other hand, proudly identified themselves as “Evangelicals,” and encouraged every believer to spread the faith and change the world.55

Protestant Printers: Their Cosmopolitan Perspective

A theologically and politically unified Protestantism, however, proved impossible. Reform-minded Christians found themselves forced to choose, not only between Catholicism and Protestantism, but between different varieties of Protestantism. Luther and Zwingli’s failure to produce a united confession at the 1529 Colloquy of Marburg left a breach among Protestants which would never be repaired. Zwingli’s death at the Battle of Kappel two years later may have given Luther some hope of a different outcome, but Zwingli’s successor, Heinrich Bullinger, maintained the distinctiveness of Reformed theology. Bullinger was able to reconcile his views with Calvin’s in 1549, ensuring the unity of a Reformed Church which would spread throughout Europe. However, efforts to reconcile with the Catholic, Lutheran, and Anglican churches never succeeded. The Catholic rioters of 1572 rejected any ecumenical claim on a shared Christendom from the Huguenots they massacred, just as John Calvin and his allies ignored it from Michael Servetus when he was burned at the stake in 1553.56

In the realms of commerce and imagination - dominated by publishers, printers, and booksellers – the possibilities were broader. The Calvinist Jean Crespin, the Lutheran Ludwig Rabus, and the Anglican John Foxe succeeded where Luther and Zwingli had failed. As printers,


56 When Martin Luther and Huldreich Zwingli met at Marburg in 1529, their meeting represented the fledgling Protestant movement’s last, beat hope at unity. Yet it was a remote hope. Zwingli seems to have held out some hope for the meeting, but Luther reportedly had very little. In hindsight, it seems unlikely that men who had stuck to their beliefs at the risk of their lives and souls, in the face of all the powers of Europe, would bend to compromise with one another. Yet the renewal of a single, reunited Christian Church was the devout hope of all Evangelicals. The sixteenth century would see repeated attempts at unification, all of them failed. Protestant theologians were too devoted to their beliefs to compromise on them. There were even attempts at political unification, as when the Dutch asked Elizabeth I of England to be their Queen in the 1580s. Elizabeth refused, perhaps in part influenced by the memory of the disastrous result of her assistance to the Huguenots of Le Havre in 1562-3. See Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints; Benedict, Christ's churches purely reformed; Scott Manetsch, Theodore Beza and the quest for peace in France, 1572-1598 (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Pettegree, The Reformation World.
in their publications, they produced a united vision of the Protestant martyr that transcended political, temporal and sectarian boundaries. They added members of all three confessions, and even a few Anabaptists, to the list of Hussites, Lollards, Albigensians and Waldensians to take part in a tradition of martyrdom that stretched back to the first century. By fitting (perhaps even forcing a little) the Protestants of the sixteenth century into the mold of Patristic martyrdom, printers provided a unity which theologians and rulers never could.\textsuperscript{57}

Protestant printers differed from both Protestant political leaders and theologians. Protestant political leaders were interested in controlling their national churches. Although they needed Protestant ecclesiastical leaders, they were also inevitably locked in a power struggle with them. In France, for instance, the Protestant nobility during the French Wars of Religion turned to the Calvinist organization for advice, money, and diplomatic aid. Yet they had different priorities with regard to matters of war and peace. The nobles sought to use war and peace in an agile manner, to make a stand when the community was threatened but to cease hostilities as soon as a favorable settlement seemed possible. The clergy, on the other hand, viewed war as a weighty moral matter: they were more reluctant to resort to warfare, but also more reluctant to stand down once the fighting had begun. The nobility generally agreed with the Calvinist ministers that the Church needed greater organization, more centralized control over local churches. Naturally, they had different ideas about who would run the new, more centralized Church. For the nobility, a centralized national Church offered a chance at more control, but a Church organized at a transnational level could be a threat to their power. Nobles were often willing to compromise on theological niceties, but not on matters of organization and control.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{57} Gregory, \textit{Salvation at Stake}, 142-90.
\textsuperscript{58} Kingdon, \textit{Geneva and the Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement}.
Protestant theologians, by contrast, drew their power and influence from their theological insights and their courage in skill and defending them. They were as eager to leap into theological disputes as the nobles were to leap into military ones, and for the same reasons: such disputes were their whole raison d’être. The reverse also applied: theologians gained nothing from wars which were purely political in motivation, while political leaders gained nothing when their clerical allies squabbled over abstruse theological issues. Given these differences, argument and differentiation were inevitable both between and among Protestant political and religious leaders.59

In contrast to political and theologian leaders, the printer’s perspective was naturally transnational and ecumenical, because, as I will show in Chapter Three, their lives were built on networks of friends and kin, and on markets. They constantly sought to broaden their networks and their readership. In his memoir, Eustache Vignon appears a cosmopolitan man who was comfortable in France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Germany. He regularly visited friends in all these places; he spoke their languages, knew their customs, participated in their markets, corresponded with their leaders. Vignon took great pains never to miss the Frankfurt book fair, where he had met Jean Crespin.60 Every printer and bookseller of note made sure to attend, and most men of letters did as well. Even writers of the greatest influence, such as Calvin himself, attended the fair regularly and were keenly aware of its importance in the printing world. Calvin’s correspondence shows a repeated concern with getting his works published in time for one session or another of the semiannual fair, a consideration which often affected his writing schedule.61

59 Ibid.
French Reformed printers were sincere and passionate in their faith, and made sure to do their part in the battle against Roman Catholicism, but it was in their interest to define Protestant Christianity as broadly as possible, even when that meant that the unity they advertised was something of an illusion. “The martyrologists,” writes Brad Gregory, “identified a Protestant community more extensive than any single denomination. They were not so much constructing an artificial community as articulating their religious identity in a different register. Crespin was a Calvinist when he worshiped together with fellowGenevans; he was a Protestant when he excluded sectarians and papists from his martyrology.”62 In much the same way, Vignon’s New World tales focused on Spanish cruelty rather than the exact nature of the victims. When French settlers were hounded out of Fort Caroline in Florida by vicious Spaniards, they cried out to God in generic, unobjectionable pieties.63 Such a situation did not require them to elaborate a specific Christology or lay out their precise positions on the nature of the divine presence at Communion. Rather, it required the persecuted to help one another and to look to what they shared rather than to what divided them.

The Print Revolution allowed the people of Europe to communicate more quickly and in more depth than ever before. This made them see themselves and each other in new ways. New identities emerged and old ones changed. The Huguenot printers of sixteenth-century Geneva claimed identities that were shockingly new. They practiced a profession that had not existed a century earlier and a religion that they were still in the process of forming, in a city that until their own time had little influence outside its immediate surroundings. These printers changed their world. They helped to create the Reformed faith and change the face of the Christian

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62 Gregory, Salvation at Stake, 184.
religion. They also laid the ground for a new idea of morality, a universal morality based on kindness and tolerance.
CHAPTER TWO
Jean Crespin and Eustache Vignon: the Networking Strategies of Huguenot Printers

The European Wars of Religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries encompassed wide-ranging political, economic and ideological conflicts. The actions of merchants and intellectuals during this period were as much a part of these wars as were the military battles. The educated urban elite fought on the battlefield of public opinion, and their weapon was the printing press. Europe was undergoing a communications revolution as print became ubiquitous. This “print revolution” fed the war of ideas in Reformation Europe and was in turn fed by it, creating a sort of positive feedback loop which contributed both to the spread of print and to the polarization of confessional identities in Europe. Nowhere was this more evident than in Geneva, where the explosive growth of the print industry was fed by a constant influx of talented and ambitious Protestant immigrants.⁶⁴ The Calvinists who set up large print shops in Geneva came from the urban elite. Many, especially in the early period of the 1540s, came from Paris, but later immigrants often came from the northeast corner of the French-speaking world. They hailed either from the French-speaking part of the Spanish Netherlands (encompassing such areas as Hainaut, Tournai and Artois) or from just across the border in French Picardy (birthplace of the Calvin brothers.) Not all of them came from the print profession, but all of them had learned

⁶⁴ Jean-François Gilmont argues that printing was one of the most important professions in Geneva. In the second half of the fifteenth century, more than a thousand people made their livings from the print industry, out of a total population which never much exceeded twenty thousand. Jean-François Gilmont, Jean Crespin, un éditeur réformé du XVIe siècle (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1981 [Travaux d’Humanisme et Renaissance, 186]), 47.
from an early age the techniques of building wealth, influence and identity by forming professional and social networks.

In this chapter I focus on the two sixteenth-century Geneva printers Jean Crespin and Eustache Vignon. Vignon was Crespin’s son-in-law and successor as head of their printing firm. I examine the strategies that these men used to conserve their financial and social capital in exile. I show how they used the social ties formed by apprenticeship, marriage and godparentage to form powerful and lasting social networks. In particular, borrowing from Sandra Cavallo, I argue that the relationship between Crespin and Vignon was a “diagonal” relationship, a close family and professional association between men half a generation apart, which benefitted them both by promoting Vignon’s career while preserving Crespin’s legacy. In her groundbreaking work, *Artisans of the Body in Early Modern Italy: Identities, Families and Masculinities*, Cavallo argued that “diagonal” relationships lay somewhere between the “horizontal” relationships among colleagues and the “vertical” relationship of “pseudo-fatherhood” that a master might develop with a much younger apprentice. Although Cavallo’s work dealt with men of a different time, place and social class (namely, eighteenth-century artisans in Turin), I have found the concept useful in analyzing the strategies of the *haut-bourgeois* printers of sixteenth-century Paris, Antwerp and Geneva.

Diagonal relationships had a profound effect on Geneva’s print industry. They allowed prudent printers such as Crespin to choose their successors for both their piety and their business acumen. This gave Geneva’s great print shops substantial continuity in both ideology and business practices over time. Instead of taking a young person as an apprentice, sometimes a master took on a man half a generation younger than himself, someone who could take on much greater responsibility much sooner than a young man could. Carefully selected and tested, such
senior apprentices could become junior partners, expanding the presence and durability of a business. Upon the death of the master, they often played a critical role in maintaining the continuity of the firm while the master’s heirs completed their training.

The Huguenot Urban Elite

Calvinist Geneva offers an unusual opportunity to observe the networking strategies of an urban elite in their historical particulars. Immigration due to steadily increasing persecution brought many wealthy and educated Huguenots to Geneva in the sixteenth century. These immigrants were experts in building and protecting their social and economic status. They rarely fled for unknown lands with nothing but what they could carry in the middle of the night. Instead, they planned and prepared. Long before such elite immigrants could be the subjects of legal prosecution or mob violence, they travelled, making contacts in the Netherlands, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Swiss Confederacy. Before they left their homes, they made every effort to preserve their wealth using a variety of mercantile, banking and legal strategies. Once they arrived in Geneva, they capitalized on the contacts which they had already made to facilitate their entry into existing social networks and formation of new ones. Thus, the Huguenot haut-bourgeois arriving in Geneva in the middle of the sixteenth century secured a financial success in a short time, via a process that involved multiple generations.65

The uprooting of so many financially solid citizens from their well-established positions in Paris, Picardy and the Spanish Netherlands was the result of an era of tumult. Throughout the course of the sixteenth century, the relationship between Huguenots and French Catholics

became increasingly hostile, marked by popular demonstrations, legal restrictions on Reformed practice, popular and elite violence, and eventually open warfare. Although many Huguenots chose to stay and continue the struggle, Huguenot printers found it increasingly difficult to practice their trade within France. They had difficulty obtaining the royal imprimatur for books which expressed their Calvinist ideals, and their shops and presses were tempting targets for popular violence. Paris was the hub of French printing, and that city was a difficult place for Protestants. The Parlement of Paris was among the most zealously Catholic institutions of Counter-Reformation France, and the city was marked by popular violence against Huguenots well before the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre of 1572. Many French Calvinists left their home country.66

Huguenots were numerous in the north, in regions such as Normandy and Calvin’s native Picardy. Whereas southern Huguenots were surrounded by the zealous Catholics of Spain and Italy, those in the north had a choice of nearby refuges like England and certain parts of the Holy Roman Empire. The southern part of the Spanish Netherlands was nominally Catholic, but the governors of Charles V ruled with a light hand. Out of some combination of sentimental attachment to the land of his youth and practical regard for an area that brought enormous income to his debt-strapped government, Charles largely allowed the Spanish Netherlands to chart their own course. However, after Charles abdicated in 1555, his son, Philip II, proved less tolerant and more zealous for direct control of his empire.

Many French Calvinists ultimately followed Calvin to Geneva. Calvin wielded great authority in Geneva from 1541 to his death in 1564, and his influence in that city persisted

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beyond his death, as his allies such as Theodore Beza continued to hold positions of authority there. Located close to France, speaking the French language, and home ground for Calvinists, Geneva became for Huguenots not only a safe refuge, but a staging ground for the battle against Popery and a land of commercial opportunity. These same motives – personal security, religious conviction, and professional ambition – led Huguenot printers to forge networks of relationships as quickly as possible once they arrived in Geneva.67

These relationships could be “horizontal,” between equals, or “vertical,” between master and servant. However, some of the most important of them fell into a category somewhere in between. The relationship between masters and apprentices was often more complex than a straightforward "vertical" patronage or "pseudo-fatherhood." A young master, beginning his business and without children old enough to take responsibility in his absence, needed more in an apprentice than a boy could provide. He needed someone whose accomplishments would burnish his own reputation, who could competently represent him in business dealings, and who could keep the business afloat in the case of the master's sudden death (an event all too likely in those days of plague, persecution and war.) Such a relationship, based on an age gap of half a generation (some ten to fifteen years), might begin as a senior apprenticeship and evolve into a partnership of near-equals.68 This is the kind of relationship that Crespin established with Eustache Vignon, a young exile from Crespin’s own home town of Arras who also, by the middle of the sixteenth century, ended up in Geneva.

Most men who founded family businesses must have hoped to live to a ripe old age and pass the business on to their fully-trained adult sons. But life was uncertain, and the fate of the

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family business was too important for a serious-minded man to leave it to chance. The details of the great Huguenot print concerns show a frequent reliance on diagonal relationships. Jean Crespin’s adoption of Eustache Vignon as son-in-law, junior partner, heir, and estate conservator was a strategy typical of men of his time, place and social class. Many other members of his networks practiced similar strategies. Elite printers in Paris already practiced these before increasingly harsh confessional divisions forced the most reform-minded of them to move to Geneva. Crespin’s sponsor in the print trade, Conrad Badius, was one product of such strategies.  

Even before the mass migration of Huguenot printers to Geneva, reform-minded printers in Francophone Europe employed diagonal relationships to knit their firms more solidly together. Josse Bade, one of the great humanist printers of early sixteenth-century Paris, was born in 1462 near Brussels, in the Burgundian Netherlands, which would fall under Habsburg rule fifteen years later. After learning the print trade in Lyons, he moved to Paris. There, some time around the year 1500, he founded what would become a highly successful printing firm. Josse had four daughters, but his son, who became known as Conrad Badius, was younger than all of them. Conrad was born in 1525, when his father was well over sixty. In order for Josse to pass his business on to an adult son, he would have to live to eighty, and Conrad would have to live to adulthood. In the sixteenth century, the odds were against them. However, Paris had plenty of able, ambitious, educated young men who would be interested in marrying the daughter of a respected and successful entrepreneur. Such a marriage could ensure them careers as book printers and sellers, and indeed, all four of Josse’s sons-in-law – Robert Estienne, Jean de Roigny, Michiel de Vascosan and Jacques Dupuys – found success in these professions. With

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69 Jean-François Gilmont, Jean Crespin, un éditeur réformé du XVIe siècle (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1981 [Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 186]), 43. Gilmont argues that Conrad Badius was the most important of Crespin’s contacts in the print business, and that it was he who sponsored Crespin’s initiation into the print trade.
four older brothers-in-law to guide him in the profession, young Conrad was in a position to take on the shop in case Josse died before he reached the age of majority – which he did, in 1535, when Conrad was only ten. As Josse must have planned, one of the sons-in-law, Robert Estienne took Conrad under his wing and gave him a solid start in the print business.\(^{70}\)

Among Josse’s colleagues in Paris printing was Henri Estienne, who had been born in Paris in 1470. His life story also reflects the same kind of diagonal relationship that protected the young heir of Josse Bade. The experience of the Estienne family followed a similar path to that of the Bade/Badius family. Henri died in 1520, when his son Robert (b. 1503) was a teenager – probably trained to some extent as a humanist and printer, but not old enough to inherit and run the shop alone. With the patriarch’s death, the printing house entered a period of transition – a dangerous time for a family business. Henri’s only son Robert was only sixteen years old – not experienced enough to inspire confidence among the firm’s patrons. Henri, however, had planned for the future. Years earlier, he had hired a bright and ambitious young man, Simon Colines, who was a decade or so younger than himself. Colines had done well, and by the time of Henri’s death, he had the status of junior partner in the firm. Upon Henri’s death, Colines stepped into his shoes. The attitudes of the time demanded that the business be headed (at least officially) by a man – not a woman, and not a boy. Thanks to clever familial and financial strategies, Colines was able to run the business much as Henri had run it, securing the success and continuity of the Estienne print firm. He acted as a mentor to Henri’s son and completed his education. He even went so far as to marry Henri’s widow. Colines ran the business for six years, maintaining its quality and profitability until Robert was old enough to take over. In 1526,

at the age of twenty-three, Robert took over his deceased father’s business, while Colines opened another print shop in the same neighborhood.\footnote{Renouard, \textit{Imprimeurs et Libraires Parisiens}, 2-21; Elizabeth Armstrong, \textit{Robert Estienne, royal printer}, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). 3-66.}

Henri Estienne’s diagonal relationship with Colines provided the continuity which the firm needed in order to keep functioning between generations. The role played by the widow Estienne was also vital to the success of the print firm. By marrying her, Colines ensured the firm’s continued access both to her dowry and to her late husband’s business contacts. Women made choices and played important roles in the networking strategies of elite families. We occasionally glimpse them, as in the remarriage of Mme. Estienne-Colines, or in the critical role that Jean Crespin’s wife Madeleine played in preserving the family fortune after his conviction for heresy, as it is discussed below.\footnote{The importance of Early Modern women in business is of great interest, but the sources require skill to mine. One work in which it has been well done is Natalie Zemon Davis, \textit{Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), esp. 5-62.}

Henri’s son Robert Estienne went on to become the official printer to Francis I of France, beginning in 1539, and is credited with creating the system of Bible versification which is still standard today. Like Colines, Robert consolidated his social networks by marriage – in his case, to one of the daughters of the prominent printer Josse Bade. Sometime between his father’s death in 1520 and his taking control of the print shop in 1526, Robert married Perrette Bade, Josse’s daughter and, at the same time, became the mentor of his young brother-in-law Conrad Badius, the heir to the Bade print firm. By 1540, at the age of fifteen, Conrad became Robert’s junior partner and was becoming ready to assume control of his inheritance. However, after the Edict of Fontainebleau in 1540, life became harder for Protestants in France, and both men were becoming more and more Protestant in their convictions. Conrad’s business travels allowed him to meet and befriend the most prominent of Protestant theologians: Théodore de Bèze, Philippe
Mélanchthon, and Jean Calvin. He also met Laurent de Normandie, the wealthy Calvinist who sponsored several of Geneva’s printers. By 1548, Conrad had decided to leave Paris for Geneva. Robert followed him two years later. Thanks to Conrad’s clever networking skills and financial talent, in the following years he soon became an official “resident” of Geneva (a distinction which was not granted to all, and which generally took several years to achieve) and had become an established member of the print profession in town, as demonstrated by his sponsorship of Jean Crespin who had recently left Arras.\(^{73}\)

Under more stable circumstances, it might have taken far longer for new arrivals in a city to become successful entrepreneurs and influential members of the urban elite. But in the sixteenth century, the print industry was growing at an explosive rate. The industry fed the religious turmoil of the times and was in turn fed by it, creating an endless demand for writers and printers of ability and conviction. To an educated and ambitious Huguenot arriving in Geneva in the 1550s, that spelled opportunity. Robert Estienne and Conrad Bade (or Badius) were already well-known printers when they arrived in Geneva, but Jean Crespin, a lawyer, was new to the trade. He may have taken it up because it combined the chance to fight for what he believed with the opportunity for rapid social advancement. By 1555, Crespin was well established in Geneva, and, as will be shown below, he was in a position to sponsor another bright and ambitious young man, Eustache Vignon, whose story paralleled his own.

**Jean Crespin**

Jean Crespin was born around 1520 to a wealthy bourgeois family of the city of Arras in the county of Artois, which was part of the Spanish Netherlands and where a French dialect was the dominant language. This made Crespin, like so many others, a subject of Charles V. However,


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Charles valued the income which the Netherlands brought him, and understood that this income depended on broad trade relations. For this reason, he allowed the merchants of Artois to maintain close economic ties with France, his political enemy. The count of Artois had a long-established free trade agreement with France, and merchants like the Crespins maintained trade networks that extended across France, the Netherlands, and the Holy Roman Empire.  

The Crespins descended from a line of wealthy bankers. Some branches had been ennobled and moved from the ranks of the bourgeoisie to those of the petty nobility. The boundary between the upper bourgeoisie and the lower nobility was porous, and the two groups interacted extensively. Jean’s branch of the family was not ennobled, but they were still respected and influential. They became wealthy as merchants in wine and cloth, practiced law, and sought public office. They made family and business alliances with other prominent families of the area such as the Bauduins, the Herlins, the Cambiers, and the Commelins.  

This urban elite often practiced business and law simultaneously, at once merchants and politicians. Jean’s father Charles Crespin was a prominent lawyer with a position on the Council of Artois who sent his son Jean to Louvain, a great center of learning in the Spanish Netherlands, “to cultivate his spirit.” He attended the famous university there from 1533 to 1541. In 1541, at the age of 21, he graduated utriusque iuris (Doctor of both civil and canon law) and soon after moved to Paris, where he began his apprenticeship as a man of letters and secretary of Charles de Moulin, a prominent legist and an early sympathizer of the reform movement. It was in Louvain that Jean Crespin may have been exposed to Protestantism. As part of De Moulin’s circle, Crespin met men who later became some of the guiding lights of the Calvinist movement.  

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75 Gilmont, Jean Crespin, 27-30.
76 Gilmont, Jean Crespin, 27-35.
Crespin did not go to Paris alone, but was accompanied a childhood friend, François Baudouin. The two of them joined de Moulin’s service together. The two became part of a network of young humanists attracted to reformist ideas, along with Georges Cassander, Juan Diaz, and the brothers Francisco and Diego de Enzinas. In 1541, it was still possible for a humanist to advocate reform and flirt with radical ideas without being forced to make a decisive choice between the Roman Catholic Church and an established Protestant church. A certain gray area continued to exist in France until the rupture known as the Tumult of Amboise in 1560. However, that gray space was shrinking, and in the 1540s, the men of de Moulin’s circle were forced to make their choice. The Spaniards committed themselves firmly to Protestantism. Both Juan Diaz and Diego de Enzinas were burned at the stake in 1547, while Francisco narrowly escaped the same fate. De Moulin and Cassander remained Catholic, although they acted as voices for toleration within the Church.77

Crespin and Baudouin tried hard to remain neutral, but ultimately their hands were forced by the war between Charles V and Francis I, king of France. The outbreak of the war forced Crespin and Baudouin out of their positions in Paris. As subjects of a hostile prince, they were given eight days to leave France.78

Back in Arras, Crespin began to practice law and seems to have been a successful lawyer. In 1544, he married Madeleine Le Cambier, daughter of another important bourgeois family of Arras. The wedding took place at the Catholic church in Arras. Whatever Crespin’s convictions and associations were at this point, he was no open schismatic. He may well have considered

77 Gilmont, Jean Crespin, 31-45.
78 In 1542, Charles V declared war on Francis I, king of Spain. Much of the fighting occurred over France’s attempts to annex the French-speaking parts of the Spanish Netherlands – Crespin’s homeland. The outcome of the war would determine whether Crespin and his fellow residents of Arras would become French or continue as subjects of Spain. Gilmont, Jean Crespin, 31-2.
himself a good Catholic, a reformer rather than a heretic. But like his friends back in Paris, Crespin would soon find this ambiguous space constricting, forcing him to take a side.\textsuperscript{79}

The pressure to do so came from both sides. If the Church was becoming less tolerant of Catholics who read the works of Jean Calvin, it was in part because Calvin’s followers were aggressively organizing congregations within Catholic Europe. In September 1544, Calvin’s disciple Pierre Brully came to Tournai, an important city in the French-speaking part of the Spanish Netherlands. (Although today Arras is in France and Tournai is in Belgium, at the time they were under the same ruler.) Brully was invited by the Calvinists of Tournai to help them create a clandestine ecclesiastical organization. He preached and organized energetically and effectively throughout the region, but after only two months he was arrested. He was convicted of heresy and burned at the stake in February of 1545.\textsuperscript{80}

The inquisitors acted quickly to uproot the organization which Brully had planted. They uncovered others who had collaborated with Brully in Tournai and nearby cities. In Arras, they found evidence to convict a handful of reform-minded young lawyers, including Jean Crespin and his friend François Baudouin. On March 28, 1545, the two young men were sentenced to banishment and confiscation of their goods. They were, however, convicted \textit{in absentia}, for they had already left the city. They returned to Paris (although they were still banned from French territory), staying at the home of Antoine Fumée, a member of the Parlement of Paris and a sympathizer of the reform movement who often sheltered refugees.\textsuperscript{81}

In 1548, Crespin and Bauduin then left for Geneva, along with their friends Juan Diaz and Matthieu Budé. In Geneva they met with Calvin, whose powerful personality seems to have

\textsuperscript{79} Gilmont, \textit{Jean Crespin}, 34-41.
\textsuperscript{80} Gilmont, \textit{Jean Crespin}, 32-7.
\textsuperscript{81} The Parisian seems to have avoided serious trouble until 1559, when he was finally arrested for heresy. Fumée was not inclined to become a martyr, and he lacked either the desire or the opportunity to become an exile. Not only was he not burnt at the stake, he regained his seat on the Parlement of Paris and went on to become a member of Henry III’s Privy Council. Gilmont, \textit{Jean Crespin}, 31-45.
affected them in different ways. Bauduin quarreled with Calvin and did not stay in Geneva. In 1563, he was welcomed back into the Roman Catholic Church and soon began to write anti-Calvinist texts. Crespin, on the other hand, admired Calvin greatly, and his regular letters to the reformer from 1545 to 1547 address him with reverence.  

Although Crespin appears to have been a committed Calvinist, he did not immediately move to Geneva. From 1545 to 1548, he moved back and forth between Paris, Geneva, and a house he owned in Picardy. He needed this time to make his preparations. Crespin had left his fortune (which had been ordered confiscated, but he would find his own ways around that) and his pregnant young wife back in Arras, and was determined to bring them both to Geneva with him. His wife Madeleine, née Le Cambier, who gave birth to their daughter Marguerite in 1545, was devoted to her husband and to the Calvinist faith, and despite the hazards of leaving home and family behind, she was determined to join her husband in Geneva. Crespin needed her active collaboration for his scheme to keep as much as possible of the family fortune intact.

Such caution was typical of successful printers – sometimes to the disgust of the more passionate Reformed theologians. Crespin’s contemporary and colleague, Robert Estienne, was lambasted by William Farel for such. In a letter to Calvin, Farel criticized Estienne for hesitating to move from France to Switzerland, accusing him of “deny[ing] Christ in a corrupt and adulterate generation.” However, Estienne knew that he could serve the cause far better if he brought his wealth, prestige and influence with him, and moving these complex assets took time. As Elizabeth Armstrong put it, “it was not a matter of shaking the dust of France from his feet

82 Gilmont, Jean Crespin 35-45, 229-32.
83 Gilmont, Jean Crespin, 39-41, 87-90.
‘openly’ in a riot of revivalist fervor, but of quietly transferring the most learned press in northern Europe from Paris to Geneva.”

Crespin had a large fortune, and he was able to save at least a portion of it thanks to Madeleine. He had been sentenced to confiscation of his goods, but since the bourgeois of Arras held the privilege of non-confiscation, the sentence was not strictly enforced. Crespin was able to reclaim much of it through a combination of legal and extra-legal means. Madeleine Crespin played the central role in the couple’s legal strategy for preserving their family fortune. She successfully claimed the right to recuperate the value of her dowry. Since Mme. Crespin had not been legally implicated in her husband’s apostasy, she argued that the state had no right to confiscate her wealth. Furthermore, her father had died after her husband was indicted, leaving her a substantial legacy. Since she and not her husband, was mentioned in her father’s will and since her husband was not with her at the time, she argued that this inheritance was not subject to confiscation. The chief magistrate, likely eager to aid the powerful Crespin and Le Cambier families without running afoul of the heresy courts, agreed in both cases. However, the premise behind Madeleine’s argument – that she was innocent of heresy and that the money would not go to her heretic husband – was false. Had Madeleine wished, she could easily have stayed in Arras with her fortune and her relatives. She chose instead to go with her husband to Geneva. To preserve the wealth which was not preserved by Madeleine’s legal claims, Crespin arranged to smuggle much of it out of Arras. This required a certain amount of strategy as well. But Crespin was able to make contact with merchants of Arras who did business with Geneva. He needed

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85 Armstrong, Robert Estienne, 212.
86 Gilmont, Jean Crespin, 32-41.
87 Gilmont, Jean Crespin, 38-41.
someone who could help him smuggle his goods there, and they (being smugglers) needed a
good lawyer.88

Crespin, an inveterate networker, had made friends in Geneva on his earlier visit, and he expanded those friendships after his arrival in 1548. His allies included the wealthy merchant Nicolas Le Fer, who managed many of Jean Calvin’s business affairs; Antoine Calvin, the great man’s brother and a powerful tycoon who played a large role in Geneva’s print business; Jean de Saint-André, a pastor who married into the Le Cambier family; Nicolas des Gallars, a pastor and friend of Jean Calvin, who probably met Crespin in Parisian intellectual circles; François Hotman, a prominent theologian who probably also met Crespin in Paris; David Busanton, the wealthy founder of the aid society for poor Frenchmen in Geneva; Charles de Joinvilliers, who would be one of Crespin’s chief financiers, probably also a Parisian associate; and Nicolas Picot, rich merchant draper of Noyon, who may have known Crespin in Arras. Once in Geneva, Crespin met and befriended other prominent men, such as Jean Calvin’s successor, Théodore de Bèze, and Conrad Badius, a wealthy printer who sponsored Crespin’s initiation into the print business.89

These men had more than their faith in common. They came from the same social classes: either the urban grand bourgeois or the rural petty nobility. Most of them had legal backgrounds. They were of similar age, most of them born within a few years of 1520. Most of them came from the northeast corner of the French-speaking region of Europe, from Picardy or the Spanish Netherlands.90 Given Crespin’s preference from his “compatriots” from this area, it is unsurprising that his junior partner and son-in-law, Eustache Vignon, was also from Crespin’s home town of Arras.

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88 Gilmont, Jean Crespin, 41–4.
89 Gilmont, Jean Crespin, 41–61.
Eustache Vignon was born around 1530 to a wealthy bourgeois family of lawyers and wine merchants in the city of Arras. Eustache studied Latin, but as he profited only “mediocrement” from his studies, his guardians decided that he was ill suited for the priesthood and apprenticed him to a merchant cousin. The young man proved his worth and became his family’s agent in Antwerp, where he sold cloth wholesale to that city’s drapers. By his own account, Eustache acquitted himself so well that in his memoirs he wrote: “I have no doubt that they were very sorry to see me go.” But go he must, for in Antwerp Eustache had converted to Calvinism.91

Antwerp in the 1550s was the heart of the international economy. Here American silver became banking capital for all the nations of Europe, Protestant as well as Catholic. Other coveted goods, from Chinese silk to African pepper to American sugar, entered Europe primarily at Antwerp. Charles V loved the Netherlands, having spent his youth there, and his governors ruled the provinces with a light hand. Antwerp became a cosmopolitan city in which different ideas could thrive, Calvinism prominently among them. Eustache left the city in 1555, over a decade before the Dutch Revolt, but likely he had prayed and studied with some who would participate in the iconoclastic riots of 1566. His openness to new religious ideas may well have had something to do with the requirements of his profession.92

In the bustling, cosmopolitan city of Antwerp, Eustache Vignon had become a busy, cosmopolitan man. The profession of merchant required a degree of open-mindedness unusual

(though not unique) in the sixteenth century. Merchants had to be polyglot and although Eustache disparaged his own mastery of Latin, he understood that language well enough to edit books written in that language. Although he grew up in a Picard-speaking region, he seems to have communicated very well in the quite different French dialect of Geneva, and his memoirs were written in a French as standard as was possible at the time. Eustache was also fluent in German, probably in multiple dialects as well. He worked in Antwerp for several years, probably speaking Brabantian (an ancestor of modern Dutch), but his second wedding, held in Wesel in 1573, was conducted in (presumably Rhenish) German, “which language I understood, as did my wife.” His description of his elaborate, multi-national honeymoon makes it clear that he and his wife had friends widely distributed across France, the Netherlands, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Swiss cantons.93 “Having sojourned and greeted many in Cologne for three days, we embarked for Frankfurt, where we all arrived in good health, we began to greet my relatives and friends … After having made provision for horses, coaches, and drivers, and all the things necessary for such a voyage, we left on the coach without checking it on November 5, 1563. And we were so delayed, by stopping in every town to visit relatives and friends, and also by days cut short by bad roads, that we spent nineteen days on the road before we arrived in Geneva.”94

Eustache Vignon apparently felt that he could not continue in the family business after his conversion. Most of his relatives remained Catholic. Indeed, his cousin Adrien Vignon, as Attorney General of Arras, was responsible for prosecuting heretics in that city. However, another cousin, Jean Vignon, proved sympathetic. Eustache left behind his family and his city, forfeiting most of the social capital he had acquired in Arras. However, he had no intention of

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93 Vignon, 175-7, 183-4.
94 Vignon, 183-4.
abandoning his financial capital. His cousin Jean helped him to liquidate his assets, including the house at Arras which his father had left him.95

The scions of elite bourgeois families were taught to conserve their wealth, and Eustache’s strategy was typical. Jean Crespin had done much the same ten years earlier. Then years later, the cousin who had helped Eustache followed his example when the taint of heresy began to make life in Arras seem dangerous. Jean Vignon liquidated his assets and in 1565 moved to Antwerp where he became an active Calvinist, participating in the consistories and helping to build a house of worship.96

As a merchant of the urban elite, Eustache Vignon cultivated friendships with a variety of people, especially the wealthy and well-educated. His networking strategies placed him in contact with a number of Calvinists, and by 1555 he had become a convert. In that year, Vignon left Antwerp for Geneva, the capital of Calvinism. He intended to establish himself there, and eventually to earn the prize of citizenship. For this he would need a sponsor. He obtained one by using the networking skills he had honed as an Antwerp merchant. Vignon used his capital to buy merchandise (probably books), which he then sold at the Frankfurt fair, the most important book fair in Europe during the period. There he met the sponsor he was looking for in Jean Crespin. For the rest of their lives, Crespin and Vignon attended the twice-annual Frankfurt book fair regularly. It must have formed a critical part of their professional networking strategies. For every birth and death in the family, Eustache Vignon recorded whether or not he was present. Out of a total of seventeen, he missed six such events. Every time he reported being in attendance at the Frankfurt fair. Although Vignon very likely made other business trips, it seems

95 Vignon, 176-7, 193-6.
96 Antwerp however, proved unsafe. The Duke of Alba arrived in the Spanish Netherlands in 1567 and Jean was investigated by the Council of Troubles for heresy. Yet he seems to have escaped with his life at least, as he attended Eustache’s second wedding in 1573. Vignon, 176-7.
that none of them had the importance of the Frankfurt fair, which he attended even when his wife was nine months pregnant or when the plague threatened his family.\(^{97}\)

Crespin proved to be just the patron Vignon was looking for. The two men came from the same background in the upper bourgeoisie of Arras. Crespin was half a generation older, and he had left Arras only ten years earlier, when Eustache was a teenager. It is thus entirely possible that the two men had already met, and likely that they knew of one another. Crespin too had managed to conserve much of his wealth, and by September of 1555 he was a personal friend of Jean Calvin, owned a successful print shop, and had just been enrolled as a citizen of Geneva. Having sold his merchandise, Vignon loaned much of his cash to Crespin. This both helped him establish friendly relations with the older man and allowed him to transfer money safely to his new city. The language of his memoir - "j'y trouvay mons' Crespin" - leaves it ambiguous whether Eustache "found" his patron at the Frankfurt fair intentionally, according to his plan, or by serendipity. Perhaps it was something in between: the resourceful and ambitious young merchant attended the fair with every intention of making useful contacts, and had the wit and charm to take advantage of a promising encounter with a man from his own home town that helped him make his career.\(^{98}\)

In Geneva, Vignon invested in Crespin’s print firm and became a junior partner. He lived in Crespin’s house, becoming a part of the older man’s household – a part of the “family,” as many Early Modern people understood the term. In 1559, he cemented this familial relationship by marrying Crespin’s oldest daughter Marguerite. In his memoir, Vignon writes that when he made the loan to Crespin, “nothing was further from my mind than the thought that I might one day become his son-in-law.” Perhaps; but this was a common path for a successful

\(^{97}\) Vignon, 178-88.
\(^{98}\) Vignon, 176-7.
diagonal relationship to take. Eustache’s friendship with Jean Crespin and his love for Marguerite were most likely genuine, but neither can have been entirely without calculation. Just as Eustache did not join the Reformed church without taking pains to conserve his fortune, he did not marry his master’s daughter without considering how it would affect his career. Business and family matters were inextricably intertwined.99

The sources for the details of the relationship between Crespin and Vignon are unusually rich and convey invaluable nuances for reconstructing the social and professional networks that tied together the sixteenth-century reformed print industry. Some of the correspondence between the two men has been preserved.100 Even more extraordinary, a memoir by Eustache Vignon has survived, and has been made available thanks to the efforts of book historian Jean-François Gilmont, who discovered it while researching his biography of Jean Crespin, which was published in 1981.101

Eustache proudly recorded the details of the important rituals of his life. After marriage, godparentage was the method he most used to reinforce social and professional ties. Some godparents were prominent figures in the Geneva printing business such as Laurent de Normandie, godfather to Suzanne Crespin in 1567, Barthelemi Vincent, godfather of the Jean Vignon who was born in 1576, and Henri Estienne, godfather of the Marie Vignon born in 1581, or close business associates such as Thomas van Thield, godfather to the Marie Vignon born in 1569.102

Other godparents were close associates of Jean Calvin, influential both ecclesiastically and politically. In late sixteenth-century Geneva, Calvin’s was a name to conjure with, and Eustache mentions his connections to the great man with evident pride. Calvin’s lieutenant

99Vignon, 177-8.
101 Vignon, 165-199.
102 Vignon, 178-88.
Theodore Beza was godfather to Eustache’s daughter Magdelaine in January 1564. Eustache takes care to point out that Calvin himself preached the sermon on this occasion, although he was too ill to personally carry out the baptism (this was only four months before his death). The next year, Jean Calvin’s brother Antoine stood as godfather to Jacques Vignon. Anne Vignon was carried to the baptismal font in 1574 by Philibert Humbert, whom, Eustache specifies, he knew through Nicolas Picot. Picot was an old friend of Calvin’s from his hometown of Noyon (like Crespin and Vignon, Calvin and Picot came from the Picard haut-bourgeoisie), and also had been a longtime friend of Crespin’s. Jacques Gradelle, godfather of Jeanne in 1584, was a mere shoemaker (albeit successful enough that he had been a citizen for three decades), but his wife, the only godmother explicitly mentioned in Eustache’s account, was Jean Calvin’s sister-in-law. Eustache seems to have used godparentage to cement relationships with influential men; this is the only case in which he treats a godmother as bringing influence or prestige to his house, and even here only through her connection to Calvin. Women played a vital part in family networking strategies, but men like Vignon tended to write of them only as establishing links between men. Still, we saw in the example of Vignon’s mother-in-law and her dowry, women did make their own choices and assert their own legal rights within the framework of family strategies. 103

The godparents of a child presented that child for baptism, officially named the child, and assumed a certain amount of responsibility for the child should the parents die prematurely. Thus godparentage bonded two men as compères, fathers to the same child. The Early Modern urban elite used this form of association to define and deepen a useful friendship based on trust. The relationship thus established was not a blood relationship, but it was a spiritual relationship

publicly acknowledged. It bonded two men, or two married couples, but it did not bond entire families in the way that marriage did. Thus such relationships could bridge broader gaps between social classes than marriages could. A man could ask a powerful patron to be the godfather to his son when asking for his daughter’s hand in marriage would be out of the question. A business owner, if he wanted to stay in business, had to keep careful track of money and favors owed. But with a compère, he could relax a bit and allow goodwill to flow naturally. This sort of relationship allowed for great trust and intimacy even in competitive business environments. Although they could be abused, most people seem to have valued these friendships and tried to behave as deserving recipients of such trust.104

Eustache Vignon was an ambitious man, and when choosing godparents for his children, he aimed high. The godparents of the Vignon children were important people. Some were prominent figures in the Geneva printing business, such as Laurent de Normandie, who often acted as Calvin’s representative in the print world; and Henri Estienne, the son of the Robert Estienne who had emigrated from Paris, and the grandson of his namesake who had died in 1520. Others were close associates of John Calvin, chosen because of their ecclesiastical and political prominence. Eustache’s first and most important godparentage relationship was with his father-in-law. Jean Crespin was godfather to Eustache’s first child (his own grandson), in 1562. Eustache named his first son Jean. He had many reasons to choose this name. Besides being the name of the most beloved apostle, it was the name of Eustache’s father, of the cousin who had helped him escape, and of Calvin himself, whom Eustache seems to have regarded as a patriarch. However, children were often named after their godfathers, and the name was likely chosen at

least in part to honor Jean Crespin. Jean's act of standing as godfather publicly reinforced the two men's alliance and reinforced the bonds that united them into a single family.  

Ten years later, Eustache returned the favor by carrying Samuel Crespin to the baptismal font, standing as godfather to his newborn brother-in-law. This baptismal ceremony took place on March 11th of 1572. In April of 1572, Vignon was at Frankfurt representing the firm at the spring book fair. His father-in-law, whether due to failing health or the desire to spend time with his new wife and newer son, stayed home. Upon his return, Vignon found a family devastated by the plague. Both his father-in-law, Jean Crespin, and his son, Jean Vignon, had died. This was a delicate moment in the history of the Crespin/Vignon family. Young Samuel Crespin was an infant and an orphan, incapable of caring for himself, much less for one of the most prominent printing houses of Geneva. It must have been at least partly in order to guard against such a moment that Jean Crespin had entered his diagonal relationship with Eustache Vignon two decades earlier. Vignon was a partner, an investor, and a carrier of important relationships within Geneva’s elite. To him fell the responsibility of preserving and expanding the firm’s presence and reputation. Vignon inherited the firm’s assets, but he held one quarter of them in trust for Samuel, his brother-in-law and godson. His charge was to raise Samuel to maturity, train him in the family business, and then hand over to him his inheritance, thus preserving the success of the next generation of the Crespin family. Jean Crespin had chosen his successor well, and under Vignon both the business and Samuel prospered.  

The sixteenth century was a time of rapid and far-reaching change in Europe, for several reasons: the Reformations and Wars of Religion; the encounter with America; new attitudes towards science; the development of the modern nation-state; and, not least, the rise of mass

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106 Vignon, 178-81.
media in what Elizabeth Eisenstein dubbed the “Printing Revolution.” Huguenot printers stood at the center of all these movements. They were the masters of the new medium using it as a propaganda weapon in the religious and political struggles of the period and to spread knowledge about science and the New World. Jean Crespin’s martyrologies are well known and understood as tools of the Protestant movement. Eustache Vignon maintained the firm’s function as an instrument for the Protestant and anti-Spanish message. He combined this message with the new goal of spreading knowledge about science and the New World in his 1576 publication of a French translation of Girolamo Benzoni’s Historia del Mondo Nuovo. By publishing this work, Vignon offered his readers fascinating details about the New World and its flora and fauna, while simultaneously attacking Catholicism in general and Spain in particular. As a long-time partner of Jean Crespin, he was uniquely suited to maintaining the firm’s Calvinist bona fides while expanding its fame and prosperity. His efforts helped to shape the way we think about the sixteenth century, America, and science today.
CHAPTER THREE

Jean Crespin’s *Livre des Martyrs*: Martyrs as Role Models

From 1541 to 1605 -- a period which encompasses Jean Crespin’s residence in Geneva -- John Calvin and his friends and successors shaped Reformed theology, dominated Geneva’s politics, and promoted the explosive growth of Geneva’s print industry. Crespin took advantage of this contest, seeking contact with John Calvin and his inner circle and building a successful print business. Crespin was a pious Reformed Christian, an ambitious social climber, and a shrewd businessman who achieved great fame and prestige through steady management, social networking, Calvinist proselytizing, and popular appeal. The latter two in particular led the firm to produce works which were designed at once to promote the Calvinist version of the faith and to appeal to a broad audience. Crespin’s martyrologies were notably successful at both, and became some of the most influential and popular works of the period. This chapter will focus on these martyrologies and their significance both for Crespin’s printing success and for the message that they convey to Calvinist followers.

Crespin was a pioneer in the field of Biblical concordances, works which sought to reconcile seeming contradictions within the holy text. He published many works for Calvin and for notable Calvinist scholars, including Théodore de Bèze, François Hotman, and John Knox. In 1551 Crespin printed Calvin’s official French translation of the Bible, which was a professional triumph bringing him fame and prestige. Although in the following years Crespin did not remain
the official printer of Calvin’s Bible, he enjoyed the success he had built up by publishing additional bibles in Greek, Latin, and in French and other vernacular languages, and by collaborating with Théodore de Bèze on the production of the Geneva Psalter, a popular and important work which had a lasting impact on the Protestant understanding of the Psalms and use of music. In addition to his involvement in printing these bibles, Crespin also published many editions of the Classical authors like *Le marchant converti* (1561), a notable tragedy in the history of French drama, which he translated and adapted from a Latin original and the *Mercator* also known as *Naogeorgo* (1540) by the Lutheran Thomas Kirchmeyer. Le *Livre des Martyrs* (*Book of Martyrs*), however, dominated Crespin’s career.

Unlike most of the works he published, *Le Livre des Martyrs* was not only printed in Crispin’s firm; it was also compiled by Crespin himself. This was the book he kept returning to, revising, renaming, and reissuing throughout his life. It remains the work for which he is best known today. It became one of the best-selling French vernacular books of the sixteenth century. It was issued in seven French and two Latin editions over the course of sixteen years, from 1554 to 1570. With each edition, Crespin also tinkered with the title, shifting the emphasis and appeal of the work as it presented itself. Crespin’s full titles were, typically for the

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110 Jean Crespin, *Le Livre des Martyrs*, qui est un Recueil de plusieurs Martyrs qui ont enduré la mort pour le Nom de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, depuis Jean Hus jusques à ceste année presente M. D. LIII* (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1554.)

111 In practice, the volumes in print were even more varied, as each print run varied in some way, minor or major, from the previous run. These variations resulted from errors, from corrections of previous errors, from the addition of new material, from reorganizations, and from financial necessities such as the need to make use of pages already printed in an era in which the price of paper might be half the cost of total production. This was standard practice for printers of the time. See Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books*, 1-25; Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book*, 1-57.
period, quite long. Each has a shortened version, which I use here for the sake of brevity, but the longer titles are revealing and I will discuss them, as well as the reasons for their variation. In spite of the difference in their titles, Crespin’s martyrology as a whole is most often referred to as Le Livre des Martyrs.  

By 1564, Crespin’s original Livre des Martyrs, which had been first published in 1554, had become a seven-part volume. Five years later, and two years before his own death, Crespin published his last edition, to which he added an eighth part. Crespin also produced two Latin editions. In 1556, he produced Acta Martyrum, Eorum Videlice, qui hoc Seculo in Gallia, Germania, Anglia, Flandria, Italia, constans dederunt nomen Evangelio, idque sanguine suo obsignarunt: ab Wicleffo & Husso ad hunc usque diem (The Acts of the Martyrs, namely of those, who in this world, in France, Germany, England, Flanders, and Italy, constantly gave the name of the Gospel, sealing it with their own blood: from Wycliffe and Hus to this very day), which was followed in 1560 by Actiones et monimenta martyrum, qui a Wicleffo et Husso ad nostram hanc aetatem in Germania, Gallia, Anglia, Flandria, Italia, et ipsa demum Hispania, veritatem Euangelicam sanguine suo constanter obsignauerunt (The Acts and Monuments of the Martyrs, who from Wycliffe and Hus to our own time in Germany, France, England, Flanders, Italy, and finally Spain, have constantly sealed the truth of the Gospel with their blood). These titles demonstrate an interesting attempt to appeal to an educated and international audience by emphasizing the varied nationalities of the martyrs they describe. However, these editions were much less successful than those in French. They were published by other printers, who employed

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114 Jean Crespin, Actiones et monimenta martyrum, qui a Wicleffo et Husso ad nostrum hanc aetatem in Germania, Gallia, Anglia, Flandria, Italia, et ipsa demum Hispania, veritatem Euangelicam sanguine suo constanter obsignauerunt (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1560).
their own translators. Crespin resented such liberties and disliked both translations, thinking that both varied too far from his original. They remained much less popular than the French versions.\footnote{Jean-François Gilmont, “Un dialogue entre soi et soi: Jean Crespin imprimeur et écrivain,” in Alain Riffaud, ed., \textit{L’écrivain et l’Imprimeur} (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 95-106.}

In the course of the sixteenth century, Jean Crespin’s French martyrologies became tremendously popular and influential. The popular success of \textit{Le Livre des Martyrs} rested on its power to offer French Reformed Christians the means to make sense of their new faith and the consequences of their choice: it provided these isolated exiles with a sense of identity and purpose. It did so in two main ways. It offered role models for its readers to follow by presenting idealized visions of perfected Protestant faith, and it made Protestants a people with a history stretching back to the beginnings of Christianity by providing a coherent timeline.

\textbf{The Reformed Church’s Need for its own Story}

The sixteenth century was a time in which anything new was suspect. Terms such as “novelty” and “innovation” were slurs at best, criminal accusations at worst. Although it can be useful, language about Protestants “creating” or “building” a new Church runs the risk of anachronism. Even to speak of their “leaving” or “breaking with” the Roman Catholic Church fails to fully capture the way that sixteenth-century Protestants thought about their religious lives. They thought of themselves as Christians, as members of the true Church with a history that stretched unbroken back to the preaching career of Jesus Christ and with ancient roots in the Israelite history of the Old Testament. It was the Papacy which had departed from that legacy, while a courageous minority had held faithful to it. Jean Crespin believed that he had never left the Church; rather, the Pope and those who stood with him were the ones who had left it.
Crespin’s readers needed that message and the proof of it that Crespin provided.116

Very few Protestants made any claims to any new or unique revelations, and those who did were quickly and widely denounced. One such was John of Leiden, a charismatic Anabaptist speaker who claimed to receive divine revelations and whose popularity was such that he was able to gain control of the city of Münster in 1534. John of Leiden was renounced by the Roman Catholic Church, by Luther and his followers, and even by other Anabaptists, such as Menno Simons.117 Martin Luther personally denounced John of Leiden and his followers in the preface to a 1534 pamphlet. Luther seems to have been unconcerned about being equated with John of Leiden as a similar false prophet, and no such accusation seems to have been made by any credible Catholic writer. Rather, Luther’s Catholic critics merely accused him of having made John of Leiden’s success possible by weakening and dividing the Catholic Church. It was against this charge that Luther felt the need to defend himself, arguing that, just as Jesus was not responsible for the sins of Judas, Luther was not responsible for the heresies of the Anabaptists. Luther admitted that heretics might have twisted his words to support their heresies, but he pointed out that the Bible was similarly twisted by those same heretics. Such misuse did not cast blame on the Bible, nor should it on Luther’s own works. Indeed, Luther reiterated a claim he had made many times before: that all of his theology came from the Bible, and nowhere else.118

Sixteenth-century Protestants told a certain story about the history of the Church. Jesus and His Apostles had founded the Church in the first century. While Jesus was incarnate on Earth, He was able to correct personally any error into which His Apostles fell. Afterwards, the

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Church had to be run by mere mortals, who even with the best of intentions were prone to sin and error. The Church had always been plagued with bad practices and heresies. However, the early Church, as shown in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, was sanctified by its presence in the New Testament. The Patristic Church of the next few centuries was closer to the ideal, but its sanctity was not guaranteed. The medieval Papacy grew increasingly corrupt until its corruption became intolerable. Christians began to realize that the True Church was the body of believers and not necessarily tied to the Catholic hierarchy. They found that they were able to form their own holy communities, like the churches of the first century, in which they could live more authentically Christian lives.

That corruption existed within the Church was a common belief long before the Reformation. When the rival Popes of the Great Schism excommunicated each other, it was clear that something was terribly wrong with the body that still claimed, despite its open division, to be the Catholic Church. The fifteenth-century autobiography of Pope Pius II included a frank account of his election, showing the Cardinals as greedy, ambitious politicians squabbling amongst themselves for gain. Satires like Erasmus’s *In Praise of Folly* were possible precisely because his intended audience of educated, literate clerics already knew about the shortcomings which they mocked. The unexpected popularity of unauthorized vernacular translations of *In Praise of Folly* showed that many savvy laymen were also aware of the Church’s problems. Yet many people who were keenly aware of the Church’s flaws - including Erasmus and several of Crespin’s friends - chose to remain within it. Those who joined Reformed churches had to make an agonizing choice to do so. However vituperative the language they used in debate, many had sympathy for those who were still trying to live authentic Christian lives within the Church.

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Roman Catholic Church. The Reformed had made such attempts themselves, even though they had failed. Catholic polemicists could condemn all Protestants as heretics, but Protestants rarely retaliated so indiscriminately. They had, after all, once been Catholics themselves. They condemned the Pope in the strongest terms, but the average Catholic they wanted to persuade, not to alienate.

Crespin’s martyrology linked the Reformed church of the sixteenth century to the early Church of the first, second and third centuries. The members of the early Church had had to meet in secret for fear of persecution, and some of its members died for their faith. Sixteenth-century Protestants were in a very similar situation, except that their persecutors were, at least nominally, fellow Christians. As an analogy, this was strong. As an argument for continuity with the ancient Church, it had problems. The time between the Edict of Milan, which legalized Christianity in the Roman Empire in 313, and Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses, which were published in 1517, left a gap of 1200 years between the two groups of martyrs.

This gap required explanation. If the martyrs of the sixteenth century were continuing an ancient tradition, what had happened to the spirit of martyrdom in the meantime? The fifteenth-century example of Jan Hus and his friend Jerome of Prague seemed to fit the pattern of Classical martyrdom. Looking even earlier, Crespin found the fourteenth-century example of John Wycliffe, who had expounded many ideas similar to those of the Reformed Church of Crespin’s day, and who had influenced Hus. Looking back further still, Crespin found similar ideas expressed by the twelfth-century Peter Waldo. However, Wycliffe and Waldo presented a new problem for the pattern of Crespin’s martyrology. Both of them courageously had preached doctrines which Crespin’s readers agreed with; both of them had inspired followers who died for those beliefs; but neither of them had personally died for their beliefs. Both had lived to old age
and died of natural causes.

Jean Crespin, then, had three reasons to expand the timeline of modern martyrdom into the past: to avoid the accusation of novelty; to strengthen the implied link with the ancient martyrs; and to provide Protestants with a stronger sense of identity by making them part of a long-standing tradition of Christian dissent.

The Patristic Martyrological Tradition

When in 1554 Crespin published his first martyrology, he turned to a tradition which went back to the very founding of the Christian faith but which had fallen out of favor in recent centuries - the martyrology. Jesus of Nazareth, the founder of Christianity, went willingly to a painful death. Thus, martyrdom had from the beginning the sanctity of following Christ’s example. Acts of the Apostles 6-8 tells the story of the death of Stephen the “Protomartyr,” considered the first martyr of Christianity.

Martyr stories had been immensely popular in the early Christian Church of the second and third centuries. As a persecuted minority, Christians told the stories of their martyrs to encourage their devotion and to strengthen their communities by building a common history. But martyr stories were inherently subversive. By their very nature, they involved individuals choosing to follow their own consciences in defiance of established legal authorities. The traditional Classical format, one which Crespin largely followed, was a trial in which the hero of the story was found guilty and sentenced to death by the court. For the marginal, often underground, Church of the first, second, and early third centuries, this format made a great deal of sense. But as the Christian Church gained status and power, and began to put its own heretics on trial for their lives, it became increasingly problematic. Brad Gregory argues in *Salvation at
the concept of “saint” subsumed that of “martyr.” “Saint” was a much broader category which lacked the inherent defiance implicit in martyrdom. However, the Protestants of the sixteenth century found themselves once again a minority persecuted for their Christian faith by legally constituted authorities. The analogy with the primitive Church was obvious and comforting. In addition to Christ’s Passion and the story of Stephen Protomartyr, a number of other works influenced Crespin, such as the stories of Perpetua, Polycarp, Carpus, Ignatius, Justin, the martyrs of Lyons, and Tertullian’s *Scorpiace*. According to Paul Middleton, Jean Crespin, like Jan Hus before him, was aware of the martyrologies of the early Church and deliberately modeled his accounts on them.

During the two centuries between Nero and Decian, the question of how to deal with Christians was left to local law enforcement. In capital cases, the governors, whose order was required for all capital sentences, would hear the cases. Thus accounts such as the Martyrs of Lyons specify that the martyrs were killed by the governor’s order, albeit often at the instigation of anti-Christian elements of the population. The legal trial became the basis of the framework of many martyr stories. The stages of the legal process became sanctified as stages of a holy story: the martyrs were reported to the authorities; they were interrogated; their associates were coerced into testifying against them; they were accused, and refused to deny the charges; they were imprisoned; they were often tortured for their faith, or offered leniency if they would renounce it. They were often given a last chance to communicate with their loved ones; they were put on trial publicly, and if they resisted all forms of persuasion, they were publicly executed. Some stories

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121 Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, 30-34. This is not to say, of course, that that stories of martyrs lost their appeal. The Litany of Saints continued to list Martyrs first, so Catholics were repeatedly confronted with a hierarchical list of saints that put apostles (all martyrs but one) and other martyrs first.


included miracles or visions; some stated that “witnesses were amazed”; some contained no miraculous elements save for the courage and steadfastness of the martyrs.

These stories tended to portray the government of the Roman Empire as a monolithic entity whose hostility to Christianity made it the perfect villain to counterpoint the martyrs’ moral heroism. However, as the Christian Church developed its own hierarchies, the subversive nature of martyrdom threatened to undermine them. This conflict came to a head with the Donatist controversy of the early fourth century. The Donatists were Christians who embraced the ideals set forth in Christian martyrlogies. They took to heart such works as the *Acts of the Abitinian Martyrs* and the *Martyrs of Lyons*, both of which praised the martyrs of the faith and condemned the “traitors” who avoided martyrdom by cooperating with the State. The Christian hierarchy, led by its bishops, not only pardoned the backsliders but allowed them to keep their positions as priests and even, in a few cases, as bishops. The Donatists refused to accept this degree of clemency, and as a result many of them gained the martyrdom they sought - at the hands of their own fellow Christians. This may have been the first time that the Church killed its own members for their excess piety, but it would not be the last. In what would become a familiar pattern, the Church hierarchy sought to suppress the most enthusiastic Christians after their religion had won legal acceptance: the Church began to persecute the Donatists in 317, only four years after the Edict of Milan announced an official Roman policy of tolerance for the Christian faith. From that time on, the leaders of the Church became increasingly wary of martyrdom as the mark of the true Christian, and began to emphasize loyalty to the Church as the new standard of what defined a good Christian.124

For the next few centuries, it was still possible for a Christian to die for his faith, and the stories of those who did so still borrowed from the martyrological tradition. However, with the

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Roman persecutions ended, these new martyrs were mainly missionaries attempting to spread the Christian faith into pagan lands. They died, then, as loyal servants of the Church, doing their duty in service under the aegis of the Church hierarchy. Even when they were killed by legal rulers, their stories were stories of obedience to Church authority. By the High Middle Ages, when Christianity dominated Europe, even this form of martyrdom was quite rare, as there were few pagans left to convert. In medieval Christianity, then, the status of martyr was mostly subsumed by the status of saint. The manner in which martyrs suffered for their faith was important mainly because it had granted them the sacred status which allowed them to intercede with God on the behalf of mortals. Nor was martyrdom the only path to sainthood. Many other saints achieved their status by their good works and by miracles that occurred before or after their deaths. Such saints were not regarded as less saintly because of their lack of violent deaths. The medieval idea of sainthood revolved around a special status, closer to God than mortal. Under this way of thinking, a martyrology was only the story of how one particular person came to be a saint. As Brad Gregory writes in Salvation at Stake, “Martyr-saints were important less because of their heroic deaths per se than because martyrdom was the source of sanctity that made them God’s powerful friends.” A saint was a patron to admire, not a role model to follow – if only for the lack of opportunity.

The High Middle Ages also saw the rise of Christian movements which, like the Donatists, defied the Church so openly that they suffered persecution for their Christian religious beliefs. Religious dissenters before Luther were already invoking the tropes of martyrdom to praise their dead - the Waldensians of the thirteenth century, the Lollards of the fourteenth, the Hussites of the fifteenth. Jan Hus in particular laid much of the groundwork for Crespin’s later

125 Gregory, Salvation at Stake, 30-34.
126 Gregory, Salvation at Stake, 62-73.
efforts. In his letters from prison, Hus urged his followers to follow the examples of Christ and of the martyrs, not simply to revere them but to emulate them.\textsuperscript{127}

The public trials and executions of people like Crespin’s friends Juan Diaz (1546), Diego de Enzinas (1547), and Pierre Brully (1545) were meant to punish and intimidate the new movement, but also to strike at its claims to legitimacy. Burning a person at the stake for heresy was a dramatic rejection by the Church and the State of everything they stood for. Protestants desperately needed different forms of support to maintain their courage and their faith. They needed a way to make sense of these brutal deaths and the rejection that they represented. This was one need that Crespin’s martyrology filled.

\textbf{Choosing Martyrs}

The Protestants of the sixteenth century knew that they had made a radical break with the Church that had united the Christians of Europe for centuries. They had not rejected Christianity, however; on the contrary, they had broken with Rome precisely because their view of what it meant to be a Christian was so radically different from the Roman Catholic understanding. Yet Europeans had identified Roman Catholicism with Christianity for so long that it was difficult to imagine what it might mean to be a Christian outside the Catholic Church. These new Protestants needed role models whose lives could serve as guides for their own post-Catholic lives. This need - rooted deep in the human need to make sense of the world and one’s own place within it - created the market for martyr stories which would make a place for Crespin’s martyrology. Crespin described his martyrs as demonstrating conspicuously Christian characteristics in the face of persecution from Catholic authorities. These figures demonstrated for his readers how to live a Christian life outside of the Catholic Church. Jean Crespin was literally in the business of

\textsuperscript{127} Paul Middleton, “Enemies of the (Church and) State,” 161-80.
selling role models.

David Watson, in his unpublished but noteworthy dissertation, “The martyrrology of Jean Crespin and the early French evangelical movement,” breaks down the elements present both in Crespin’s stories and in classical martyrrologies. These included three essential elements: willingness to die, an orthodox statement of faith, and a clearly religious motive for the deaths. Secondary elements include betrayal by close associates, refusal to recant, forgiveness of the persecutors, miracles, and the astonishment of witnesses. These elements were already present in the New Testament stories of Jesus and Stephen. Jesus was betrayed by close associates, passed through moments of doubt and worry before reaching peace, was tortured, and caused witnesses to marvel at the manner of his death. Stephen made a lengthy and detailed confession of faith at his trial and was granted miraculous visions at his execution. Both Jesus and Stephen were put on trial and confounded their inquisitors; both were brutally murdered but prayed for God to forgive their killers. All these elements guided Crespin in choosing martyrs in his martyrrology.

In order to qualify as martyrs, Crespin’s subjects had to meet certain criteria. First, they must have been killed - a seemingly simple criterion which developed its own complications. Second, they must have been killed specifically for the sake of their faith - executed as heretics rather than as common criminals. Third, they had to go willingly to their deaths. Finally, they had to confess a faith which was acceptably Christian.

The second criterion was often surprisingly easy to satisfy. To the historian - and Crespin was, after all, writing a history - it is often easier to say what happened than why it happened. However, most of Crespin’s subjects were convicted of heresy in public trials of which legal

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records were kept. With diligent research, the help of influential friends, and occasionally a bit of discreet bribery, Crespin could obtain copies of these records. The legal systems all over Europe required that a criminal be convicted of a specific charge. If that charge was listed as heresy, rather than another capital crime like treason or murder, then Crespin had his proof that the accused had been killed specifically because of his religious beliefs. Criminal trials had provided the framework of the martyr stories of the early Church: accusation, arrest, interrogation, imprisonment, public hearing, sentencing, execution. If Crespin’s new martyr stories followed a similar framework, it may have been in part because he was directly influenced by those stories. However, much of the similarity can be explained simply by observing that the pattern of these martyr stories mirrors the pattern of judicial records.  

Crespin also attempted to demonstrate the martyr’s willingness to die. Again, the martyr’s attitude was often surprisingly easy to document. Attitudes are often difficult things to prove, but in the cases of these martyrs, both the court and the accused often were eager to demonstrate that the accused had made a deliberate and informed choice. The accused wanted the world to know that he had died for what he believed in. The court had to demonstrate that the accused had deliberately refused to accept an orthodox precept, because that was precisely his or her crime. Heresy law recognized that anyone could make a mistake, and allowed a person who made an unorthodox statement a second chance. A priest had to explain the orthodox tenet to the accused and the court had to give him or her the chance to accept the correction. Capital punishment could only be imposed on contumacious heretics - those who either rejected the orthodox precept or accepted it but then later restated their previous heresy.  

In some cases, court records included the testimony of the accused and their official

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130 Watson, The martyrology of Jean Crespin.
131 Watson, The martyrology of Jean Crespin; Gregory, Salvation at Stake; Middleton, “Enemies of the (Church and) State.”
rejection of the orthodox doctrine despite warnings that they would be burned as heretics for
doing so. In other cases, Crespin was able to obtain copies of letters sent from prison in which
the prisoner expressed his or her willingness to die for the true faith. This sort of evidence
Crespin could and did copy directly into the *Livre des Martyrs*. In other cases, he had statements
from friends or relatives who had spoken with the prisoner or from witnesses to the trial. Crespin
claimed to have such evidence for all his accounts, but in some cases he does not explain his
evidence and it is possible that he was relying on word of mouth.\(^\text{132}\)

When no formal trial was held, the martyr’s willingness to die could be difficult to prove.
It was, at least in theory, a necessary element. A person killed unwillingly might be a victim, but
not a martyr, not a hero of the faith, not a role model. Yet when innocent people were killed for
their faith, it created such a compelling story that such niceties might be overlooked. Such was
the case in the 1545 massacres of the villages of Mérindol and Cabrières. Ten named inhabitants
of Mérindol were examined by doctors of theology and found to be heretics – probably
Waldensians. On this basis the Royal government issued the Arrest of Mérindol, which not only
sentenced the ten named men to be burned as heretics, but extended their punishment to the
whole town: “that same Arrest condemned all the inhabitants of Mérindol (in which place there
were easily eighty households) to be burned, including men, women, and children, without
reserving any person.” The buildings were to be demolished and all the trees cut down. With the
exception of the ten named men, the other inhabitants of Mérindol made no explicit statement of
faith, nor did they choose to die for their faith; they were given no choice in the matter. Strictly
speaking, they did not qualify as martyrs. Yet their story was so moving that Crespin decided to

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include it nevertheless.\textsuperscript{133}

Crespin’s martyrs also had to be theologically correct. This criterion became increasingly important as Anabaptists began to write their own martyrologies, which Crespin was at pains to refute. Crespin evaluated the faith of each of his martyrs to make sure that they did not express any ideas which fell too far outside of what was acceptable for his readers. In making these choices, Crespin had to define what “mainstream Protestantism” was and where its boundaries lay. Thus, he became a highly influential figure in the definition of what Protestantism was and was not. Crespin’s concern over being confused with “Anabaptists, Libertines, Atheists, Epicureans, Servetists, mockers and scorners of all religion”\textsuperscript{134} drove him to prove that the martyrs he praised practiced the true Christian faith. They could be Calvinists, Lutherans, or Anglicans, but not Anabaptists, Spiritualists, or Unitarians. Crespin does not provide any more specific reasons for his rejection of certain groups, but his readers would not likely have required much. Most Protestant leaders, including John Calvin, condemned the Anabaptists as heretics.\textsuperscript{135} The Unitarian theologian Michael Servetus had been burned for heresy in Geneva in 1553, and John Calvin had personally approved his execution.\textsuperscript{136}

\textit{Le Livre des Martyrs}

Although the \textit{Livre des Martyrs} was always most popular in its French-language edition, it always portrayed martyrdom as an international phenomenon. Each edition added new martyr stories of which Crespin had learned since the previous edition. The martyrs he honored were not

\textsuperscript{133} Jean Crespin, \textit{Recueil de Plusiers Personnes,qui ont constamment enduré la mort, pour le Nom du Seigneur, depuis Jean Wicleff jusques au temps present, avec une troisieme partie, contenant de autres excellents personnages, puis n’a gueres execuez, pour une mesme confession du nom de Dieu} (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1556), 821-5.

\textsuperscript{134} Jean Crespin, \textit{Le Livre des Martyrs, qui est un Recueil de plusieurs Martyrs qui ont enduré la mort pour le Nom de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, depuis Jean Hus jusques à ceste année presente M. D. LIII} (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1554), vi.


only French Calvinists like himself. The first edition included the Bohemians Jan Hus (whom Crespin credits as the first of the new martyrs) and Jerome of Prague and the Spaniards Juan Diaz and Diego de Enzinas. Later editions would add significant numbers of German, Flemish, Dutch, Italian, and English martyrs. Although Crespin excluded Catholic and Anabaptist martyrs, and those of other groups which he considered heretical, he included, along with Calvinist also Lutheran and Anglican martyrs. Reaching back into the past, he also included pre-Reformation groups such as the Lollards, Cathars, and Waldensians.137

With each edition, Crespin tinkered with the title, shifting the emphasis and appeal of the work as it presented itself. Crespin’s full titles were, typically for the period, quite long, but the longer and different titles are revealing.

Crespin was conscious of his readers’ need for role models and explicitly offered his martyrs as such. The first edition was published in 1554, entitled Le Livre des Martyrs, qui est un Recueil de plusiers Martyrs qui ont enduré la mort pour le Nom de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, depuis Jean Hus jusques à ceste anné presente M. D. LIPIII (The Book of Martyrs, which is a Record of many Martyrs who have endured death for the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, from Jan Hus to the present year 1554).138 This first edition was mainly concerned with the deaths of reformers over the previous three decades, most of them French. The only two martyrs from before 1523 were Jan Hus, burned at the Council of Constance in 1415, and his friend Jerome of Prague, who suffered the same fate the following year. Wanting to demonstrate that the Reformed Church had older and deeper roots, Crespin took some pains to make the connection between Hus and the sixteenth-century Protestants, but skipped fairly quickly over the century after Hus and Jerome and the majority of the work is devoted instead to contemporary people.

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138 Jean Crespin, Le Livre des Martyrs, qui est un Recueil de plusiers Martyrs qui ont enduré la mort pour le Nom de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, depuis Jean Hus jusques à ceste anné presente M. D. LIPIII (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1554).
known to Crespin and to the members of his network. Although the majority were French, he also included two Spaniards and several Germanic residents of the Holy Roman Empire like the German Henry Supphen, the Italian Faventino Fanino, the Flemish Henry and John of Brussels, Juan Diaz and Diego “Dryander” de Enzinas.\(^{139}\)

In the Preface to the first edition, Crespin explained the purpose and significance of his martyrology: “the usefulness of this record is amply demonstrated in the … Preface.”\(^{140}\) He proposed that the courage and virtue of his martyrs could provide useful “examples” for his readers, thereby encouraging them and demonstrating how to behave like true Christians in the face of hardship. Crespin explained both the nature of the hardships which his coreligionists endured and the manner in which he expected his work to aid them.

In the Preface, Jean Crespin spoke of the hardships which befell the members of “the true Church of God … those who are commonly called Lutherans in these recent times.”\(^{141}\) Specifically, Crespin classified the oppression of the “true Church” into two types, the spiritual and the material: “It was inevitable that Satan, father of lies and murderer from the beginning, would bend all his efforts to suppressing the Truth, in order to master the two kingdoms, the spiritual and the material: the spiritual by lies and false doctrines, the material by cruelty and tyrannical oppression.”\(^{142}\) By speaking of two types of oppression, spiritual and material, and attributing them to diabolical causes, Crespin attempted to make sense of the persecution of Protestants in his time and to help the reader make sense of whatever suffering he or she had

\(^{139}\) Jean Crespin, *Le Livre des Martyrs*, 1554.
\(^{140}\) Jean Crespin, *Le Livre des Martyrs* (1554), Title Page.
\(^{141}\) Jean Crespin, *Le Livre des Martyrs, qui est un Recueil de plusieurs Martyrs qui ont enduré la mort pour le Nom de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, depuis Jean Hus jusques à ceste année presente M. D. LIII* (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1554), vi.
\(^{142}\) « …il ne se peut faire autrement que Satan père de mensonge & meurtrier des le commencement, ne face tous ses efforts pour opprimer ceste vérité, à fin d’obtenir les deux royaumes, & le spiritual & le corporel: le spiritual par mensonges & fausses doctrines, le corporel par cruautez & oppressions tyranniques. » Jean Crespin, *Le Livre des Martyrs, qui est un Recueil de plusieurs Martyrs qui ont enduré la mort pour le Nom de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, depuis Jean Hus jusques à ceste année presente M. D. LIII* (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1554) ii.
borne for the faith.\textsuperscript{143}

Crespin proposed that his martyr stories could be useful examples to his readers: “In conclusion, this present work, as it has been collected as faithfully and simply as possible: I also hope that it will serve you well, insofar as each of you has need of consolation or confirmation. For you have here marvelous images and powerful examples, from persons of every estate, sex, age and nation … In short, there is much here with which you may strengthen yourself greatly. You old and young, noble and humble, will find those who have gone before you. You husbands will not find it so hard to leave behind your wives and children: for a better place is prepared for you. You women, may the infirmity of your sex not make you draw back: there are virtuous women who by their example open the path to you.”\textsuperscript{144} Thus Crespin named two specific ways in which he hoped that his work would be of use to the faithful reader: confirmation and consolation.

Confirmation strengthened the resolve of those who doubted or wavered, such as the family men and infirm women he mentioned towards the end of his Preface. They should keep in mind, as the martyrs had, that the rewards of faithfulness to the True Faith – that “better place … prepared for you” – far outweighed any temporal suffering. It might make some of the faithful doubt, to be lumped in with “Anabaptists, Libertines, Atheists, Epicureans, Servetists, mockers and scorners of all religion,”\textsuperscript{145} to have “all this garbage and infections heaped upon their

\textsuperscript{143} The “tyrants” who inflicted these punishments were usually Catholic kings and princes. The most powerful, and one of the most eager, of these was Philip II of Spain. But among them were most of Europe’s rulers, including Henry II of France, Mary I of England, and many of the German princes.

\textsuperscript{144} « Or pour conclusion, ce present labeur tout ainsi qu’il a esté recueilli le plus fidelement & simplement qu’il a este possible: aussi j’espere qu’il vous servira grandement, selon qu’un chacun de vous aura besoin ou de consolation ou de confirmation. Car vous avez ici de merveilleux miroirs & de toutes fortés d’exemples, de tous estats, sexes, aages & nations … Bref il y a en toute forte & manière de quoy se foritifier. Vous ancien & jeunes, nobles & abjects, il y a icy qui vous precedent. Vous maris ne faites difficulté de laisser derriere & femmes & enfans : car il y a une eschange de meillure condition qui vous est preparée. Vous femmes, que l’infirmité de vostre sexe ne vous face reculler : il y a des femmes vertueuses qui par leur exemple vous ouvent le chemin. » Jean Crespin, \textit{Le Livre des Martyrs, qui est un Recueil de plusieurs Martyrs qui ont enduri la mort pour le Nom de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, depuis Jean Hus jusques à ceste anné presente M. D. LIII} (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1554), ix.

\textsuperscript{145} Jean Crespin, \textit{Le Livre des Martyrs, qui est un Recueil de plusieurs Martyrs qui ont enduri la mort pour le Nom de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, depuis Jean Hus jusques à ceste anné presente M. D. LIII} (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1554), vi.
shoulders, and all ignominy and oppression fallen on them.” Yet, by God’s light, “one can easily discern the true Martyrs of Lord Jesus from the enraged minions of Satan. Therefore I beg with a good heart and exhort all who favor the true Gospel, wherever they may be, that they be of one will, of one voice and heart as they give praise with us and render thanks to God the eternal and all-powerful, and however much they help to maintain the good and just cause of His son Jesus Christ … they shall pay them double according to their works, as it is said in Revelation.” As for what precisely his readers ought to emulate, Crespin names two ways in which God aided the martyrs: He granted them the courage to remain constant in the face of fear, doubt, and pain, and He “opened their mouths,” allowing them to express their faith clearly.

Consolation, the other benefit which the martyrology had to offer, was an effect which could benefit any Protestant – including those like Crespin, whose life was fairly comfortable. As a businessman, Crespin was interested in profiting from publishing martyrologies; but there was also a personal dimension. Although he had not sacrificed his life in the name of the new faith, he and his family, like many other ordinary Protestants, had been forced to make sacrifices which required consolation. Exile, like Crespin’s own, was commonplace. Calvin’s Geneva was full of exiles from France, Britain, the Netherlands, and the German states. Each of these communities had its own Reformed church in Geneva. Some of these refugees lost all they owned and had to live in poverty. Others, like Crespin, saw their fortunes diminished but were able to restore them. Nevertheless, they still paid a price. They lost the comfort of living in their

146 « Toutes ces ordures & infections sur leurs epaules, & toute ignominie & opprobre soit tombe sur eux. » Jean Crespin, Le Livre des Martyrs, qui est un Recueil de plusieurs Martyrs qui ont endure la mort pour le Nom de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, depuis Jean Hus jusques à ceste anné presente M. D. LIIII (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1554), vi-vii.
147 « ...on peut aisement discerener les vrais Martyrs du Seigneur Jesus, & les enragez supposts de Satan. Parquoy je prie de bon cuer & exhorte tous ceux qui favoirissent, & veulent bien a l’Evangile, ou qu’ils soyen, d’un mesme consentement, d’une mesme bouche & cuer ils louent avec nous, & rendent graces au Dieu eternel & toutpuissant, & quant & quant qu’ils aident à maintenir cest tant bonne & iuste cause de son Fils Jesus Christ … ils luy payent au double selon ses ouevres, comme il est dit en l’Apocal. » Jean Crespin, Le Livre des Martyrs, qui est un Recueil de plusieurs Martyrs qui ont endure la mort pour le Nom de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, depuis Jean Hus jusques à ceste anné presente M. D. LIIII (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1554), viii-viii. See also Revelation 18:6.
148 Jean Crespin, Le Livre des Martyrs, qui est un Recueil de plusieurs Martyrs qui ont endure la mort pour le Nom de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, depuis Jean Hus jusques à ceste anné presente M. D. LIIII (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1554), Preface.
home towns, with the dialect and customs and neighbors they had grown up with. They lost friends and fell out of contact with relatives. They also lost the comfortable weight of centuries of Catholic tradition, trading it for a burden of doubt and introspection.\(^{149}\) For those who mourned and perhaps sometimes regretted their sacrifices, the stories of the martyrs reminded them that others had sacrificed far more. The courage with which they bore their much greater sufferings must have encouraged Crespin’s readers to more gracefully bear their own.\(^{150}\)

In 1555 Crespin produced a second edition of the martyrology, which was updated and divided into two parts. He also changed the title to *Recueil de Plusiers Personnes, qui ont constamment enduré la mort, pour le Nom du Seigneur, depuis Jean Wicleff jusques au temps present, avec une troisieme partie, contenante autres excellents personnages, puis n’a gueres executez, pour une mesme confession du nom de Dieu* (Record of Many Persons who have constantly endured death for the name of the Lord, from John Wycliffe to the present time, with a third part, containing other worthy characters who, though they were not executed, are notable for the same confession of God’s name).\(^{151}\) The title of this second edition contained two interesting variations from the title of the first edition. The first of these is that the word “martyrs” was removed and replaced by “persons.” Crespin made this choice because a critic had

\(^{149}\) Little wonder, then, that among the first psalms included in the Geneva Psalter (which Crespin also published) was Psalm 137: “Stans assis aux rives aquatiques, De Babylon, plorions melancholiques, Nos souvenans du pays de Sion…. Las, dismes-nous, qui pourroit inciter nos tristes coeurs à chanter la louange de nostre Dieu en une terre estrange? (“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion…. How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?”) Clement Marot and Theodore de Bèze, *Les Pseaumes mis en Rime Francoise* (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1563), 308.

\(^{150}\) Theodore de Bèze, in a foreword to the Psalter, supplied a guide to “the true use of the Psalms” and for those who needed to “deplore the misery” of a “captive” Church. This turned out to be an index to help the reader find the Psalm proper to the occasion. Just as Paracelsus - another radical sixteenth-century writer of the Swiss-French-German-Netherlands border area - recommended specific chemicals to cure specific physical ailments, de Bèze recommended specific Psalms for specific spiritual ailments. The comparison is not merely an idle one; for Paracelsus had much in common with Calvin, de Bèze and Crespin. Paracelsus was only a generation older - when he died, in September 1541, Calvin had just returned to Geneva. All four were educated men born to prosperous families, and all four traveled, wrote, addressed crowds, and formed networks along the borders between the Holy Roman Empire, France, Switzerland, and the Spanish Netherlands. Border cities such as Basel, Strasbourg, and Metz figure prominently in all their stories. Something in this combination of literacy, mobility, and liminality in the sixteenth century produced a certain approach: preoccupied with the written word, yet focused on its practical application. Theodore de Bèze, “Indice pour trouver les Pseaumes selon l’occurrence des afaires, esquelles l’Eglise de Dieu, ou bien la personne privee se peut trouver: en quoy consiste le vray usage des Pseaumes,” in Clement Marot and Theodore de Bèze, *Les Pseaumes mis en Rime Francoise* (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1563), 9.

\(^{151}\) Jean Crespin, *Recueil de Plusiers Personnes, qui ont constamment enduré la mort, pour le Nom du Seigneur, depuis Jean Wicleff jusques au temps present, avec une troisieme partie, contenante autres excellents personnages, puis n’a gueres executez, pour une mesme confession du nom de Dieu* (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1555).
expressed concern that writing about “martyrs” might have been aping Catholic idolatry.152

Second, whereas the first edition traced modern martyrdom back to Jan Hus, the title of this second edition extended it further back, to John Wycliffe and even earlier. Crespin likely emphasized Wycliffe because in between the first and second editions, he had read the work of another budding Protestant martyrrologist, the English John Foxe, on the persecution of the English Lollards.153 The stories of the persecuted Lollards fit Crespin’s mold very well, and some of them predated the death of Hus. But Wycliffe himself, the founder of the Lollards, managed to live a long, successful life and die of natural causes. He could not be counted as a martyr, yet his story was vital to Crespin’s account. To include Wycliffe, Crespin created the vague category of “worthy characters who, though they were not executed, were notable for the same confession of God’s name.”154

Chronologically, it made sense to begin with Wycliffe, who had influenced Jan Hus and his followers. Furthermore, Wycliffe’s own followers in England, the Lollards, had been persecuted for beliefs very similar to those of Crespin and his readers. By including Wycliffe and the Lollards, Crespin was able to extend the history of Protestant martyrdom back to the fourteenth century. The 1555 edition included even earlier persons that had been executed as heretics as far back as the twelfth century. Under French religious dissidents Crespin included a variety of names of people who were persecuted, including Publicans, Cathars, Paterinians, and Albigensians. Crespin selected people who were executed for denying the authority of the Pope or the efficacy of the Sacraments to save without Divine Grace. Crespin traces the persecution of the English Lollards to 1401, the year immediately after Wycliffe’s death, and thirteen years

153 The Marian persecutions for which Foxe is most famous for chronicling were yet to come, and in the event, Crespin wrote about them before Foxe did. John Foxe, Foxe’s Book of Martyrs (The John C. Winston Company, 1926.) However, Foxe published a work about Christian martyrdom which used the Lollards as prime examples in 1554: the Commentarii rerum ecclesiasticarum (Strasbourg, 1554.)
before the death of Hus. John Wycliffe openly defied the Pope and denied the power of the sacraments. Crespin devoted a lengthy chapter to him in the 1555 edition, reproducing copies of Wycliffe’s correspondence with the Pope. Wycliffe’s courage and constancy made him an excellent role model for Protestants two centuries later, and his beliefs were in accordance with theirs. Yet Wycliffe failed the first test - protected by the English royal family, he escaped prosecution and died in his old age, of natural causes. Wycliffe’s story was clearly important in the story of latter-day martyrdom, yet he himself did not qualify as a martyr.

However, Crespin’s second edition reached further into the past even than Wycliffe’s time. It included other late-medieval groups and characters condemned as heretics for challenging the power of the Pope, emphasizing the study of Scripture over Church tradition, and/or denying that the Sacraments had any power to save apart from God’s will. Crespin claimed the Cathars and the Waldensians, as well as specific individuals condemned for heresy due to Protestant-sounding pronouncements, as Protestants or proto-Protestants. This extended the origins of the movement back through the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries and back into the twelfth. Peter Waldo’s career as a religious reformer began in the 1160s. The Cathars of France probably existed before that, as they seem to have had their own ecclesiastical institutions in place by 1167. The earliest martyrs whom Crespin identifies in the second edition of the *Livre des Martyrs* were Cathars burnt in a mass persecution in 1182. By this reckoning, Protestantism was at least 373 years old. This was a history with a real and substantial heft to it - a history which Crespin and his readers could be proud of.

Peter Waldo, a twelfth-century merchant from Lyons, championed the Scripture as the

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156 Jean Crespin, *Recueil de Plusiers Personnes, qui ont constamment enduré la mort, pour le Nom du Seigneur, depuis Jean Wicleff jusques au temps present, avec une troisième partie, contenant autres excellents personnages, puis n’a gueres executez, pour une mesme confession du nom de Dieu* (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1555), 1-27.
sole source of truth and rejected the Pope’s authority. Like the Lollards and the Hussites, many of his Waldensian followers were persecuted and killed for heresy, but like John Wycliffe, he personally escaped such a fate. In the 1555 edition, Crespin called Waldo “divinely inspired,” and praised him for arranging the first vernacular translation of the Bible (into French). Crespin strengthened his case for the continuity of his Church by including the Waldensians among his martyrs, even though Waldo’s own failure to be martyred made this awkward.\footnote{Jean Crespin, \textit{Recueil de Plaisiers Personnes, qui ont constamment enduré la mort, pour le Nom du Seigneur, depuis Jean Wicleff jusques au temps present, avec une troisième partie, contenant autres excellents personnages, puis n’a gueres executez, pour une mesme confession du nom de Dieu} (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1555), 816-21.}

In 1556, gratified by the success of these first two editions, Crespin implemented a new financial strategy. Instead of revising and republishing a lengthy history beginning in the fourteenth century, Crespin published three new chapters in a stand-alone format, as supplements and updates for readers who had already read and, more significantly, had already purchased the 1554 and 1555 volumes, \textit{Troisieme partie du recueil des martyrs, qui de ce temps ont constamment enduré la mort pour la vraye doctrine du Fils de Dieu. Ceste III. partie contient exemples admirables de grans personnages executez en divers lieux, et surtout au pays d'Angleterre, de France et de Flandes} \footnote{Jean Crespin, \textit{Troisieme partie du recueil des martyrs, qui de ce temps ont constamment enduré la mort pour la vraye doctrine du Fils de Dieu. Ceste III. partie contient exemples admirables de grans personnages executez en divers lieux, et surtout au pays d'Angleterre, de France et de Flandes} (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1556).}. 157 In addition, because John Calvin had approved the use of the term “martyr,” Crespin reclaimed the title of “martyrs,” as a “record of the martyrs.” However, he slightly changed the nature of what the martyrs died for: whereas previously they had died for the Lord’s “name,” now they died for His “doctrine.” This shift changed the focus from the honor of God to theological correctness and emphasized the variety of nationalities represented among the
martyrs. Parts Four (1561) and Five (1563) used much the same language, but Crespin entitled them *Actes des martyrs* (*Acts of the martyrs*) rather than “Records,” perhaps because of that term’s resonance with the New Testament’s *Actes des Apostres*.

Finally Crespin assembled a new combined edition, which integrated all the previous material, as well as some new material, in chronological order. This effort consumed most of his energy for over a year. The resulting work, first printed in 1564, was an enormous volume divided into seven chapters and called, like the first version of ten years earlier, *Actes des Martyrs*; specifically, *Actes des Martyrs Deduits en Sept Livres, depuis le temps de Wiclef & de Hus, jusques à present. Contenans un Receuil de vraye histoire Ecclesiastique, de ceux qui one constamment enduré la mort és derniers tems, pour la verité du Fils de Dieu* (*Acts of the Martyrs in Seven Books, from the time of Wycliffe and Hus up to the present day: Containing a Record of the true history of the Church, of those who have constantly endured death in these latter days, for the truth of the Son of God*). In this edition, Crespin had the martyrs dying for God’s “truth,” a term which combines the advantages of “doctrine” and “name.” Like “doctrine,” “truth” emphasizes that the martyrs died for very specific ideas, but “truth” (*vérité*) has a more powerful holy resonance than *doctrine*. Crespin retained the term “acts of the martyrs,” but he also described the new edition as a “record of the true history of the Church,” thus employing both terms, *Receuil* as well as *Actes*. In addition, Like the 1555 edition, the 1564 edition begins with Wycliffe, but Crespin seemed to be troubled on how to identify Wycliffe as a martyr. Crespin’s text settled for making clear that Wycliffe was a learned preacher of the

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Gospel who ushered in a new age of martyrs.  

By the time Crespin produced the 1564 edition of the *Livre des Martyrs*, he was ready to make the argument that the True Church extend backwards in an unbroken line, a position that he had not yet been able to support because he could not produce any examples of martyrs between the fourth and the eleventh centuries. In his words:

According to the times, the Lord by His admirable bounty has given to His Church not only faithful Doctors, who have announced His truth, but also excellent champions, who have died confirmed and constant in it. And while the world has long been covered with horrible shadows, nevertheless it has in a marvelous fashion always had some seed or spark, to illuminate the clarity of that truth in the middle of the dark and shadowy night. And so it has been that since the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel, there has been a continuous sequence of worthy Doctors and Ministers (as it would be easy to demonstrate by supporting testimony and examples); notwithstanding, it seems to us that the kindly Readers will be content if we begin with John Wycliffe, of the English nation…

Crespin’s statement that “it would be easy to demonstrate” his point seems a bit disingenuous. He likely had very little information about the period between the fifth and the eleventh centuries, a period during which Europeans left relatively few documentary records. His confident assertion of an unbroken line of pure doctrine was a statement of faith, not a historically verifiable claim. Crespin knew the difference, as he took great pains to reproduce the words of the martyrs whenever possible. Whenever possible, Crespin devoted far more space to the martyrs’ own words than to his own. If he had possessed “testimony and examples” of Protestant-style preaching from that time, he would surely have included it. On the other hand, it would have been even more difficult to prove that such preaching had not occurred. As it was, the reader would have to be content to begin with Wycliffe and take the previous millennium on faith.

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In 1570, two years before his own death, Crespin published the last edition of his martyrology during his own lifetime. He added an eighth chapter and changed the title to *Histoire des vrays Témoins de la vérité de l'Évangile, qui de leur sang l’ont signés, depuis Jean Hus jusqu’à présent. Comprinse en VIII Livres Contenans Actes memorables du Seigneur en l’ininfirmité des siens: non seulement contre les forces & efforts du monde, mais aussi à l’encontre de diverses fortes d’assauts & Heresies monstreuses* (History of the true Witnesses of the truth of the Gospel, who have sealed it with their blood, from Jan Hus to the present time: Comprising eight books containing memorable Acts of the Lord in the weakness of His own: not only against the powers of this world, but also against various assaults and monstrous Heresies).  

Interestingly, the title of the final edition dropped the term “martyrs” in favor of “witnesses.” This time they died for the “Gospel” instead of for “truth,” “doctrine,” or “name.” Crespin dropped Wycliffe and retained only Hus as example of the first martyr. He also introduced the expression “sealed with their blood,” which had only appeared in the Latin editions. In this last edition, Crespin also clarified that any miracles that may have happened were performed by God’s will and not by the martyrs. The mention of “various assaults” in addition to “the powers of this world” was likely meant to clarify that people murdered by Catholic mobs could still count as martyrs even though the traditional model involved a courtroom trial. The mention of “monstrous Heresies” was probably Crespin’s attempt to discredit Anabaptist martyrologies and hence distance his own from them.

Two interrelated reasons account for Crespin’s indefatigable work on the multiple editions and publications of *Le Livre des Martyrs*. First, Crespin viewed its publication as profitable and useful in advancing his business. As his biographer, Jean-François Gilmont, said,
“up to the very end of his career, the work remained a safe bet, regularly brought back to the press.” Crespin’s ability to add new volumes to his work on such a regular basis was a testament not only to his hard work but also to the same networking skills which served him so well in building and promoting his publishing house. Crespin had friends all over Europe with whom he corresponded regularly, and his friends were eager to inform him about the martyrs of their day. Crespin was serious about his responsibility to provide his readers with the truth. In contrast to the works of some of his colleagues, such as Henri Estienne’s *Apologie pour Herodote* (1566), which blithely transmitted a collection of implausible and vaguely-sourced tales about the misdeeds of priests and friars, Crespin researched his stories and provided his readers with primary source material when possible. In fact, he often devoted more space to reproducing the martyrs’ own words than to his own summaries. His tales included evidence from court records, eyewitness accounts, and transcripts of letters sent from prison by his martyrs to their friends and loved ones. Crespin’s concern with authenticity and his desire to present his material as faithfully as possible led him to document the events of each martyrdom. As he put it, his goal was “to render faithfully in memory” not their mortal remains, in the idolatrous manner of pagan relics, but “their faithfulness, their words, spoken and written, their responses, their confessions of faith, their last words and deeds: to report it all around the Church, in order that the fruit may be passed on to posterity.”

If it is possible to read a man’s soul across the void of centuries, then Jean Crespin’s piety was as sincere as his ambition. Crespin’s florid style was, as Calvin recognized, better suited to popular works than to scholarship. His purple prose was well-suited to matters of life and death.
and of even greater significance. Even his insincerities are sincere. When he blithely asserted that preachers of what he and his readers considered the true gospel were active during the Early Middle Ages, and that he could easily have proved it, he meant it, even as he knew that technically it was untrue. The actual proof would have been nice to have, but it was not really necessary. Crespin was selling his readers a framework for making sense of the world. The framework was strong enough that a gap here and there was easily supported. If what the Protestants of the sixteenth century believed was the same eternal Truth that the Apostles had believed, then any gap between them could not have been greatly significant. And an important part of what they believed was precisely that their Truth was the same as that of the Apostles.

Immediately after - and sometimes even before, as Crespin’s stories demonstrate - the needs of brute survival, human beings demand meaning. Our lives, our world, our past and future, have to make sense in some larger scheme, or we will be miserable no matter what our other circumstances. Jean Crespin understood this. He was a salesman, and like all salesmen to some extent, what he sold was meaning. But times change, and in the sixteenth century they were changing fast. By 1572, as Eustache Vignon took over the print firm in the wake of Crespin’s death - and the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, which happened in the same year - the circumstances and needs of Reformed Francophones were changing. A different man, living in a different time, would produce the next edition of the *Livre des Martyrs* to meet different needs.
CHAPTER FOUR

Martyrdom at the Time of Eustache Vignon

After Crespin’s death, Vignon managed to preserve the business networks largely intact. The great martyrrologist had finished his work; the successful printer had left his heirs with a product already marketable. The printing firm continued to print the martyrology, which remained a very popular and profitable work. At first glance, Vignon’s edition of Crespin’s work appears to be a straightforward continuation of his predecessor’s work. A closer examination, however, reveals important differences. The urgency of learning the latest news about martyrs is greatly diminished. The necessity for proper documentation of martyrdom is significantly relaxed. Perhaps the greatest difference between Crespin’s editions of the martyrology and those published after his death is the sheer number of editions. During his time as the head of the print firm, Eustache Vignon reprinted Crespin’s 1570 martyrology several times, but it was not updated with the same urgency as it had been during Crespin’s lifetime. Whereas between 1554 and 1570 Crespin published at least seven editions, during the sixteen years after his death, when Eustache Vignon headed the print firm, only one new version of the martyrology was produced. Crespin’s printing firm should have had little difficulty in acquiring new martyr accounts if it bent its efforts in that direction. But Vignon lived at a different time when new interests and challenges were emerging.
Vignon’s edition of the martyrology, entitled *Histoire des Martyrs, persecutez et mis à mort pour la vérité de l'Evangile depuis le temps des Apostres jusques à l'an 1574*, was published in 1582. This edition included two new chapters, written by the pastor and humanist Simon Goulart, who had also been Crespin’s collaborator. In a preface from “the Printer to the Christian Reader,” Vignon explained the circumstances that led to the new edition: “A friend of mine [Goulart], wishing the advancement of the glory of God, having communicated his plan to me, I was encouraged to proceed. In place of eight books, he has made ten, the first and last newly added, and the others enriched with additional martyrs, confessions, letters, and excellent doctrines, augmented with records, discussions, and notable details.”

The issue of the authorship of this volume, then, is complex. Earlier editions were compiled by Jean Crespin from various pieces by and about his martyrs. The 1582 edition was overseen and published by Eustache Vignon, but the vision, and most of the work, came from Simon Goulart. Inasmuch as this chapter is concerned with the differences between the 1582 edition and previous ones, I will refer to Goulart as the “author” of the 1582 edition. However, these differences reflect changes in the Reformed readership which affected many of Vignon’s publishing decisions.

In the first three decades of Geneva’s Protestant publishing, between Calvin’s return to the city in 1541 and the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre of 1572, a certain apocalyptic strain was very influential. 1572 was a pivotal year not only for the publishing firm, but for the Huguenot cause. That year saw the death not only of Jean Crespin but that of Jeanne d’Albret, the formidable queen regnant of Navarre, who had been the foremost supporter of the Protestant side of the French Wars of Religion. Most infamously, 1572 was the year of the Saint Bartholomew’s

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166 « Un des mes amis desireux de l’avancement de la gloire de Dieu, m’ayant communiqué son dessein, j’ay esté tant plus encouragé à passer outre. Au lieu de huit livres, il en a fait dix, le premier & dernier estans adjoustez de nouveau, & les autres enrichés de martyrs, confessions, lettres, & doctrines excellentes, augmentez de receuils, discours, & particularitez notables… » Jean Crespin and Simon Goulart, *Histoire des Martyrs, persecutez et mis à mort pour la vérité de l'Evangile depuis le temps des Apostres jusques à l'an 1574* (Geneva: Eustache Vignon, 1582), 9.
Day Massacre. That mass murder seems to have come in two stages: a targeted series of assassinations against Coligny and the other notable leaders of the Huguenots, followed by a wave of popular violence by ordinary Catholics against ordinary Huguenots. The massacre was widely publicized by Protestant printers and became infamous throughout Europe. \[167\] Printers emphasized the martyrdom of the faithful, holding up those who died for the true faith as role models. The Catholic faithful were pitiable characters, held in ignorance by malevolent priests, whom the truth would soon set free. In these turbulent times, adding new martyrs to the list would have meant making the same hard decisions that Crespin had faced: whom to include, whom to exclude, and how to edit the accounts for publication. The direction which Vignon and Goulart took went much further in the direction of inclusivity than Crespin ever had. To leave the martyrology as it was would have meant to exclude the victims of the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacres. The solution - which took ten years to implement - was a new edition which employed Goulart’s prestige and took the martyrology in a new direction - one which included many more martyrs, under a broadened set of criteria, and which presented the Protestant identity in a way that allowed Protestants to make sense of their new circumstances.

Crespin’s creation of a Protestant martyrology had been a bold act of reimagining Christian history intended to bring fresh news to the reader. The 1564 edition included Jean Mutonis, who had died in February of that same year. The 1570 edition included Jean Sorres, who had died in October of 1569. In each case, the latest martyr to be featured in the work had died only a few months before its publication. A sense of eschatalogical urgency pervaded Crespin’s work. He and his readers understood themselves to be in the middle of a time of earth-shaking changes, which might well signal the End of Days. This led to the need to regularly

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\[167\] Robert Kingdon argues that for the Huguenots, the massacres of 1572 “ended for good all their hopes of winning France to their cause” and made them accept their status as an “endangered minority, Robert Kingdon, Myths about St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacres, 1572-1576, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988, 207. See also Denis Crouzet, Les Guerriers de Dieu.
update the work. By the time Vignon took over the leadership of the firm, the optimism of Crespin’s time, when it seemed possible that all Christians might join together to renew the universal Church, had faded. The St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre cast its long shadow over Huguenot views of the future and the martyrs’ stories turned grimmer, focusing more on their suffering. Whereas Crespin had simply related those stories which he thought best illustrated the spirit of the latter-day martyrs, the 1582 editions showed a different sort of historical consciousness – that of a people with not only a past, but a future. The eschatological expectations of the Huguenots seem to have been weakened rather than strengthened by the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre. It had become clear that popular as well as elite resistance to the Protestant message was real and powerful, not to be overcome swiftly. The struggle of the Protestants was now clearly a political struggle, one which would have to be waged within historical time. This gave rise to the new impulse to historicize Protestantism. The Vignon/Goulart edition grappled with new issues raised by the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre of 1572, made a bold effort to demonstrate continuity over time through the long cycle of Church history, and reinterpreted the meaning of martyrdom for the changing needs of the Protestant community.168

The 1582 edition, entitled the *Histoire des Martyrs, persecutez et mis à mort pour la vérité de l’Evangile depuis le temps des Apostres jusques à l’an 1574*, included two new chapters,

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168 Charles H. Parker has argued that Vignon’s martyrologies presented the Huguenot as the children of Israel. Parker uses the accounts of martyrs who died before 1562 to argue that this idea was firmly in place even before the beginning of the French Wars of Religion (Charles H. Parker, “French Calvinists as the Children of Israel: An Old Testament Self-Consciousness in Jean Crespin’s *Histoire des martyrs* Before the Wars of Religion,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 24 (1993): 227-48). However, as David Watson points out, Parker’s analysis is anachronistic because it is based on the text of the 1619 edition, which had been edited by Goulart. Goulart had personally witnessed the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, and had perhaps done more than anyone else to spread the story. It greatly affected his view of the Huguenot Church. Watson argues that Goulart’s editions subtly changed the focus of the work from an optimistic (if gruesome) celebration of Christian faith towards a gloomier vision of a true Church forever persecuted. These changes may be placed in two main categories: a broadening of the definition of martyrdom, and an increased identification with the Israel of the Old Testament. The second point is intriguing, and matches my own observations, but Watson does not focus much argumentative attention there. His primary evidence is that Goulart’s editions included more miracles, particularly miracles of divine vengeance - the Old Testament wrath of God. As for the first point, Watson is on more solid ground, pointing out that Goulart added several stories of persecution which were not, strictly speaking, martyrdom, such as the life of Wycliffe (who died of natural causes, though he was burned at the stake posthumously), Protestant sufferings in the battles, sieges, and massacres of the French Wars of Religion, and even status updates on the Protestant churches of Europe. David Watson, *The martyrology of Jean Crespin and the early French evangelical movement*. (Unpublished dissertation), 1977, 167-76.
one at the beginning and one at the end, with the previous eight chapters sandwiched in between. The original eight chapters were changed only slightly. For the most part, these changes served to broaden the geography of Protestant martyrdom. Books Three, Five, Eight and Nine (Books Two, Four, Seven and Eight of Crespin’s account), which had focused on French martyrs, were broadened to include more Dutch, Italian, Polish, and Spanish martyrs. Book Six, which already dealt with the Marian persecutions in England, added a few additional English martyrs, as well as one from Lyon and four from the Netherlands. The last new chapter covered the events of 1572-4 and had much to say about the Saint Bartholomew’s Day massacre and was much influenced by Goulart, who had personally witnessed the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre. The bloody events of 1572 were treated passionately and in detail, but little was said about events after that and the latest events it described occurred in 1574, some ten years before its publication. The first of the new chapters reached backwards in time attempting to bridge the gap between the Apostolic Church and the wave of reformers beginning with the persecutions of the Emperor Nero and ending just before John Wycliffe.

In the 1582 edition, Simon Goulart attempted to provide a much more detailed timeline of the preaching of the Truth. This edition described in much greater detail the martyrdoms of the early Church: Stephen, Peter, Paul. It detailed the Roman persecutions under Nero, Domitian, and Trajan. It then moved to discussing assaults on the Christian faith by pagan barbarians such as the Vandals and by Muslims such as the Saracens and the Turks. Bringing the Muslim world into the discussion did allow for a bit more continuity, but the gap between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Late Middle Ages is still noticeable, likely due to a lack of sources. Nonetheless, this edition did manage to trace reform movements back a bit earlier than Wycliffe. It discussed the Great Schism and the careers of Girolamo Savonarola and Peter Waldo. Crespin had already
made an effort to claim the Waldensian tradition as part of the Protestant heritage, but his efforts had been hampered by his adherence to a strict standard of martyrdom which Waldo’s own death did not meet. By relaxing this standard, Vignon’s edition was able to do a more wholehearted job of extending the history of Protestantism backwards in time. Goulart claimed that, “As for the faith of the martyrs so executed, and of those who opposed in various ways the tyranny of the Pope, before the times of Wycliffe, they agree in their basic principles with the doctrine advanced by the martyrs of our own times,” but of course, the latter-day martyrs remained the primary focus of the work.169

Goulart’s first chapter set forth a more explicit description of the Protestant view of Church history than any of Crespin’s had done. He explicitly argued that the martyrs of his own time “conform[ed]” to the standards set by the Classical martyrs; that the Papacy gradually became increasingly corrupt and heretical; and that the great disasters of the fall of the Roman Empire and of the Middle Ages were the miraculous result of Divine punishment of wicked rulers.170 In particular, Goulart made more explicit the separation of the primitive Christian Church from the Roman Catholic Church by presenting the Roman Catholic hierarchy as the real persecutor of the true Christian Church.

Goulart divided the life of the Church into three periods. In the first period, “The ancient Bishops of Rome, from 70 AD to the time of Constantine the Great, about 314 AD, were thirty-two in number, all Preachers and Ministers of the Church of Jesus Christ, and they faithfully carried out their charge, even enduring death, for the love of our Lord JESUS CHRIST and His

Gospel.”¹⁷¹ But “After this first age came the second, which augmented and confirmed the errors and superstitions which the first age had left, and over the years strayed further and further from the rule of holy Scripture, so much so that finally the mass of superstitions and errors overwhelmed and extinguished entirely the light of pure doctrine.”¹⁷² Then, “A thousand years elapsed from the time of the Apostles to [Holy Roman Emperor] Henry IV. So the Church began its third period, and changed its doctrine, discipline and form of government, into new and contrary things.”¹⁷³

By crafting this new view of the Church’s history, Goulart created a new way for Protestants to think about the relationship between God, the world, and the Church. In an eschatological view, Divine intervention in human history is a sign of the End of Days. Miracles and martyrdoms are extraordinary, they are signs that God is beginning to intervene in history in a new way. The 1582 edition, by contrast, introduced the idea that divine intervention and martyrdom had been perennial features of Church history. But this interpretation presented a knotty problem in theodicy: how can it be that God frequently intervenes within history, and yet that the true Church is always persecuted, always suffering? The Bible offered plenty of precedent for such a perspective. Christ Himself willingly underwent torment and death, and told his followers, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake” (Matthew 5:11; Luke 6:22). Protestants read the entire Old Testament as an account of God’s chosen people undergoing suffering and

⁷² Après ce premier aage, survint le second, qui augmenta & conforma les erreurs & superstitions que le premier aoit laissez, & par sucession de temps s’eslongna encor davantage de la reigle des saisetas Escritures, tant que finalement l’amas des superstitions & erreurs accabl & estaignit entierement la lumiere de la pure doctrine. Jean Crespin and Simon Goulart, Histoire des Martyrs, persecutez, et mis a mort pour la vérité de l’Evangile depuis le temps des Apostres jusques à l'an 1574 (Geneva: Eustache Vignon, 1582), 21.
persecution – an account with which they strongly identified. By creating a historical continuity of persecution and divine will, the 1582 edition presented persecution as a sign of divine favor and it depicted not just the Huguenot community, but the entire Protestant community (while still excluding outliers such as Anabaptists) as martyr.

With his heavy-handed acclaim of God’s role in history, Goulart placed Huguenots firmly within a sacred timeline wherein God was continually active. Not every story from the previous edition was altered, but Goulart inserted themes of Divine retribution into some of the martyr stories. Crespin’s most famous stories, such as the tale of the martyrs of Meaux, were left largely unchanged. However, when discussing more remote events, Goulart felt free to connect persecutions with subsequent disasters and point to them as evidence of Divine judgment.

In the first new chapter of the martyrology, Goulart inserted an entire section entitled “The Judgments of God upon the Persecutors of the Church.” He explained in detail how all the troubles of the later Roman Empire were caused by Divine vengeance for Roman persecutions of the Christian faith. The barbarian tribes who raided Rome, killing many Christians, were also in turn subjected to Divine punishment. God’s terrible judgment allowed the Muslim conquests, but Mohammed was proven a false prophet and “his soul took the road to Hell.” The Turks, too, rose to punish the unfaithful and were then smitten by Divine retribution. God resurrected the Roman Emperors so that rulers like Frederick II could chastise the corrupt and wicked popes. The Great Schism, too, was God’s judgment on the Papacy.¹⁷⁴ When the Archbishop of Canterbury summoned a council to condemn Wycliffe, Goulard informs us, England was troubled with such terrible earthquakes that most of the assembled churchmen, taking this as a sign of Divine displeasure, refused to condemn Wycliffe.¹⁷⁵ In Crespin’s version, the fears of the

¹⁷⁴ Crespin & Goulart, 27-31.
¹⁷⁵ Jean Crespin and Simon Goulart, *Histoire des Martyrs, persecutez et mis à mort pour la vérité de l’Evangile depuis le temps des Apostres*
churchmen were due to human agency: to threats by an influential nobleman, Louis Clifford, and the possibility to riots by a London mob. Goulart’s new interpretation of divine judgment and displeasure allowed all Protestants to share in the righteousness of the persecuted minority and in the process the very notion of martyrdom also changed.

The edition of 1582, thanks to its new historical view of the church and of divine intervention, used the term “martyr” more boldly than Crespin ever had and helped integrate the victims of the 1572 massacre into the group of martyrs. In 1564, Crespin had published *Actes de Martyrs*, a work which was avowedly about “martyrs” who had died for the true faith and about “acts” which had demonstrated their status as martyrs to the world. In 1570, Crespin had begun to connect the Apostolic Church to the Protestant movement by introducing few exceptions like John Wycliffe, who had boldly proclaimed the truth, risking martyrdom. But people like Wycliffe were not martyrs by Crespin’s own criteria. Thus the 1570 title spoke not of “acts of martyrs,” but of the “History of the true witnesses of the truth of the gospel, who have signed it with their blood”: *Histoire des vrayes tésmoins de la vérité de l'Évangile, qui de leur sang l’ont signés*. The title still alluded to martyrdom, in claiming that these witnesses had “signed the Gospel with their own blood,” but drew short of claiming that every person featured was a true martyr. Crespin’s criteria for martyrdom were easily fulfilled by those accused of heresy, who accept death willingly and professed a statement of true faith. These criteria, however, excluded the victims of the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, an issue that Vignon and Goulart addressed in the new last chapter of the martyrology.

Crespin had already begun to reconsider his position on the nature of martyrdom following the confessional violence after the 1562 Vassy Massacre, perpetrated by the Guise

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family. Following the massacre, Crespin had found it impossible to say how many of the victims of this mass violence counted as martyrs and did not spend much space on it. The Vassy Massacre resulted in a civil war in which the faithful “of all ages, states, and qualities” were killed in great number by mob violence, with the connivance of the Guises and their allies. Sounding a note of doubt unusual in his ordinarily confident writing, Crespin admitted that it had become difficult to recognize martyrdom, more difficult than before. The victims of this mass violence were members of the true Faith, and they were murdered because of their faith. But another important element turned out to be difficult to prove: had they remained faithful to the end, in spite of the fear and torment of their brutal treatment? Crespin preferred public trials, in which legal records were taken and, preferably, the accused had the chance to express himself (or herself) both to co-religionists and to their accusers. A murder by mob violence, unlike a legal trial, left behind few trustworthy documents. The victims might have renounced their faith in a vain hope that this would save them, or they might have despaired at the end. Crespin could only say that very many of the dead were likely true martyrs, but that in the absence of better evidence it was impossible to say for certain which ones.\(^{177}\)

The uncertainties that had troubled Crespin were shared by Goulart, who, in Chapter Eight of the 1582 edition, undertook a more comprehensive evaluation of whether the victims of the Vassy Massacres counted as martyrs. Goulart admitted that these victims did not have the chance to follow the traditional pattern which Crespin had preferred by rejecting a second chance and publicly confessing their faith. He even admitted that some of them might have tried to apostatize to save their lives and overall, the victims of these massacres were people who had known the risks and chosen to follow God anyway. To some extent it was fair to say that they (at

\(^{177}\)Jean Crespin, *Histoire des vrays tésmoins de la vérité de l'Évangile, qui de leur sang l’ont signés, depuis Jean Hus jusques au temps présent.* (Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1570), 590-5.
least the ones who never apostatized in their hearts) went to their deaths willingly for God’s truth and earned their place in Heaven.

The same issue of who was a true martyr resurfaced in the last chapter about the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre. It was impossible to prove that all of the thousands of Huguenots who were murdered in 1572 had had the chance to make a choice or a statement of faith. A Huguenot who may have been dragged unwilling to his or her death would not have qualified as one of Crespin’s martyrs. But by shifting the focus from the true faith to the eternally persecuted true Church, Goulart included them.

In the last chapter of the new edition of the martyrology, Goulart detailed the Paris massacre in accord with what we accept today: a wave of targeted assassinations of Huguenot leaders, starting with Admiral Coligny; a subsequent wave of mob violence which killed some ten thousand Parisians; later massacres across France which killed some thirty thousand more Huguenots; military action which resulted in the fall of Sancerre but which La Rochelle successfully withstood. Goulart placed the blame for the first wave of murders firmly on the Guise family. His account claims that Charles IX had given some warning to certain Protestant leaders, particularly Henry of Navarre. On the other hand, it also claims that Charles witnessed some of the other murders from a window and did nothing to protect the victims “despite his promises.” It also claims that the mob violence was organized to some extent by the “Captains of the quarters.”

The story told by Vignon and Goulart also stressed violence against women, especially the murder of pregnant women, and against children to emphasize the brutality of the massacre. A few of these stories were presented in a format similar to that of Crespin’s martyr stories, with the same familiar pattern of confrontations with the authorities and refusal to recant.

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However, many lacked some or all of these elements. Instead the brutality and injustice of the massacres were emphasized and the people involved were presented as victims and assailants. These stories, possibly because Goulart had personally witnessed the massacre, were treated passionately and in detail. Recounting the story of the lady of Yverny, Goulart wrote, “They put a dagger to her throat with threats of massacre if she did not pray to the Virgin Mary and the Saints: since she would not do so, the murderers took her to the millers’ bridge, where they then stabbed her many times with daggers, throwing her in the water.”

A similar story was that of an unnamed bookbinder who was dragged by the mob to the cloister of Saint Benoit and ordered to go inside and take the Mass. He refused and was killed. Goulart might have not witnessed the stories he told, but the passion with which he told them clearly indicated the deep impact that such an experience had on him. Goulart wrote, “This very paper would weep if I told all of these horrible blasphemies … the continual sounds of gunfire, the laments and pitiable cries of the victims, the curses of the murderers, the bodies hurled from windows, the trails of blood, the strange cries and whistles, the breaking of doors and windows, the jewels stolen, the plundering of over six hundred houses, could present to the eyes of the reader nothing less than an unforgettable image of extreme misery and suffering.

The new title chosen by Vignon and Goulart for the 1582 edition of the martyrology still used the word “martyr,” but in a dependent clause, and it redefined the term more broadly. The choice of the term “histoire,” rather than “actes,” in the title of the 1582 edition Histoire des Martyrs, persecutez et mis à mort pour la vérité de l'Evangile depuis le temps des Apostres jusquès à l'an 1574 takes on greater significance. “Des Martyrs” were those who had been

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180 Ibid., p. 716/1429
181 Coligny’s story is similar to a martyr story in that he is reported to have faced death courageously and without renouncing his convictions. However, the account emphasizes the martial virtues of courage and constancy rather than his piety. Jean Crespin and Simon Goulart, Histoire des Martyrs, persecutez et mis à mort pour la vérité de l'Evangile depuis le temps des Apostres jusquès à l'an 1574 (Geneva: Eustache Vignon, 1582), 716-32.
182 Jean Crespin and Simon Goulart, Histoire des Martyrs, persecutez et mis à mort pour la vérité de l'Evangile depuis le temps des Apostres jusquès à l'an 1574 (Geneva: Eustache Vignon, 1582), 717.
“persecuted and put to death for the sake of the truth of the Gospel.” The continuity stressed by the title, “from the time of the Apostles up to the year 1574,” demonstrated that all true Christians were linked together by unjust persecution. Thus, the suffering Protestants of the 1570s were part of the same community as the early martyr Stephen Protomartyr. Martyrs were significant for what they had suffered on account of their faith and not because of what they had done for their faith. This was an important distinction, because it not only relaxed the criteria for martyrdom; it also anticipated an important shift in the way Huguenot printers and intellectual viewed themselves within the changing circumstances of late sixteenth-century Europe.

Each edition, then, was the product of its time. The dozen years between the 1572 and the 1582 editions had seen a great deal of Huguenot suffering. However, the bloodiest and most famous events of these years were not consciously chosen martyrdoms, but the random suffering of Huguenot civilians: the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, the sieges of Sancerre and La Rochelle. These were not saints, but victims of injustice.

In the preface to the first new chapter, Vignon introduced an important theme. First, he praised Crespin and his work commenting that an update of the work was needed to account for the number of “witnesses” which had “greatly accrued since the decease of this great figure.”

Vignon continued by praising his good fortune of having a close friend (almost certainly this refers to Simon Goulart) who, “desirous of the advancement of the glory of God,” had volunteered to update the work. He ended by assuring the reader and himself that, “please God, we will be able to make this the end, without being obliged to present you with another volume of persecutions of His Church, against which Satan is more enraged than ever, wishing nothing

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183 « …porce que le nombre des témoins de la vérité de l’Evangile estoit accrêu de beaucoup depuis le deces de ce bon personnage… » Jean Crespin and Simon Goulart, Histoire des Martyrs, persecutez et mis à mort pour la vérité de l’Evangile depuis le temps des Apostres jusques à l’an 1574 (Geneva: Eustache Vignon, 1582), 9.
more than fresh massacres.”¹⁸⁴ Vignon’s words betray a new attitude towards the place of the Protestant Church in history. Although the whole book existed to celebrate martyrdom, Vignon did not wish its expansion. He hoped, rather, that his Church would be able to grow peacefully, without further persecution.

The same appeasing attitude reemerged in the last chapter. In spite of the emphasis on the brutality of the massacre Goulart was careful not to blame all Catholics, but only the most hostile and intolerant ones, especially the Guises and their followers. This account includes the stories of compassionate Catholics who attempted to help their Protestant neighbors. Several stories mention that, when captured, the victims had been hiding in the homes of Catholic friends and neighbors. Some of these compassionate Catholics even suffered the same fate as the Huguenots they attempted to protect: “There were many who were revolted, even among Papists, who, for showing compassion for the victims, were themselves murdered.” The example is given of a Papist solicitor who was killed on the street of the Seine simply for displaying some compassion for the victims.¹⁸⁵ The printer and the humanist had no desire to foster vengeance and resentment. As Vignon wrote, they wanted to “grow peacefully,” and to this end they pointed out that La Rochelle had weathered its siege, that King Charles IX had died in 1574, and that the Reformed Church continued to prosper throughout Europe. The account concluded with a blanket statement which explained the new vision of martyrdom.

But having no more to relate for now, we end this tenth book and the entire work, wherein the faithful Reader has all we could recount about the MARTYRS of the Lord, who have sealed the message with their blood, and authentically proved its truth before all those who condemn it: this has not only made clear their injustice and cruelty, but it has also made them, despite themselves, serve as instruments

¹⁸⁴ “…Dieu vuille que nous puissions faire fin, sans estre contraints de vous presenter quelque second volume de persecutions de son Eglise, a laquelle Satan en veut plus que jamais, & ne demande que massacres nouveaux.” Jean Crespin and Simon Goulart, Histoire des Martyrs, persecutez et mis à mort pour la vérité de l’Evangile depuis le temps des Apôtres jusques à l’an 1574 (Geneva: Eustache Vignon, 1582), 9.
¹⁸⁵ “Il y eut plusiers revoltez & Papistes mesmes, qui monstroient avoir compassion des meurtris, qui furent aussi massacrez … Un solliciteur Papiste en la Rue de Seine, monstrant quelque compassion fut tué.” Jean Crespin and Simon Goulart, Histoire des Martyrs, persecutez et mis à mort pour la vérité de l’Evangile depuis le temps des Apôtres jusques à l’an 1574 (Geneva: Eustache Vignon, 1582), 716.
whereby God has reinvigorated the faith and constancy of His faithful servants. It is true that some of [the martyrs], especially among those named in the last chapter, had not known the Lord for as long as we would normally expect, and were, as the saying goes, plucked before they could flower; but, God having willed that they be counted among the number of those of the greatest faith, strengthening their weaknesses, and crowning their lives with such an honor as to suffer for His Name, we have not wanted to separate what was thus joined.  

The existence of sympathetic Catholics was insisted upon, and the blame for evil events was placed on individual actors such as the Duc de Guise. Vignon was a different man than Crespin, and he may have lacked the latter’s extensive network of sympathetic Reformed contacts. More than that, though, his focus had shifted. Crespin had been publishing for a small, eschatological reform movement which hoped to purify the Church before the End of Days. Vignon was publishing for a larger, more cosmopolitan Protestant community, one which had accepted the impossibility of reuniting the Church. Crespin’s movement had hoped to purify and reunify the Church. Vignon’s accepted that they were now a separate Church and were looking forward to its survival. For Huguenots, this could only happen if they allied with moderate Catholics by turning them against the Guises and Spain. Moreover, by ending in 1574, this edition hinted that in a way, the age of the apostles was over. It signaled an end to eschatological expectations.

186 « Mais n’ayans deliberé de passer plus outre pour le present, nous mettrons fin à ce dixiesme livre & à tout l’œuvre, ou le Lecteur fidele a ce que nous avons peu recueillir touchant les MARTYRS du Seigneur, qui ont seelleé par leur sang : & d’une façon authenti que la verité de la doctrine de salut devant ceux qui en les condamnant & ostans du monde : ont non seulement fait paroistre leur injustice & cruauté : mais aussi ont maugré eux servi d’instrumens, par lesquels Dieu a fair reluire la foy & constance de ses fideles serviteurs. Vray est que quelques uns, nommement de ceux qui sont nommez en ce dernier livre, n’avoient pas encore si avant profité en la connaissance de Dieu qu’il eust esté bien requis, & ont esté, par manière de dire, cuellis en herbe : mais le Seigneur ayant voulu les associer a ceux qui estoient plus fermes, & besogné en leurs infirmitez : couronant leurs vies d’un tel honneur, que de souffrir pour son Nom, nous n’avoins voulu separer ce qui estoit ainsi conjoint. » Jean Crespin and Simon Goulart, Histoire des Martyrs, persecutez et mis à mort pour la vérité de l’Evangile depuis le temps des Apostres jusques à l’an 1574 (Geneva: Eustache Vignon, 1582), 732.
CHAPTER FIVE
Images of the New World by Huguenot Printers

In the third quarter of the sixteenth century Crespin’s martyrologies had become some of the most influential and popular works of the period. Once Vignon took over the management of the printing firm, he did everything possible to replicate Crespin’s success, promote the Calvinist version of the faith, and appeal to a broad audience. In the late sixteenth century, travel narratives became increasingly popular among the European readership. By the end of the 1570s they had become one of the most important parts of the production of Vignon’s printing firm. Notably, Vignon’s firm published a French translation of an account of the Spanish New World by the Italian Girolamo Benzoni, an account of the French settlement in Florida by Nicolas le Challeux and an account of the French settlement in Brazil by Jean de Léry.

Vignon was not alone in grasping the potential of New World tales. His colleagues in Geneva published editions of Jean de Léry (Antoine Chuppin, 1578) and Bartolomé de las Casas (Gabriel Cartier, 1582). Other Huguenot printers in Paris, Antwerp, Lyon, and Louvain published their own editions of all of these and more in the 1570s, 1580s, and 1590s. Through the publication and translation of travel narratives, Huguenot printers like Vignon sought to appeal to a broad audience, urban elites whether French or Dutch, Catholic or Protestant. They

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created points of contact rather than of separation and disagreement through a number of strategies: by exploiting widespread anti-Spanish sentiments caused by the political and diplomatic developments of the long 16th century; by defining morality in terms of kindness and justice rather than allegiance or creed; and by envisioning an ecumenical Christianity which could include both Protestants and Catholics of good will. In this chapter, I argue that in the process of reconciling their own religious beliefs with the need to be financially successful at a time of increasing political and religious polarization, of emerging interest in the newly rediscovered lands, and of a rising popular fascination with travel literature, Vignon and his colleagues fostered the idea of a civilized Christian ethos by attempting to unite Catholics and Protestants transcended confessional divisions.

Notably, these printers made these points in the process of publishing New World accounts which had mostly been written by Catholic authors. Bartolomé de las Casas and Girolamo Benzoni harshly criticized Spanish actions in the New World, but they did not criticize the Roman Catholic faith nor write a word in favor of Europe’s Protestants. The Huguenot scholars who translated these works did not attempt to put such claims into their authors’ mouths. They were content with the texts’ criticisms of Spain and the appealing exoticism of their details. But Protestant redactors did make their own points in forewords and prologues. The Huguenot printers may have contributed to these, but at the least they edited the works, set the title pages, and handled distribution.

The type of religious tolerance championed by Vignon and his colleagues attempted to unite Catholics and Protestants at a time of rising confessionalism. Toleration had occurred in many times and places, but the ideal of tolerance, which arose in opposition to that of confessionalism, was a product of the divisions of the Reformation during the sixteenth and
seventeenth centuries. According to Benjamin Kaplan, confessionalism insisted that, by divine mandate, the wrong type of Christianity had to be forcefully expunged. Toleration argued the opposite. Kaplan insists on the distinction between the practice of toleration, which he defines as groups living together more or less peaceably despite their differences, and the ideal of toleration. Kaplan argues that the level of actual toleration in Europe sharply decreased with the rise of confessionalism, and that the ideal of toleration, which arose with confessionalism and in opposition to it, failed to gather much support until the Enlightenment. Furthermore, he claims that the entire process was more uneven, irregular, and messy than is generally recognized.¹⁸⁸

Kaplan’s work does much to improve our understanding of the timeline of the practice of toleration and of the ideal of tolerance. His study of the former attempts to investigate the actions of Christians of all social classes. His examination of the development of tolerance focuses on intellectuals – theologians, philosophers, polemicists. As he notes, the more vocal proponents of confessionalism were often theologians. Kaplan suggests that the champions of toleration were often motivated by compassion informed by exposure to a variety of cultures. Kaplan’s main example is the poet and philologist Sebastian Castellio. As an independent intellectual without a place in any ecclesiastical hierarchy, Castellio was well positioned to lead the protests against Servetus’s burning that came in from Italy, somewhere, and elsewhere in Switzerland. As for the persons who practiced everyday toleration, these were less famous and thus less well documented. Kaplan names groups and places rather than individuals. He names printers among

¹⁸⁸ For example, the clash between confessional division and tolerance was clearly central to the debate surrounding the 1553 execution of the anti-Trinitarian Spanish physician Michael Servetus for heresy. Servetus was burned at the stake not by Catholics, but by the Reformed faithful of Calvin’s Geneva. The Savoyard poet Sebastian Castellio, who had once been good friends with John Calvin, harshly criticized this action. Castellio’s 1554 work Concerning Heretics: Whether they are to be persecuted and how they are to be treated argued that heresy ought not to be treated as a crime, much less a capital one, but as a simple difference of opinion. Calvin promptly countered with his own treatise, Defense of the orthodox faith in the sacred Trinity, and Beza conducted a pamphlet war against Castellio on his behalf. (Citation?)
the skilled craftsmen who were willing to take on work across confessional lines in Augsburg, along with goldsmiths, engravers and painters.189

In France, the latter stages of the Wars of Religion were not the struggle of a Protestant minority against a Catholic majority but rather a struggle between two religious minorities – Huguenots and hard-line anti-toleration Catholics. The events of the 1570s polarized all of Europe, and the Francophone portion in particular. Only a minority of those who stayed with the Roman Church viewed the Reformed with murderous hostility. The majority of both Protestants and Catholics belonged to neither faction and were stuck in the middle.190

By the time that Eustache Vignon took over Jean Crespin’s print firm in 1572, Geneva’s print business had changed. As mentioned in Chapter Four, Vignon strived to follow in Crespin’s footsteps. He formed close ties with the leaders of Geneva, such as Theodore Beza, Laurent de Normandie, and Francois Hotman, and, he continued to publish and sell Crespin’s martyrologies. But martyrologies no longer sold as well as they once had, while the patronage of devout and wealthy men like Laurent de Normandie had dried up.191 Furthermore, after Calvin’s death in 1564, the Consistory’s grip on the print industry relaxed. With this increase in independence, Huguenot printers produced works that tended to propound a more tolerant version of the Christian faith. Printers were a cosmopolitan, polyglot lot, and left to their own devices they


191 Laurent de Normandie was a wealthy patron and a friend of both Calvin and Crespin. He was willing to bankrupt himself in order to flood France with French-language Bibles because he earnestly believed that the act of reading the Bible would make one a Protestant, Schlaepfer, H.-L. “Laurent de Normandie,” in Berthoud, ed., *Aspects de la propagande religieuse*, 176-230.
were more inclined to support toleration (especially if it helped them sell more books) than were the theologians whose works they so frequently published.\(^{192}\)

This shift in publication patterns happened during a turbulent time in France, and in Europe more broadly, with increasing political and religious polarization caused by a number of events that took place in the 1570s. In particular, the year 1572 was a pivotal moment for the Huguenot cause. In 1572 Jeanne d'Albret, the formidable queen regnant of Navarre, who had been the foremost supporter of the Protestant side of the French Wars of Religion had died. Most infamously, 1572 was the year of the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre. As I have discussed in Chapter Four, the massacre, which was widely publicized by Protestant printers, dashed Huguenot hopes for the religious conversion of all of France and led to changes in their rhetorical strategies.\(^{193}\)

Sixteenth-century Huguenot printers, however, never saw all Catholics as their enemies. After all, most of them had been born and raised as Catholics themselves. They thought that the majority of lay Catholics were Christians of good will who had been led astray by a Church they trusted. In the early sixteenth century, many Protestants were confident that exposure to the Truth would readily convert sincere Catholics to the true Christian faith. Calvin’s followers were men of faith, and they believed that the truth would make their fellow Francophones free. Although the events of the second half of the sixteenth century challenged this position, Huguenot printers persisted in believing that not all Catholics were their enemies.\(^{194}\)

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\(^{194}\) Natalie Zemon Davis, “Rites of Violence,” in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press,
The skepticism and war-weariness which Michel de Montaigne articulated in his *Essais* (1580) were felt by many of his contemporaries of every social class, sick of violence and suffering. Montaigne reflected on the many cruelties inflicted both within France and the New World, and suggested that perhaps the true “barbarism” lay not in nakedness or ignorance of the Christian faith, but in cruelty and injustice – by which standard Europeans might well surpass Americans in barbarity.¹⁹⁵

Eustache Vignon and his colleagues wished to promote – and to sell – just such attitudes to a French populace sick of violence and suffering. The edition of Crespin’s martyrology which Vignon published in 1584 discussed manifold brutalities by the ultra-Catholic Guise faction, emphasizing not the virtue of the victims, but their innocence, and the cruelty of their tormentors. The New World travel narratives published by Vignon and his colleagues in the late sixteenth century took these ideas a step further. They invited the reader to sympathize with all innocents who suffered – not only Protestants, not only Christians, but all humans. They often stressed the common Christianity of Protestants and (non-Spanish) Catholics. Even the innocents of the New World, ignorant as they were of the Christian religion, could in a sense be martyrs – suffering maltreatment at the hands of the same oppressors.¹⁹⁶

The European book market was eager for tales of the New World, and Geneva’s Huguenot printers understood their value both as a product and as a vehicle for promoting their own message. This message comprised three major points. First, these works expressed divisions

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and differences in terms of national identities. The villains of these stories were primarily identified as Spaniards. By contrast, the French people were identified as a united group which included both French Catholics and Huguenots. Second, although these works, like Crespin’s martyrologies, described the abuse and murder of innocents, they focused on the cruelty of the oppressors rather than on the virtue of the victims. Whereas Crespin offered his readers positive role models in the persons of his martyrs, the New World narratives mainly focused on negative role models in the persons of the persecutors. Finally, these works proposed a broad and universal view of right and wrong, defining morality in terms of kindness and justice, and putting forth an ecumenical definition of Christianity.

Bartolomé de las Casas, *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*

Perhaps the best-known of the New World travel narratives which Geneva’s Huguenot printers published is that written by Bartolomé de las Casas and entitled *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies.) De las Casas wrote horrific, pitiable stories of Spanish cruelty and injustice in the West Indies. The revulsion which these tales generated was very much intended by their author. But de las Casas did not intend to condemn Spain or the Catholic faith. He was a Spanish Catholic bishop. He intended a powerful emotional effect of horror and pity, but he laid the blame on the officials who ran the colonial governments and called for reform by the Spanish Crown.

De las Casas emphasized the innocence of the natives of the West Indies:

Out of all universes, and out of the infinity of peoples of all kinds, God created them the most simple, without evil or duplicity; the most obedient, the most

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198 Bartolomé de las Casas, *Brevísima Relacion de la Destruction de las Indias*: colegida por el Obispo don Fray Bartolome de las Casas, de la Orden de Santo Domingo (Seville: N.P., 1552).
faithful to their natural lords, and to the Christians whom they serve; the most humble, most patient, most peaceful and calm; the most free from quarrels, noisiness, arguments, complaints, grudges, hatred, and vengefulness, that there are in the whole world. … Among these gentle sheep, endowed with the aforesaid qualities by their maker and creator, came the Spaniards, who no sooner met these people than they fell on them like the fiercest wolves, tigers, and lions, famished for many days. And for the past forty years until this day, they have done, and still do to this day, nothing but rend them, murder them, harass them, afflict them, torment them, and destroy them…

By “Christians,” de las Casas meant those like himself – Roman Catholics; but in his description of the behavior of the “Christians” of Hispaniola, de las Casas described the most terrible cruelties and injustices. These began with theft, beatings and rape, and proceeded to wholesale slaughter which “spare[d] not children, or old people, or pregnant women, or women with suckling babes.” Las Casas describes “Christian” soldiers setting about their task with ghoulish glee:

They would lay wagers who might slice open the belly of a man with one stroke of their blade, or cut off a man’s head with one swift motion of their pike, or spill out his entrails. They would snatch babes from their mothers’ breasts and take them by their feet and dash their heads against the rocks. Others would fling them over their shoulders into the rivers, laughing and jeering, and as they fell into the water would call out: “Thrash, you little bugger!”

Las Casas tells how the “Christians” systematically mutilated and murdered natives of Hispaniola as a matter of policy: amputated their hands, burned them alive, sent dogs to tear them apart.

The stories related by de las Casas were gruesome, piteous, and infuriating. He admitted to having written them in order to produce a powerful emotional effect on the reader. In an afterword, he explained his motives:

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199 “Todas estas universas, è infinitas gentes a todo genero crio Dios lo mas simples, sin maldades, ni doblezas: obedientissimas, fidelissimas a sus señores naturales, è a los Christianos a quien sirven, mas humildes, mas pacientes, mas pacificas è quietas: sin renzillas, ni bollicos, no ríosos, no querelosos, sin lanceros, sin odios, sin desear venganças que ay en el mundo … En estas ovejas mansas … entraron los Españoles, desde luego que las conocieron como lobos, è tigres, y leones cruelissimos de muchos dias hambrientos. Y otra cosa no han hecho de quarenta años a esta parte hasta oy, è oy en ensta dia lo hacen, sino despedaçallas, matallas, angustiallas, astigallas, aormallitas, y destruyllas por las estañas, y nuevas, è varias, è nunca otras tales vistas, ni leydas, ni oydas maneras de cruelidad…” Bartolomé de las Casas, Brevisíssima Relacion de la Destruição de las Indias: colegida por el Obispo don Fray Bartolome de las Casas,ò Casaus, de la Orden de Santo Domingo (Seville: N.P., 1552), 4-5.

200 Las Casas, trans. Knight and Harley, 9-12.
I have great hope that the emperor and king of Spain, our lord Don Carlos, the fifth of that name, may come to understand (for until now the truth has always been most industriously covered over) the acts of malice and treachery which have been and still are being done upon those nations and lands, against the will of God and his own, and that he may bring an end to so many evils and bring relief to that New World which God has given him, as the lover and cultivator, as he is, of justice.  

The indication that Charles V was unaware of any atrocities committed in the New World was likely to some extent flattery, intended to give the king room to distance himself from them. De las Casas addressed his work directly to the king. He must have intended it to be read more widely, but only within Spain. He neither sought nor allowed for it to be published outside of Spain or in any other language than Spanish. This is attested to by the 37-year gap between his first Spanish publication and the Protestant publication of unauthorized translations. The *Brevissima Relacion de la Destructcion de las Indias* was published in Seville in 1542; the *Tyrannies et cruautez des Espagnols, commises es Indes Occidentales qu'on dit le Nouveau Monde* was published in Antwerp in 1579.  

De las Casas gave no indication that he had given any thought whatever to French and Dutch Protestants in his work, yet the dramatic nature of his work, and its daring in criticizing Spanish actions, made it a very useful tool for their purposes. His gruesome work bolstered their claims to moral superiority; it also provided legitimacy to their rebellion. In a society that took authority very seriously, separating from the Catholic Church and opposing royal authority were drastic steps that had to be justified if the upstarts were not to be simply dismissed as heretics and criminals. Thus the concept of Spanish “tyranny” in the Indies was very important to Protestant claims. Although rebellion against a king who ruled by Divine Right was a grievous

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sin, rebellion against a tyrant was legitimate. This was an important point to the Protestant Dutch, who were rebelling against the King of Spain; to the French Huguenots, who were rebelling against a French Catholic League supported by Spain; and to the Genevois, who were rebelling against Spain’s Catholic allies in the House of Savoy.\(^{203}\)

Protestant printers, however, found his accounts useful in condemning Spain herself.\(^{204}\) A French translation by the Huguenot scholar Jacques Miggrode de las Casas’s work was published by two of Eustache Vignon’s colleagues: by François de Ravelenghien of Antwerp in 1579, entitled *Tyrannies et cruautez des Espagnols, commises es Indes Occidentales qu'on dit le Nouveau Monde* (Tyrannies and Cruelties of the Spanish, Committed in the West Indies, which are called the New World); and by Gabriel Cartier of Geneva in 1582, entitled *Histoire Admirable des horrible insolences, cruautez, & tyrannies exercees par les Espagnols es Indes Occidentales* (The Remarkable Story of the Insolences, Cruelties, and Tyrannies Committed by the Spanish in the West Indies.) Despite the different titles, the text of the two books is essentially the same.

Jacques de Miggrode claimed, truthfully enough, that he had translated de


las Casas’s text faithfully, because “there is no need for any other accusation than that of the
author.” He even translated the prologue in which de las Casas exonerated the Spanish Crown
of any guilt:

No one could have any doubt (without being wrong) of the good will that these
[Spanish] Kings have to do the right thing. Inasmuch as there have been mistakes,
crimes, and misdeeds, the only reason that these have not been put to rights is that
they [the kings] had no knowledge whatsoever of it; for if they had known, they
would have taken every care and effort to remedy them.

Miggrode at once protected himself and bolstered the force of the text by pointing out that he
was merely the translator of a text written by de las Casas. Spanish cruelties stood condemned
not only by anti-Spanish Protestants, but by a Spanish Catholic bishop.

Miggrode and Ravelenghien made their political intentions clearly known in the title page
of the volume by stating that the goal of the publication was “to serve as an example and a
warning to the 17 provinces of the Low Countries.” The “tyrannies and cruelties” were
committed not by sinful individuals in the absence of any authority to restrain them, as de las
Casas had intended, nor was the blame placed on Catholicism, instead, the first French edition by

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206 “…ninguna duda de la rectitud de sus animos Reales se tiene, ó con recta razon se deve tener: que si algunos defectos, nocomentos, y males se padecen en ellas, no ser otra la causa sino carecer los Reyes de la noticia dellos.” Bartolomé de las Casas, Brevisissima Relacion de la Destructucion de las Indias: colegida por el Obispo don Fray Bartolome de las Casas,à Casaus, de la Orden de Santo Domingo (Seville: N.P., 1552), 1-4. Compare: “… lon ne peult doubter (qu’à tort) de la bonne volonté que les mesmes Rois ont de faire droit, que s’il s’y commet des fautes, des torts, & des maux, la seule cause pourquoi il n’y est mis ordre, est, qu’ilz n’en ont point de cognoissance ; car s’ilz le scoayent, ils mettroyent tout soing & estude à y remedier.” Bartolomé de las Casas, Tyrannies et cruautéz des Espagnols, commises es Indes Occidentales qu’on dit le Nouveau Monde, trans. Jacques Miggrode (Antwerp: François de Ravelenghien, 1579), 3.

207 Bartolomé de las Casas, Tyrannies et cruautéz des Espagnols, commises es Indes Occidentales qu’on dit le Nouveau Monde, trans. Jacques Miggrode (Antwerp: François de Ravelenghien, 1579). The comparison between the acts described by de las Casas and the acts of the Spanish in the Netherlands was made more explicit in a 1620 edition of Miggrode’s translation by the Amsterdam printer Ian Cloppenburg. This work combined an abridged French text of Gysius’ 1616 Origin and Progress of the Dutch Convulsions (Oorsprong en voortgang der Nederlandschef woorden) with a French version of de las Casas. The combined work was entitled Mirror of the Cruel and Horrible Spanish Tyranny Perpetrated upon the Netherlands by the Tyrant Duke of Alba and other Commanders on Behalf of King Philip II: We have Added the Second part of the Tyrannies Committed in the West Indies by the Spanish. As was the case of Miggrode and Ravelenghien’s edition, Spanish atrocities in the Americas and in the Netherlands were literally presented as pages in the same book. Bartolomé de las Casas, Le miroir de la cruelle, & horrible tyrannie espagnole perpetree au Pays Bas, par le tyran duc de Albe, & autres commandeurs de par le roy Philippe le desseisme: on a adjoinct la deuxiesme partie de les tyrannies commises aux Indes occidentales par les Espagnols, trans. Jacques Miggrode (Amsterdam: Ian Cloppenborg, 1620).

208 Bartolomé de las Casas, Tyrannies et cruautéz des Espagnols, commises es Indes Occidentales qu’on dit le Nouveau Monde, trans. Jacques Miggrode (Antwerp: François de Ravelenghien, 1579). The time and place of publication - Antwerp in 1579 - are significant. The Dutch Revolt was well under way, and the city of Antwerp in particular had been devastated by the “Spanish Fury” of 1576. Publishers like Ravelenghien sought neither to convert Catholics nor to rally Protestants; rather, they urged the Dutch people to unite against Spain regardless of confessional differences.
condemning Spain placed the blame on the political rather than the confessional identity. Miggrode and Ravelenghien sought neither to convert Catholics nor to rally Protestants; rather, they urged the Dutch people to unite against Spain regardless of confessional differences. The “seventeen provinces” included all the Spanish Netherlands, both those that would eventually break away as an independent Dutch-speaking Reformed republic and those which would remain under Spain’s control as a Catholic colony, speaking Flemish and French. Ravelenghien published at Anvers, in the more Catholic south of the Spanish Netherlands, and in the French language which was predominant there.

Eustache Vignon’s colleague Gabriel Cartier of Geneva published the same text under a different title three years later, in 1582. Cartier likely did not intend the work primarily for a Dutch audience, and he removed Ravelenghien’s explicit reference to the Netherlands. However, his title page retained its admonitory character by keeping the verse which Ravelenghien had appended underneath: “Happy is he who becomes wise/In observing the ills of others.” The message remained: take Spain’s actions in the New World as a warning.

Girolamo Benzoni, Historia del Mundo Nuevo

Eustache Vignon did not publish his own edition of de las Casas, but he did publish a similar work: a single volume containing two New World accounts that showed Spain in a very

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bad light: the 1579 *Histoire Nouvelle du Nouveau Monde (New History of the New World)*. The first part of the book was a travel narrative of the West Indies by the Milanese Catholic merchant Girolamo Benzoni. The Geneva Huguenot scholar Urbain Chauveton translated Benzoni’s work from Italian into French. The second part had its own title page and was numbered independently. It was entitled *Brief discours et histoire d’un voyage de quelques François en la Floride (Brief Discourse and History of a Voyage of Certain Frenchmen in Florida)*, and was based on the testimony of survivors of that voyage, as collected and edited by Chauveton. The full title of the book explains its dual nature, while also making its anti-Spanish intent perfectly clear: *A New History of the New World, Containing a summary of the deeds of the Spaniards so far in the West Indies, and their rough treatment of the poor natives. Translated from the Italian of Mr. Girolamo Benzoni of Milan, who voyaged for Thirteen Years in that country: and enriched with many Discourses and things worthy of memory. By Mr. Urbain Chauveton. Together with, A Brief History of the Massacre committed by the Spaniards of certain Frenchmen in Florida. With an Index of the most remarkable items. [Published] by Eustache Vignon, MDLXXIX.*

Like Jacques Miggrode with de las Casas, Urbain Chauveton claimed that he would translate Benzoni’s words accurately and let the text speak for itself. And in this case, too, he seems overall to have translated faithfully a text that needed no embellishment. Benzoni’s judgment of Spanish actions was harsh enough in itself:

> It is certain that if the Spaniards, when they first began to trade in those countries, had treated the natives with friendliness and modesty, and held as fast to the path of kindness and benevolence as they instead did to that of cruelty and avarice, it must be believed that these poor barbaric nations would have learned to live with

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reason and civility, and, abandoning their savage dress and customs, would have learned virtue, and been a credit to the Christian name, and there would not have followed the deaths of many Spaniards, nor the destruction of such multitudes of Indians.\textsuperscript{213}

Chauveton added some unnecessary flourishes, and inserted some of the works of the Italian Reformed theologian Peter Martyr, apparently for comparison, but his translation of Benzoni was fairly accurate.\textsuperscript{214}

Chauveton, however, had plenty to say for himself; he simply said it in his lengthy Foreword. In the foreword to his translation of Benzoni’s \textit{Histoire Nouvelle du Nouveau Monde}, Urbain Chauveton stressed the common Christian identity of Catholics and Protestants, while emphasizing the national rivalry between France and Spain. By this choice of emphasis, he hoped to gain the support of most French Catholics and unite them against the Spanish, which was a hope that Henry IV largely realized some fifteen years later. Although the author accepted the superiority of European culture and the Christian religion, he did not conclude that these automatically made Europeans inherently superior to the Americans. They made it possible for Europeans to behave better than savages, but Europeans of bad faith could easily reject the dictates of civilization and Christianity. People were to be judged on the nature of their actions rather than the content of their beliefs. Le Challeux’s account offered examples of both kindness and cruelty from both Europeans and Americans. However, Chauveton’s descriptive text

\textsuperscript{213} “Mais c’est bien chose assurée, que si les Hespagnols de z lors qu’ils commencèrent à trafiquer en ces contrees se fussent comportez amiablement & modestement avec les gens du pays : & eussent aussi bien pris & suivi la voye de douceur & de bonté comme ils on fait celle de cruauté & d’avarice : il faut croire pour certain que cette generation bruttes & avaritaires eussent appris à vivre avec quelque raison & honesteté civile : & abandonnans leurs façons & coutumes bestiales se fussent adonnees à la vertu, au grand honneur & avantage de toute la Chrestienté. Et si ne fust pas avenue la mort de tant d’Hespagnols, ny la destruction de tant de povres Indiens.” Benzoni, trans. Chauveton, \textit{Histoire Nouvelle du Nouveau Monde}, 118-19.

\textsuperscript{214} Compare: “Se gli Spagnuoli quando cominciaronó à entrar in questi paesi fufero con benignità, & mansuetudine perseverati, come fecero con crudeltà, & avaritia, si deve creders che questa generazione brutti animali, barebbono imparato à viver con ragione, & si sarebbono dati à qualche virtù, à honore, & utile del nome Cristiano, & non ne sarebbe dopo succelto la morte di tanti Spagnuoli, nè la distrutzione di tanta multitudine d’Indiani.” Benzoni, \textit{Historia del Mundo Nuevo}, 17-18.
condemned European cruelties much more harshly, because Europeans, with their advantages, were expected to know better.  

Chauveton claimed that the Spanish considered the Indians “brute beasts,” as naturally fit for servitude as donkeys, despite baptizing them. He argued, however, that if people were judged by their actions, then the Spaniards had shown themselves to be more bestial than the savages. To prove his point, he cited the words of the Indians themselves, as reported by Benzoni in the first part of the book. He wrote that the Indians considered the Spaniards to be “the most violent and disorderly creatures in the entire world.” Evil, Chauveton argued, was not a matter of believing the wrong theological propositions, but a matter of violence and injustice. Only under the pressure of the religious conflicts of the sixteenth century did scholars feel the need to distinguish a morality separate from any religious institution - though still not separate from the Christian religion, as broadly as writers like Chauveton conceived it. This separation meant that Chauveton was free to praise Catholics whom he considered true Christians - in particular, those who spoke up against Spanish cruelties in the New World, such as de las Casas and Benzoni.

The Protestant movement was influenced by a long-standing European tradition of anti-clericalism, and Chauveton harshly condemned the higher ranks of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. However, he singled out certain individual Catholics for praise. Chauveton masterfully maintained his balance between Huguenot and politque sensibilities by criticizing the Catholic hierarchy and the Spanish conquistadores while emphasizing that some Catholics were kind and well-intentioned. An example of this balance may be seen in Chauveton’s...
description of the death of Friar Luis Cancer de Barbastro at Tampa Bay in 1549. Believing that it was better to preach peacefully to the natives of Florida than to “make them Christians at halberd-point,” Barbastro landed in Tampa Bay with four fellow friars and a complement of sailors. However, instead of listening to his sermon, the natives attacked. Friar Barbastro was knocked unconscious (and later killed), as were two of his fellow friars and some of the sailors. The other two friars fled, running away back to the ship and then sailing away, as “they would rather (as it is said) remain Confessors than become Martyrs quite yet.” Chauveton’s sarcastic phrase made clear his suspicion of the Catholic clergy in general, while leaving open the possibility that Barbastro himself might have been a worthy man, perhaps even a martyr.\footnote{Chauveton, 33.}

Urbain Chauveton’s introduction to and translation of Le Challeux’s account of the Florida expedition held the Spanish to a high standard of civilized behavior, while maintaining neutrality towards the barbaric behavior of those who were, after all, barbarians.\footnote{Urbain Chauveton, \textit{Histoire d’une Voyage de Quelques François en Floride, qui y furent Massacrez pour les Hespagnols}, in Girolamo Benzoni, \textit{Histoire nouvelle du nouveau monde}, trans. Urbain Chauveton (Geneva: Eustache Vignon, 1579), II.} Girolamo Benzoni criticized Spanish cruelty towards Native Americans, but, unlike De las Casas, he did not idealize their victims. He portrayed both sides as equally capable of treachery and brutality. However, he blamed the Spanish far more than he did the natives. He held the Spanish to a higher standard, because they were civilized Christians who ought to know better than ignorant barbarians. The passage quoted above implies that the Spaniards in the New World had the option to act with “kindness and benevolence,” but chose not to. The natives, by contrast, “would have learned to live with reason and civility” and “virtue” if the Spaniards had taught them to do so. Benzoni’s words imply a concept of virtue as something to be learned – a product of civilization, of Christianity, or of both. As European Christians, the Spanish had been taught virtue; as savage barbarians, the natives of the Americas had not. Thus it was the responsibility
of the Spanish to demonstrate virtuous behavior and teach it to the natives. They had instead acted with “cruelty and avarice,” and it was this failure which had led to such human suffering in the Indies.219

Like Montaigne, Benzoni admitted that some of the natives were cannibals, but (also like Montaigne) he treated cannibalism as merely another example of the same cruelty that human beings, including and especially Europeans, were capable of inflicting on one another. Benzoni grudgingly admitted that the Spaniards had converted vast numbers of natives to Christianity, and conceded that this was a good thing overall. However, he implied that the conversion of the pagans served mainly as an excuse for adventurers to enrich themselves by theft and mass enslavement. He admitted that “certain Dominicans” had objected, however ineffectively, to the brutality they had witnessed.220

Benzoni’s account condemned callous officials and venal churchmen in tones similar to those of Crespin’s martyrology, but the two narratives are as much opposite as they are similar. Unlike Crespin’s virtuous martyrs, the natives in Benzoni’s account were portrayed as pagans, ignorant and sinful. Spanish adventurers tortured and murdered them in a manner which sometimes resembled the methods employed in martyr narratives, but these Spaniards were motivated by greed, not by any religious motive.

The contrast is clearest when confrontations took place in milieux similar to the courtroom settings of so many martyrs’ confessions. For instance, Benzoni related the story of a chief who appeared before a Spanish Conquistador (Governor Hoieda). The chief came to the governor’s court because the Spanish troops had captured the chief’s wife in a raid. The chief claimed that he had come to ransom his wife. When he was brought to face the governor, he, like

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219 Benzoni, Historia del Mundo Nuevo, 17-18.
220 Girolamo Benzoni, Histoire nouvelle du nouveau monde, trans. Urbain Chauveton (Geneva: Eustache Vignon, 1579). Interestingly, Benzoni seems not to have counted Las Casas among these objectors, as he accuses the latter of acting out of greed and ambition.
the Christian martyrs, spoke bravely and freely. However, his words and actions were very
different from those of the martyrs: “When he got into the governor’s presence, he spoke most
bravely, and abused him, not only in words, but also in deeds, for he then threw a poisoned dart
at him.” Witnesses did marvel, for the Spanish soldiers, though they killed the chief and his
wife, were impressed with his courage and manliness, and questioned their leaders. However, the
violence of the chief’s words and actions made it clear that he was no martyr. Rather than
making a profession of faith, he only insulted the governor; rather than praying for the
forgiveness of his persecutors, he returned violence with violence.

Nicolas le Challeux, *Histoire d’une Voyage de Quelques François en Floride*

The French expedition to Florida was dispatched from France by the Admiral of France,
Gaspard de Coligny, one of the foremost political leaders of the Huguenots. It was led by René
de Laudonnière and comprised some three hundred Huguenots. They established and fortified a
base at the mouth of the St. John’s River in June of 1564, naming it Fort Caroline. From this base
they played politics with the natives and pursued hints of treasure. However, the Spanish
enforced their own claim to Florida. In September of 1564, the Spanish admiral Pedro Menéndez
de Avilés seized Fort Caroline and massacred the majority of its inhabitants, sparing some fifty
women, children, and men who claimed convincingly to be Roman Catholic, at a place which is
still today called Matanzas (Spanish for “massacres”).

Several notable historians have examined the history of the Matanzas massacre as
published by Eustache Vignon. However, they have tended to place these events in the context of
a history that is largely political and diplomatic. Charles Bennett, in his *Settlement of Florida*

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221 Benzoni, 60.
(1968), focused on possible political and economic motives for the leaders of France “to enlarge their territorial holdings, increase their commerce, find precious metals, and have ready access for attack on Spanish treasury ships.” Frank Lestringant, in *Le Huguenot et le Sauvage* (1990), wrote of the expedition as part of the brief “history of the Huguenot refuge on American soil,” argued that Coligny foresaw the French Civil War and intended to create a safe haven for French Protestants. John T. McGrath, author of *The French in Early Florida* (2000), agreed that Coligny wanted to help French Protestants, but he argued that Coligny had another, more immediate goal: to forestall civil war by opposing French Protestants to Spanish Catholics in Florida. This might have had the effect of making French identity more important than confessional identity and thereby weaken the alliance of his rivals, the intolerantly Catholic Guises, with Spain. McGrath’s point is intriguing, but Gaspard de Coligny had many interests and considerations; the true motives behind this expedition are difficult to divine.

However, the motives of Eustache Vignon and Urbain Chauveton in publishing the account are laid out fairly clearly in the introduction. The introduction repeatedly argues that Catholics and Huguenots are fellow Christians, and that the issue is about Spain’s failure to follow the principles of “good war” with regard to the French settlers. Chauveton began his introduction to the Florida account by explaining his reasons for pairing it with Benzoni’s. First, he explained, the two stories followed the same course, and took place at the same time in the same part of the world. Second, he hoped to expose the Spanish as hypocrites who used false piety to cover for their atrocities. Chauveton aimed to refute Spain’s claim for the necessity of dealing harshly with savages and cannibals who, on account of their lack of civilization, were not amenable to reasoned persuasion. Chauveton argued that France

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223 Bennett, *Settlement of Florida*, xiii.
was one of the most civilized nations in the world (although he admitted that they had recently backslidden somewhat, in an oblique reference to the violence of the Wars of Religion), and that the French had historically behaved in a civilized fashion towards Spanish prisoners. In dealing with Spanish claims about American savagery, he took them seriously. He admitted that the fear of being eaten by cannibals might justify the use of harsh measures. However, he argued that the Spanish treated the French in America just as they treated the Americans, and that this behavior undermined their claim that dealing with savages made extreme measures unavoidable.226

Chauveton put forth, in quotation marks, a list of arguments which the Spanish had made to justify their actions. First, the Spanish claimed that they were defending their property: America was Spain’s by the right of discovery, by the Papal Donation, and by the Spanish blood and labor expended in conquering and civilizing it. The piratical actions of the French Corsairs demonstrated France’s history of stealing Spain’s New World wealth. Second, the Spanish pointed out that the settlers whom they had massacred had been Huguenots, and therefore heretics and a threat to all of Christianity and all the kings of Europe. But Chauveton refuted these arguments. About the Papal Donation, he pointed out that the Native Americans never agreed to it. The Pope gave away something which he did not possess. Furthermore, the Donation was given in order that the Spanish might convert the Americans to Christianity; Chauveton argued that they had failed to do so, citing as evidence the testimony of Benzoni “and others.”227

As for the right of discovery, Chauveton argued that Columbus discovered only certain of the islands of the West Indies, and that other parts had been discovered by other explorers. “Florida” (which seems, in his reckoning, to have encompassed most of North America) was

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226 Chauveton, 3-4.
227 Chauveton, 4-7.
discovered not by Columbus, but by John Cabot, who was in the pay of King Henry VII of England. These explorers were of many nationalities, and in the pay of kings of many nations, so that the right to the Americas was much more complicated than the Spanish claimed. Again, Chauveton returned to the point that the Americas were already inhabited when Columbus arrived. He argued that the Spanish had violated the natural rights of the Natives. This idea of “natural rights” became very prominent during the Enlightenment, but its roots were much older, and here we see it invoked a century before Locke: “But the question is … whether it is in accordance with natural Justice, or human rights [le droit des gens], to exterminate the natural inhabitants of a country in order to establish one’s ownership of it…. “

In searching for an airtight rationale by which he could condemn Spanish cruelty, no matter where it took place, Chauveton invoked a concept of natural human rights which would become immensely important in later political discourse.

The third Spanish claim to ownership of the Americas rested in the right of conquest. The fact of conquest could not be denied, Chauveton admitted, but one might dispute what sort of moral rights that conquest granted. Chauveton argued that a legal right based in conquest only applied in the context of a formal war, and that “whoever invades or possesses [a country] otherwise, is as unjust an owner of what he has conquered as a brigand is of the purse of a merchant whose throat he has slit.” Since the Spanish had no casus belli, nor had they made a formal declaration of war in the West Indies, their conquest was unjust and granted them no rights. If one accepted their logic, and agreed that empty land, however it was emptied, belonged

228 Chauveton, 7-11.
to he who claimed it first, then the French had exactly the same right to settle in Florida as the Spanish had in the West Indies. Furthermore, Chauveton argued, as the true size of America became apparent, it became clear that the Spanish were claiming for themselves an entire continent which might make up a quarter of the world’s landmass. This was an act of extreme greed and hubris, and Spain could never produce enough people to populate such an area.\textsuperscript{230}

Next Chauveton addressed the religious argument. His imaginary Spanish interlocutor claimed that if Ribaud’s expedition had been made up of good Catholics, they would have been treated according to the laws of war. After all, the Spanish had shown in other battles in Europe that they knew how to conduct war in a civilized manner and treat prisoners properly. He mentioned the battles of Pavia and Cerizoles in the Italian Wars. These were cited by the hypothetical Spanish rhetorician as examples of civilized behavior by the Spanish, but they also served to remind the reader that Spain and France had recently been at war.

The imaginary Spaniard claimed the right to kill heretics as a holy duty for defenders of the Church and officers of the Inquisition. Chauveton interrogated him sternly: were the Florida settlers human beings like yourself? He imagined that the Spaniard would have to agree. And were they not Christians? Here the imaginary Spaniard was more resistant – he was not certain that heretics counted as Christians. However, when pressed, he admitted that they believed themselves to be Christians, that they said the Paternoster and the long and short credos, and that they had been baptized in the name of the Trinity. And so, Chauveton argued, even the most Catholic of Spaniards would have to admit that Huguenots were Christians. And by what authority, Chauveton asked, were they executed? In a manner consistent with his emphasis on human rights, Chauveton argued that people may only be executed as heretics after a fair trial, which had been entirely lacking at Matanzas. The proper procedure, established over the

\textsuperscript{230} Chauveton, 11-15.
centuries, was that those accused of heresy had to be examined by a bishop and by a legally appointed judge, and they had to be informed of their error and given the opportunity to repent. Chauveton again insisted that religious differences were not the important matter; what was important was that all people (or at least all Christians) be treated fairly and justly. This argument, emphasizing the rights of the individual and the legal powers of the state, seems to have been persuasive to *politiques* like Montaigne.

Chauveton also addressed the claim that, as self-confessed Huguenots, those killed at Matanzas were *ipso facto* heretics. “This word ‘Huguenot’ is no more than a vulgar sobriquet, which indicates neither an error in faith, nor a suspicion of criminality, nor a stain on the conscience, nor an injury to the reputation: But to be a heretic is a very different thing,” one which a soldier lacked the theological understanding to judge.231

But Chauveton’s Spaniard would not surrender so easily. He pointed out that Protestantism, whether called Lutheran or Huguenot, had been condemned by Popes, Councils, and the universities of Louvain and Sorbonne. Surely the soldier could rely on a condemnation with such authority. Chauveton again appealed to the ideal of the fair trial. He pointed out that no Protestants had been invited to the councils that condemned them, and argued that no trial could be just at which the accused was not permitted to speak in his own defense. A judge had to hear both sides of the case, and a Council that would condemn people as heretics was obliged to hear what the accused had to say for themselves.

Chauveton was making two points here. The more obvious was about the nature of a fair trial. Inquisitors investigating an accused heretic were often scrupulous in their task, interviewing friends and neighbors of the accused, and interviewing the accused himself multiple times. The richness of sources which made Carlo Ginzburg’s *The Cheese and the Worms* possible is a

231 Chauveton, 11-33.
testament to the sedulity of inquisitors. Even when, as Ginzburg found in his works on witchcraft, the inquisitors had a set script and little interest in truly hearing what the accused had to say, they still found it necessary to conduct lengthy interviews with the accused and take notes on those interviews. Chauveton argued that killing a heretic after such an in-depth investigation was very different from undertaking mass murder on the mere assumption that one’s victims must be heretics. However, for this argument to apply to self-confessed Huguenots, Chauveton’s second point had to apply: that it was possible to be a Huguenot without being a heretic. Chauveton argued that certain things were necessary in order to be a good Christian: belief in God, in the divinity of Jesus Christ, in the Trinity, in the necessity and efficacy of baptism. If these basics were met, Chauveton argued, then one could disagree on minor issues and still be a good Christian. Chauveton implied a notion of adiaphora, or things indifferent, which, like his assertion of natural human rights, had its roots in Classical Stoicism as well as in the New Testament.

It might be argued that such ideas were hopeless idealism in the brutal, opportunistic world of early modern politics. However, Chauveton anticipated this argument as well. He cited a historical example from earlier in the sixteenth century, in which the French King Louis XII had followed the principles which Chauveton put forth. Louis was approached by the Vaudois, a sect of French Waldensians, to determine whether they were heretics or true Christians. He asked the delegates about their beliefs and sent commissioners to their chief cities – Mérindol and Cabrières – to report on their practices. The king was informed that the Vaudois administered baptism, observed the Sabbath and the Ten Commandments, and preached the Gospel, but they did not accept the authority of the Pope. As Louis was at war against the Pope at the time, this last fact troubled him little, and he declared the Vaudois to be “gens de bien” – good people. Of
course, Chauveton must have known, and most of his readers likely knew, that Louis’s successor Francis I was of a different mind, and ordered a large-scale massacre of those same people. However, Chauveton’s example demonstrated that a just and tolerant policy towards religious dissidents was not only possible, but had French precedents.232

As for Le Challeux’s account of the massacre itself, it condemned the cruelty of the Spanish in the harshest terms, but it never portrayed the Huguenot settlers as martyrs. The situation was presented as one of war between Spanish forces and the French settlers (aided by some native allies). The accusation of heresy, which the Spaniards leveled against the French, was presented as a pretext for a massacre which was really motivated by nationalist motives - political hostility and competition for land in the New World. The Spaniards began a “horrible slaughter” immediately upon taking the fort - this was not a heresy trial (in fact, as Chauveton had emphasized, there was no trial at all) but a military action. The Huguenots were not martyrs; when taken by surprise, with overwhelming force, everyone attempted to flee however he could. The situation was not a bold stand but a sauve-qui-peut. The narrator (le Challeux) made no religious references until he saw that all hope of a military rally was lost, whereupon he “resigned all my senses to the Lord, and recommended myself to His mercy, grace, and favor, and hurled into the woods.”

The prayer and the attitude were unobjectionably Christian, displaying neither the appeal to a particular saint which might have identified it as Catholic nor the quoting of Scripture which would have marked it as Protestant. However, when the escapee encountered other escapees, they consoled one another with passages from Scripture, a Protestant action. Finding themselves in desperate straits, pursued by an overwhelming enemy, they placed their faith in God. Those

233 Le Challeux, 74/854.
who attempted to surrender to the Spanish were instantly murdered, and le Challeux explained that they had been foolish to trust men rather than God. The rest, trusting in God, experienced a terrifying, excruciating, miraculous Exodus which finally brought them to safety. The model here was not the classical martyrs, but rather the Israelites of the Old Testament. The oppressors were no longer Catholic Pharisees, but Spanish Pharaohs.

A similar tactic can be seen in Jean de Léry’s *Histoire d’un Voyage Faict en la Terre du Brésil*. Like las Casas, Benzoni, and Montaigne, Léry viewed native American cannibalism in context. His condemnation was harshest on the Catholics who opposed his mission - from the French leader of the expedition, the Chevalier de Villegaignon, to the Spanish and Portuguese who were also interested in the area, to his intellectual rival Thevet. Léry was much harsher when writing about Europeans who turned to cannibalism at the Siege of Sancerre. As pagans, the Tupi knew no better, and it was up to missionaries to educate them. But Huguenots who turned to cannibalism were God’s chosen people turned aside from the true path, like the Israelites worshiping a golden calf. The narrative of Protestants as Israelites existed alongside that of Protestants as the Patristic Church, but the former gained steadily in popularity.

Huguenot books about the New World in the late sixteenth century often stressed the common Christianity of Protestants and (non-Spanish) Catholics. In translations of works by Catholics, this message appeared mainly or solely in the forewords to these translations. Jean de Léry, however, made this point himself. De Léry stated that many of the supporters of the voyage were Huguenots, and even mentioned that they were interested in finding a “retraite” in the New World. However, in his discussion of the expedition’s recruitment of ministers from Geneva, he related that “ministers were sent for” in order to convert the Native Americans – as

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though Geneva were simply the readiest source of missionaries, and it did not matter much to which Christian sect they belonged. The difference between Christians and pagans, he implied, was vastly greater than that between Catholics and Protestants.236

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CONCLUSION

In sixteenth-century Europe, printers – practitioners of a profession that could not have existed before the middle of the previous century – wielded a powerful position. They certainly were subject to the control and influence of others – political and ecclesiastical authorities as well as the wishes of writers and the demands of readers – but as the people who actually rendered ideas into physical printed books, they inevitably held an authority of their own. The printed word reached people with an unprecedented speed and on an unprecedented scale and became a powerful tool of persuasion during the violent decades of religious conflicts known as the Wars of Religion. These conflicts were waged on many levels: the clash of armies on the battlefield; the convulsions of urban riots; the political struggles within the emerging European nation-states; the territorial claims of those nations all across the world; the debates of theologians. Public opinion, however, was of the utmost importance in these struggles, and this particular field of battle was more important and more volatile than ever as Europe underwent a communication revolution.

The practitioners of this revolution – or at least the most successful of them – sprang from Europe’s urban elites, from families of lawyers and government officials, successful merchants, and wealthy professionals such as goldsmiths. These families educated their children in the arts and sciences as well as in business skills. They negotiated deals, judged markets and established networks of contacts.
The print firm of Jean Crespin and Eustache Vignon offers a prime opportunity to examine the roles, practices, and importance of sixteenth-century printers. As exiles from the French-speaking part of the Spanish Netherlands, these men made extensive use of their networking skills to establish themselves as respectable businessmen in their new home city of Geneva. They demonstrate the strategies of the urban elite in their use of professional gatherings such as the Frankfurt book fair, their establishment of professional friendships that spanned multiple nations and languages, and their use of marriage, godparentage and diagonal relationships to cement interpersonal bonds.

Jean Crespin made skillful use of these connections to build his printing business. He made connections to John Calvin and to important members of Calvin’s circle such as Laurent de Normandie and Theodore de Bèze. These connections afforded him important and prestigious work printing some of the foundational documents of the Reformed Faith. Beyond Geneva, Crespin’s extensive network of Protestant friends granted him access to the latest news about reformers who had suffered for their faith. The information which he accumulated in this way became the basis of his most famous work, the *Livre des Martyrs*, which offered his Protestant reader new role models, in the examples of those martyrs who had maintained their faith in the face of hardship and death. By portraying these deaths – which were legally executions for the crime of heresy – as heroic martyrdoms, Crespin offered his readers a sense of justification and meaning. He also offered them a new way of thinking about their identity – as the persecuted members of the ‘True Faith’. Over time, however, the limitations of Crespin’s model of martyrdom became evident. Large-scale massacres, such as those of the Waldensians of Mérindol and Cabrières in 1545, and those of Huguenots in Paris and elsewhere in 1572, occurred at a speed and on a scale which made it impossible to document a proper display of
theological correctness and fidelity in the face of adversity. The new edition of the Livre des Martyrs which Eustache Vignon published after Crespin’s death demonstrated the beginning of a shift in emphasis away from the virtue of the victim of religious persecution in favor of an emphasis on the cruelty of the persecutor.

This tendency is even more pronounced in the New World narratives published by Vignon during his tenure as chief of the printing firm. Stories of Spanish cruelty towards Native Americans, as told by the Catholic narrators Girolamo Benzoni and Bartolomé de las Casas, became in the hands of Huguenot printers powerful propaganda tools. These victims were not any sort of Christians, but their stories were still well-suited to an anti-Spanish narrative. Neither did the tale of the Spanish massacre of French Huguenot settlers in Florida emphasize the religious qualities of the victims: the story was related as one of Spanish treachery and cruelty towards Frenchmen. Rather than condemning the Conquistadores for their idolatrous doctrines, these works condemned them instead for greed and savagery. The standard to which they were held was not one of theological correctness, but rather one of justice and kindness – a universal morality which might be applied to persons of any religious persuasion.

By the 1580s, the eschatological expectations of the early Protestant movement had faded. Protestants had become less certain that they were living in the End Times. No longer did they expect to transform all of Christendom within their own lifetimes. Instead, they increasingly viewed their own movement historically, as part of a process taking place within time. Instead of aiming to convert all Roman Catholics to their own way of thinking, they sought toleration, peaceful cooperation, and mutual understanding.

These values were a natural fit with those of printers. Printers were not bellicose warriors nor quarrelsome theologians. Rather, they prospered by peaceful trade and communication. Their
cosmopolitan international networks encouraged such interactions. The new universal morality which they began to promote towards the end of the sixteenth century would become increasingly influential in the centuries to come.
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