The Martyrology of Jean Crespin and the Early French Evangelical Movement, 1523-1555

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of St Andrews

September 1997
ABSTRACT

Jean Crespin's *Histoire des vrays tesmoins* was the official martyrology of the French Reformed Church. Published in Geneva in 1554, this collection has been consistently quarried as a fundamental source for the study of the early Reformation in France. Historians and other commentators of the period 1523-1555 have made use of this collection of martyr stories as a repository of reliable, first-hand evidence as to the nature and make-up of the early French evangelical movement. However, the central theme of this dissertation is that the *Histoire* is, in fact, far from a reliable source. Written with a profoundly different sense of objectivity than twentieth-century ideals of history-writing, Crespin's collection must be used with more care and circumspection than has previously been the case. Written by a firm adherent to Calvin's nascent regime in Geneva, Crespin's collection was compiled within well-defined traditions of Christian martyrology as a pedagogical tool, which necessarily affected its authenticity as a historical source.

The eight chapters of the thesis offer a corrective evaluation of the reliability and worth of the *Histoire* as evidence in assessing this period. Crespin's ambitions and methodology are set out, as are the traditions of history-writing within which he operated (chapter 2). Subsequent chapters show how an uncritical analysis of the *Histoire* has distorted our view of the period of the French Reformation up to the establishment of open Calvinist churches in 1555. This is especially the case when it is shown that the edition most used by modern-day historians is, in fact, the least reliable (chapter 7). For Crespin, concurrent persecution in other parts of Europe confirmed the righteousness of the Protestant cause. Consequently, the *Histoire* became the most international of all the Protestant martyrologies that were produced in the sixteenth century, something that is reflected in chapter 6.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My decision to embark on a career as a graduate student was taken on a golf course in the summer of 1992. Since then, I have been very fortunate to have been on a journey which is now coming to an end. Although my career as a professional historian is now over, I know that I will never lose interest in the early modern period, and most especially sixteenth-century France. For that I have many people to thank. During my time at St Andrews, I have been the grateful recipient of bursaries from the Russell Trust and the School of History and International Relations at the University, the Huguenot Society of Great Britain and the Ecclesiastical History Society.

Throughout the last five years, I have been struck by the depth of the generosity and unselfishness shown to me by fellow historians of the sixteenth century. I have been encouraged at every turn and have benefitted from their helpful advice and words of wisdom. The European Reformation Research Group meeting in St Andrews in 1992 was my first insight into graduate work. From within their ranks, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bill Naphy, Penny Roberts and Andrew Spicer for their help and advice to a young graduate student. In addition, in those early days Dr Mark Greengrass was a mine of information and knowledge which helped smooth the path from undergraduate to postgraduate work. As one reads chapter 6 of this study, my debt to Tom Freeman is obvious. Dr Alastair Duke was extremely kind and helpful, and he can now look forward to being reunited with his copy of the Bibliographie des Martyrologes Protestants Néerlandais. Ray Mentzer has proved a generous host as well as an impressive authority on the prosecution of heresy in sixteenth-century France.

Within the academic community of St. Andrews, debts run even higher. I would like to thank everybody within the Department of Modern History, most especially Norma Porter and Phyllis Dingwall. Professor John Guy has been supportive in every way possible. Professor James Cameron has always had kind words of encouragement. Karin Maag’s generosity and kindness cannot be overstated. Bruce Gordon and Rona Johnston have become great friends, something I hope will continue now that I have left St. Andrews.

My main debt however, is to Professor Andrew Pettigree, whose guidance and supervision cannot be faulted. He was also on that golf course in 1992 and ever since has monitored my work with incredible patience. He has cajoled and harassed when necessary, but has always known when to be supportive. Without his input this dissertation would never have reached this far: his commitment to my work has been immense.
From the very start my family has given me all the support I could ever have wished for. Penny and Jeff have provided timely handouts as well as palatial accommodation during trips to the British Library. Unfortunately, Alec Watson never lived to see the extent of my career as a historian, yet his contribution was as important as any other. One can only guess what he would have made of it, but I would like to think he would have been quietly impressed. Grandad could not have done more. His generosity and interest in the subject have sustained me, both spiritually and materially. I would like to think that some of my grandmother’s love of history has shone through in this dissertation.

There remains two other people I would like to thank: my parents, Sandy and Jenny Watson. I owe them a debt of thanks for the last twenty-seven years which I will never be able to repay. Their love and support have given me endless encouragement over the years. I dedicate this work to them both, in the hope that they take as much pride from it as I do. Now that I am leaving the world of history and education, perhaps they will be able to breath a sigh of relief that now, at long last, I have finally ‘finished my sums.’
### ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ARG</td>
<td>Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BHR</td>
<td>Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et de la Renaissance.</td>
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<td>Crespin 1554</td>
<td>Recueil de plusieurs personnes qui ont constamment enduré la mort pour le nom de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ (Geneva, J. Crespin, 1554).</td>
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<td>Crespin 1555</td>
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<td>Recueil de plusieurs personnes qui ont constamment enduré la mort pour le nom de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ (Geneva, J. Crespin, 1556).</td>
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<td>Crespin 1556 (TP)</td>
<td>Troisieme partie du recueil des martyrs (Geneva, J. Crespin, 1556).</td>
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<td>Crespin 1560</td>
<td>Actiones et monimenta martyrum (Geneva, J. Crespin, 1560).</td>
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<td>Crespin 1561</td>
<td>Quatrieme partie des actes des martyrs (Geneva, J. Crespin, 1561).</td>
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<td>Crespin 1564</td>
<td>Actes des martyrs (Geneva, J. Crespin, 1564).</td>
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Crespin-Goulart 1582

Crespin-Goulart 1597

Crespin-Goulart 1885-9,

Eusebius, *The History of the Church*

Herminjard

*Histoire ecclésiastique*

*SCJ*
*Sixteenth Century Journal*

*STC*

*WA*
JEAN CRESPIN: EXILE, PRINTER, MARTYROLOGIST.

Pierre Serre from Toulouse was being interrogated by the Juge d’apppeaux as to the nature of his profession. He replied that he was a cobbler. ‘What job had you held before that?’ the Judge asked. Serre could barely bring himself to confess his terrible secret; for he had been ‘in the most villainous, wicked and unfortunate profession in the whole world.’ Those in attendance thought that he meant he had been a thief, a brigand or a forger and they demanded that he dare tell them, for his shame and sadness seemed to be preventing him from speaking. Eventually he did reply: ‘Alas, wretched person that I am, I have been a Priest.’ Suitably irritated, the Judge condemned Serre to death by fire, with immediate effect.\(^1\)

Despite the gravity of its subject, Jean Crespin's martyrology recounted stories of heroic endeavour with a personal touch which created an immediacy in the dramatic atmosphere of the victims’ last hours. The inspirational quality of the martyrs’ behaviour transmitted into prose made the *Livre des Martyrs* Crespin's most successful publication.\(^2\) It proved to be one of the core texts of the French Reformation. In successive editions between the first of 1554, and 1619, when the book achieved its final definitive shape, the book grew from a small collection to a vast compendium of martyr stories and church history. Its successive editions elaborated an enormously influential vision of French Protestantism, sketching a history of evangelical commitment and torment going back to the first decade of the sixteenth century. French Protestants could find encouragement in the witness of their suffering brethren, and the book achieved almost canonical status, on occasions apparently being read aloud as part of divine service.\(^3\)

Crespin’s martyrology has become one of the major primary sources for historians of the French Reformation. It has been utilised in order to clarify many aspects of the spread of religious dissent in France. For example, its pages have been plundered for information on the nature of the heresy in France, the extent of the persecution and also to pinpoint the beliefs of the victims of that persecution.\(^4\) Yet, often use has been made of the *Livre des Martyrs*

\(^1\) Crespin 1570, fol. 276v.
\(^2\) As will be seen, the title of Crespin’s martyrology constantly changed. The *Livre des Martyrs* is the title of the first edition of 1554. Throughout this study it will be the *Histoire des vrais témoins* of 1570 that will be used: it was the last edition that Crespin edited before his death in 1572.
\(^4\) Among many examples, most recently H. Heller, *The Conquest of Poverty. The Calvinist Revolt in Sixteenth Century France* (Leiden, 1986); W. Monter, *Les exécutés pour hérésie par arrêt du Parlement de Paris* (1523-
without a sense of critical distance. Jean Crespin was a committed Calvinist and the biased nature of the collection and the intentions of its collator are crucial in appreciating its merits as a quarry of first-hand evidence about the spread and persecution of evangelism in France. As will be shown throughout this study, some commentators have seemed unaware that the reliability and veracity of the martyrology are intrinsically linked to its original purpose as a pedagogic tool, designed to educate the faithful and furnish them with heroic examples.

Some historians have had some sense of the circumspection that must be employed in extracting information from the Histoire des vrais témoins. Ray Mentzer has suggested that Crespin's collection contains 'occassional inaccuracies' and their use 'requires considerable caution'. Euan Cameron has also identified some of the risks involved in basing one's research on the Histoire: 'The martyrologies, which must be used, often claim to include authentic records, but obviously involve the risk of distortion...'. Donald Kelley has gone even further in casting doubt upon the martyrology as reliable testimony, claiming that 'Crespin did not hesitate to stretch the already flexible standards of sixteenth-century editorship, improving in various ways upon the texts of even original documents.'

Yet how extensive is this distortion? Nearly 70 years ago, Arthur Piaget and Gabrielle Berthoud condemned Crespin in much the same way as John Foxe had been condemned as 'a maker of mighty myths.' More recently however, Crespin's reputation, like that of Foxe, has been restored. The work of Professors Léon-E. Halkin and George Moreau at Liège has ensured that the Histoire is treated with more empathy and understanding of the circumstances of its composition. They felt that historians should not discard the martyrology as worthless too rashly:

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There is in the martyrologies a number of documents which are not be found elsewhere. There is above all an extraordinarily rich and powerful testimony to religious life under oppression.\textsuperscript{10}

This is all true and important work in recent years has considerably refined our understanding of the way in which sixteenth-century historical writings can be used as evidence. Building on the work done at Liège, Professor Jean-François Gilmont has written expertly on Crespin and the other Protestant martyrologies.\textsuperscript{11} He has produced magisterial works on Crespin the printer and Crespin the editor.\textsuperscript{12} Although Professor Gilmont’s interest is primarily bibliographical, by exposing Crespin’s working method and the techniques he used in the compilation and development of the martyrology, Gilmont has enabled the study of the \textit{Histoire} to be taken to new heights of refinement.

However, dealing as he does with the technical aspects of Crespin’s book, Professor Gilmont does not greatly concern himself with the question central to this investigation: the way in which Crespin’s work has been used, often inappropriately, as historical evidence. In particular, no recent scholarship has cast a critical eye over the way Crespin has been exploited in most studies of the early French Reformation. Professor Moreau’s important study of the reliability of the martyrology, although addressing many of these critical questions, dealt exclusively with accounts of martyrs from the Low Countries.\textsuperscript{13} A re-examination of the early French evangelical movement, addressing much the same sorts of issues, is long overdue. The substantial bulk of this study will therefore re-assess this critical period in the genesis and evolution of French Protestantism in the light of a more critical evaluation of the evidence contained in the martyrology.

This study will necessarily involve a more subtle and in-depth investigation than has been attempted before. To begin with, the broader picture of Crespin’s life and work will be examined for factors that influenced and shaped his martyrology. Chapter 2 will then concentrate on the veracity and authenticity of the \textit{Histoire} in general terms. In order to provide some sense of Crespin’s intentions as an author, it will look at Crespin's own, personal view of history and history-writing. It will investigate what kind of sources Crespin made use

\textsuperscript{10} Halkin, ‘Les martyrologes et la critique’, p. 64.
of, ask how he managed to get hold of them, and to what extent he re-worked them for inclusion in his collection. Crespin’s purpose and intentions for his collection affected the whole outlook of the book; it reflected the religious and personal bias of the author. Much of his narrative was shaped by standards and traditions of martyr story-telling that stretched back to biblical times. The *Histoire*’s educational and inspirational purpose had significant consequences for the manner in which its martyr narratives are constructed.

The main body of this dissertation lies in chapters 3, 4 and 5. Having established limitations to the credibility of the collection, these three chapters present a chronological re-examination of evangelical heresy in France through Crespin’s narratives in the period before the establishment of open Calvinist churches in 1555. These chapters will illustrate how, by using the martyrology in a more nuanced manner, we are able to create a picture of the early French evangelical movement that is significantly different from that portrayed elsewhere.

Many of the martyr accounts that Crespin included in the *Histoire* were taken from previously-published material. Where possible, the source of Crespin’s account will be identified, as a preliminary step to gauging the reliability of his narrative. The historical worth of each individual account will then be investigated by comparing Crespin’s narrative with such other contemporary records as have survived. This will tell us something about the basic reliability of Crespin’s accounts, and the sources of information upon which he relied. But such an investigation also inevitably points up the different intentions and preoccupations of the martyrologist from these other corroborative sources: letters, diaries, or court records. For example, in comparing the details contained in the *Histoire* with those of court records, it becomes clear that the martyrology and the trial records were two different sources with very different priorities.¹⁴

Consequently, these chapters will necessarily concentrate not only on the factual accuracy of Crespin’s work, but on the context in which it was written. Crespin’s priorities in constructing his book went far beyond a basic re-telling of events. For Crespin was often ‘expressing a theological, rather than a simple historical, truth’.¹⁵ In order to make the best use of the *Histoire*, it is necessary to be aware of the stylistic and rhetorical characteristics of sixteenth-century martyrology. Crespin wrote within a tradition which inevitably affected his presentation and interpretation of crucial evidence. The extent to which this impinges on his reliability as a historical source will be a constant theme of this study and is confronted directly in chapter 2.

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¹⁴ See chapter 5.

Having examined in depth Crespin's portrayal of the early French evangelical movement, chapter 6 will turn to a consideration of the international character of the collection. In some editions of Crespin's work more than half the collection was occupied with narratives of non-French martyrs. These foreign martyrs play an extremely important role in Crespin's scheme of affairs, validating and enhancing his presentation of early French religious dissent. For Crespin, the universality of the persecution was crucial in determining the righteousness of the Protestant cause. In turn, the ease with which Crespin obtained access to details of these executions scattered throughout Europe demonstrates both the efficacy of his contacts within the wider evangelical community and the impressive lines of communication between Protestants from different 'churches under the cross'.

Nearly all historians of the period make use of the most-widely available edition of the martyrology; the nineteenth-century reprint of the *Histoire des Martyrs*. Yet chapter 7 will make clear that this is, in many respects, the least reliable of all editions of the martyrology. After Crespin's death in 1572, four editions of the martyrology were produced in French. These were the work of the Genevan pastor and author, Simon Goulart. This chapter will show that Goulart's interventions altered the structure of the book, its content and its reliability. A more skilled historian and propagandist than Crespin, Goulart drew the *Histoire* away from the intentions of its creator and placed it in a much more highly developed genre of history-writing.

Finally, chapter 8 will conclude with an appraisal of Crespin's 'first' martyrs, the five students of Lyon. Not only was their case the inspiration for Crespin to compile a martyrology, but their accounts made up a very significant proportion of the subsequent editions. The purpose of this conclusion will be to illustrate how their accounts were the nearest Crespin got to his ideal of a martyr story, and consequently how far short of that ideal other stories fell. In the account of the five students the extensive documentation attested to the reliability of Crespin's sources of information, their exemplary conduct was in the best traditions of martyr behaviour, their theology was strictly Calvinist, and best of all, it had been to Geneva that they had turned for help and consolation.

Jean Crespin was one of the most influential of the first generation of Frenchmen who joined Calvin in Geneva.\(^{16}\) An advocate by training, Crespin came to Geneva to serve the Reformed faith through the work of his printing business. A publisher of more than 250

\(^{16}\) Much of this first chapter is based on Gilmont, *Jean Crespin*. 

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editions, Crespin was one of Geneva’s leading printers for over twenty years. In turn, he became a Reformer of European stature.

Crespin was born in Arras in around 1520 into a prominent local family, his father being a Councillor on the Council of Artois and one of the foremost jurists in the region. Crespin left his homeland in the early 1530s to attend university at Louvain, where for three years he studied the arts. Mirroring the early life of Calvin, Crespin then took the decision to follow his father into the law.\(^{17}\) In all, Crespin was in Louvain for eight years, during which time he was educated within a strongly humanist environment, with some of his friends attending Louvain’s Trilingual college.\(^{18}\) Having received his licence in 1541, Crespin’s first post was as secretary to the Gallican jurist Charles du Moulin in Paris. Crespin’s appointment turned out to be temporary, however; with the renewal of war between Charles V and Francis I in 1542, all subjects of Charles V were forced to leave France. Crespin returned to his native Artois to take up a career as an advocate, his mental and spiritual make-up forever altered by his time in Louvain and Paris.

In all probability, it was during his time at Louvain that Crespin was exposed to the ideas of the Reformation. His later status as one of the most active publishers of translations of Luther’s works into French perhaps indicates something of his first religious orientations.\(^{19}\) Certainly by the middle of November 1541, he was sufficiently interested (or curious) to attend the execution of Claude Le Pianctre in Paris.\(^{20}\) Crespin was one of a group of young Reformers, which probably included his friends Jaime de Enzinias, Juan Diaz and Matthew Budé, who witnessed Le Pianctre’s suffering. Twenty years later, Crespin recorded his presence in his account of Le Pianctre’s death in the Histoire: ‘I was one of those number who were spectators at his death and most fortunate end, which confirmed several who had a starting and some sentiment for the truth.’\(^{21}\)

Crespin’s return to Artois did not last long. His new-found beliefs quickly brought him to the attention of the authorities, and within two years of returning to his homeland, Crespin was banished from the region. The arrest and execution of Pierre Brully at Tournai in November 1544 set in train a wave of investigation into and persecution of evangélials in the area.

\(^{17}\) In 1523, Calvin studied the arts in Paris, before moving to Orléans to read law on the insistence of his father. T. de Béze, Life and Death of John Calvin reproduced in A. Duke, G. Lewis and A. Pettigree (eds.), Calvinism in Europe, 1540-1610. A collection of documents (Manchester, 1992), pp. 15-25.

\(^{18}\) Crespin’s great friend before he fled to Geneva, François Bauduin, attended the Trilingual college; Gilmont, Jean Crespin, p. 32.

\(^{19}\) For example, some of Crespin’s translations of Luther’s works include: Le livre d’Ecclesiaste, autrement dit le Prescheur (Geneva, Crespin, 1557); Commentaires sur les révélations des prophètes Joel et Jonas (Geneva, J. Crespin, 1558).

\(^{20}\) On the execution of Le Pianctre, see chapter 4, pp. 83ff.

\(^{21}\) Crespin 1570, fol. 977'.
However, by the time the order for Crespin’s banishment and the confiscation of his belongings had been issued, he had fled.\textsuperscript{22}

Leaving behind his newly-wed wife, who was carrying their first child, Crespin went to Paris, and then to Geneva for a brief stay before arriving in Strasbourg in May 1545. Influenced by Pierre Brully’s own contacts with the city, the personal magnetism of Calvin, and the discovery of a close-knit community of exiles of a similar social and occupational make-up as himself, it was during this first exploratory trip to Geneva that Crespin decided that this is where he would come to live. It would not be for another three and a half years, however, that Crespin would make Geneva his home. He spent this time recovering as much of his own personal fortune as possible and reuniting himself with his wife and newly-born daughter.\textsuperscript{23}

Crucially, during this first trip to Geneva, Crespin met many important and influential people. Friendships with Antoine Calvin, David Busanton, Nicolas des Gallars, François Hotman, Charles de Joinvillers, Laurent de Normandie and Theodore Beza were struck up at this time. It was through his friendship with Beza that Crespin was introduced to the world of printing. When he eventually arrived in Geneva for good, Crespin very quickly fitted into a powerful social group in the city. Linking up with a circle of exiles emanating, like himself, from the nobility or wealthy bourgeoisie, perhaps legally-trained, of a similar age, Crespin established himself and his family upon his arrival in Geneva in 1548.\textsuperscript{24}

Crespin made the most of his considerable personal fortune and his prominent contacts to establish himself quickly within the printing industry in Geneva.\textsuperscript{25} Crespin provided the print-shop in the Rue de Rive, Conrad Badius the technical know-how and within 20 months of his arrival, Crespin’s workshop had produced its first publication; the first edition of Beza’s \textit{Abraham sacrificant}.\textsuperscript{26} In securing this highly important work for his new enterprise, Crespin signalled immediately his impeccable connections within the exiled elite; that Beza took his work to Crespin, and not to one of the established Genevan printers, would have sent a clear message that something significant was afoot.

\textsuperscript{22} This was issued on 28 March 1545. It was at this time that Crespin fell out with his great friend François Bauduin, who had decided to stay in France and take the post of Chair of Civil Law at Bourges. Crespin’s disappointment at Bauduin’s refusal to leave France was symptomatic of his later intransigence with regard to all Nicodemites.

\textsuperscript{23} It appears that Crespin was a man of some considerable wealth. Crespin’s own fortune was greatly enhanced by the dowry of his wife, Madeleine Le Cambier who came from a wealthy local family, and monies left to his wife by the recent death of her father. Gilmont, \textit{Jean Crespin}, pp. 39-40.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 44.

\textsuperscript{25} He was wealthy enough to have his own independent paper suppliers; see H.J. Bremme, \textit{Buchdrucker und Buchhändler zur Zeit des Glaubenskampfe} (Geneva, 1969), p. 33

\textsuperscript{26} Gilmont, \textit{Bibliographie des éditions de Jean Crespin}, vol. I, 50/1, p. 1.
For the Genevan publishing industry, this was in many respects a defining moment. Through the preceding decade, Geneva had created a significant market in Protestant works. But although these included many important titles, including Calvin’s early polemic and the first French editions of his *Institutes*, they were for the most part relatively unambitious in terms of both size and appearance.\(^{27}\) This situation was transformed by the arrival of Crespin and, equally important, Robert Estienne, a leading member of the great Parisian printing dynasty, who had fled to Geneva at much the same time. Estienne brought with him both the superior working techniques and the modern typefaces which had characterised his Parisian work. This, combined with the capital resources of Estienne, Crespin and other newcomers such as Antoine Vincent, allowed Genevan printers to take on works of a much more ambitious character during the early 1550s; that is, the period that Crespin’s press was making its mark. The result was work of a quality and sophistication which for the first time rivalled that of the established French-language printing centres; Paris and Lyon. Crespin was both one of the principal instruments, and beneficiaries, of this transformation. In the fifteen years after his arrival in Geneva he became one of the two most significant figures in the Genevan industry.\(^{28}\)

Crespin’s success in the printing industry was not mirrored by his personal life. Only one of his seven children survived beyond infancy. His eldest child Marguerite, born during his absence from Arras in 1545, survived to marry fellow *Arrageois* Eustache Vignon in 1559, but three of their six children died at an early age. Marguerite herself passed away in 1570 during childbirth, and a fortnight later Crespin’s wife died of the plague. Crespin himself lived for another two years, in which time he was re-married to Marthe Bourgoing. He did manage to live long enough to see the birth of his son, Samuel, before succumbing to the plague himself a month later in April 1572.

Yet personal tragedy had not prevented Crespin from becoming an important figure in Geneva. Following Calvin’s victory over his opponents in 1555, Crespin became a *bourgeois* and seven years later was appointed to the Council of 200. Yet, despite a position of great influence, and generally good relations with the leading figures of the Genevan church, Crespin fiercely guarded his independence, both politically and financially. He was not part of the powerful clique of authors, printers and financiers which made up the innermost circle of influence within the Genevan printing industry, which included Calvin, Beza, Laurent de

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\(^{27}\) On the early printing industry in Geneva, see particularly G. Berthoud (ed.), *Aspects de la propagande religieuse* (Geneva, 1957).

\(^{28}\) By an Edict of the Council of Geneva of 1563, Crespin was one of four printers to own four presses. The others were Henri Estienne, Antoine Vincent and Laurent de Normandie. According to Gilmont, Crespin and Estienne were considerably larger than the others; Gilmont, *Jean Crespin*, p. 61.
Normandie and Henri Estienne. In particular he was in constant rivalry with the very powerful Estienne family, whose monopoly of Bible printing was fiercely resented by all other Genevan printers. Like printers everywhere, Crespin did not let his undoubtedly strong religious convictions govern his professional conduct on all occasions. Somewhat scandalously, in 1565 he had still not paid what he owed the Bourse Française as their stipulated royalty for his edition of the 1562 publication of the complete Psalms. On one occasion unauthorised alterations to a new edition of Calvin’s *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* in 1560 even found Crespin condemned to three days in prison and a fine of 50 écus. All Geneva’s printers at sometime fell foul of the Genevan authorities, who exercised an exceptionally close supervision over their work. Yet Crespin was clearly too important a figure in Genevan society to be dealt with too harshly. On this occasion his sentence was later amended to a reduced fine of 25 écus on the grounds of his service to the advancement of the ‘glory of God’. Clearly, Crespin was a man of influence. As chapter 6 illustrates, he was the leading Genevan authority on religious issues in the Low Countries. His status within the Walloon exile community was such that he sat on the committee appointed to settle the turbulent affairs of the Walloon church at Frankfurt in 1555-56. In 1565, he was involved in choosing ministers for Antwerp (François du Jon) and Valenciennes (Pérégrin de La Grange), and in September 1566 he was sent in place of Beza to counsel Calvinists in the Low Countries during the opening months of the Dutch Revolt. Crespin was also entrusted as one of Calvin’s special envoys to the Colloquy of Worms in 1557. Attending the Colloquy after the end of the Frankfurt Fair in September, Crespin did not stay long, returning to Geneva by 13 October.

Crucial to Crespin’s rise to prominence in Geneva was his personal fortune and his social status. His experience of dealing with large sums of money made him an ideal choice to act as the city’s representative in receiving the Palatinate’s contribution of 16,500 *livres tournois* to the Reformed cause during the second war of religion (1569). Of course, it was his leading

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35 Ibid., p. 89.
role in the printing industry, at that time such a crucial component of the financial and religious make-up of the city, that granted Crespin such authority.\footnote{See Chaix, Recherches sur l'imprimerie à Genève de 1550 à 1564.}

Crespin's œuvre was dominated by religious printing. To begin with, it was the printing of Scripture that provided many of Crespin's early editions. Publications such as Calvin's revision of Olivétan's translation of the Bible in 1551 and Beza's translations in verse of the Psalms with and without music were amongst the most successful.\footnote{Gilmont, Bibliographie des éditions de Jean Crespin, vol. I, 51/5, 51/6, pp. 11-12.} Crespin's edition of the Psalter with musical notation was in fact an important milestone in the publication of this book, since before his arrival, Geneva's printers had struggled to master the technically difficult business of printing music.\footnote{See P. Pidoux, 'Les Origines de l'impression de musique à Genève', in J.-D. Candaux and B. Lescaze (eds.), \textit{Cinq siècles d'imprimerie genevoise} (2 vols., Geneva, 1980), vol. I, pp. 97-108.} However, his expertise in publishing biblical text was not so impressive. When there were complaints about the standard of the work he produced from Calvin and Beza, Crespin soon began to reduce the volume of his printing of Scripture.\footnote{Gilmont, \textit{Jean Crespin}, pp. 79-80.} Consequently, although Crespin's first six years of business had produced 14 editions of Scripture, the remaining 17 years produced only ten further editions.\footnote{Ibid., p. 108.}

Another feature of Crespin's early career was the predominance of the works of John Calvin. Around one quarter of his total production were works by Calvin.\footnote{Ibid., p. 112.} However, not all types of Calvin's writings were represented in Crespin's production. Crespin never printed the \textit{Institutes} in Latin and only a very few of his sermons. In French, there are no commentaries, no biblical lessons and no sermons. Other types of work were, however, much better represented. Calvin's \textit{Catechisme} and his \textit{Forme des prières ecclesiastiques} were very popular, as were Latin printings of his biblical commentaries.

It appears that Crespin possessed a very shrewd commercial sense. One of his most successful early projects was his decision to be the first to bind together and produce as one volume the 'three basic manuals of Reformed propaganda'; the Catechism, the Psalter and the liturgy. This project is a clear indication of Crespin's interest in making works of theology available to a wider audience in an attractive and manageable form. This is a theme which would recur equally with the publication of his martyrology.

Many of the rest of Crespin's \textit{Calvinia} were polemical works. Indeed, a significant proportion of Crespin's output was to be taken up with polemical works by various authors. These slim volumes constituted nearly one quarter of the titles Crespin produced, but only 8%
of the total output in terms of the number of pages. The subjects of these works provide a good indication of the threats facing the Reformed community in the period of Crespin’s working life. Prominent amongst these were Calvin’s anti-Nicodemite writings with six editions printed by Crespin between 1550 and 1562. In addition, he printed two of Calvin’s attacks on Westphal and his other writings against three of his most vociferous enemies; Bolsec, Servetus and Castellion. In fact, the large majority of Crespin’s published polemical works were directed against fellow Protestants. The changing confessional climate reflected in these conflicts also found its echo in the pages of the Histoire.

Throughout his career, Crespin maintained strong links with the German-speaking world, especially in Zurich, Strasbourg, Frankfurt and Basle. The period of rapport between Geneva and Zurich following the signing of the Consensus Tigurinus in 1549 enabled Crespin to develop a strong personal and professional relationship with Bullinger. Often stopping off in Zurich on the way to the Frankfurt book fair, Crespin remained in correspondence with Bullinger all his life. This friendship was reflected in Crespin’s extensive printing of Bullinger’s works in French, with seven editions between 1556 and 1566. Translations of Bullinger were integral to one of the main characteristics of Crespin’s publishing activity; to make German authors available in French. This was something that Crespin had practised since his earliest years in business. Prior to the mid to late 1550s, Crespin was an enthusiastic printer of translations of Luther’s works and was the pre-eminent publisher in Geneva of Luther’s works between 1552 and 1558. After 1558 however, the increasing divide between Lutheran and Calvinist, as a result of the Westphal controversy, meant that Crespin no longer continued to print works of Luther.

Another distinctive characteristic of Crespin’s output was his dominant role in the printing of French language histories of the Church. Protestant concepts of their own history were gradually developing and Crespin was at the forefront of publications in French on this subject. Indeed, it was in this field that Crespin most excelled, both as printer and editor. Prior to Crespin’s arrival in Geneva, there had been virtually no works of Protestant history

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42 Gilmont, Jean Crespin, p. 146.
43 Gilmont, Bibliographie des éditions de Jean Crespin, vol. I, 50/4, pp. 3; 50/7, pp. 4-5; 51/10, p. 15; 51/11, pp. 15-16; 53/4, pp. 36-7; 62/1, p. 146.
44 Ibid., 56/3, p. 63; 57/6, pp. 79-80; 52/6-8, pp. 24-26; 54/5, pp. 44-45; 57/5, p. 79.
45 Two-thirds of the polemical works were against Protestants. Thirteen concentrated on the Eucharistic controversy, including attacks against Westphal, Brenz and Andrease amongst others. Fourteen denounced Nicodemism; Gilmont, Jean Crespin, p. 147.
46 See chapter 2, p. 31.
47 Gilmont, Jean Crespin, pp. 119-124.
49 Ibid., pp. 148-155.
published in French either in Geneva or elsewhere. Crespin was, therefore, a genuine pioneer in this field. In 1556, Crespin published works by two authors who were to dominate his historical publications: Johannes Sleidan and Jean de Hainault.\footnote{See below, chapter 2, pp. 13-15.} Sleidan’s \textit{De statu religionis et republicae...} of 1555 and his \textit{De quator summis imperis librites} of 1556 had both been a huge commercial success all over Europe. Crespin was able to share in this success, since he operated a monopoly of French translations of Sleidan and exploited this fully, producing 15 editions of Sleidan’s works within ten years.\footnote{Gilmont, \textit{Bibliographie des éditions de Jean Crespin}, vol. I, 56/16-17, pp. 74-75; 57/14-16, pp. 85-89; 58/17-20, pp. 108-111; 59/10-12, pp. 119-122; 61/9, p. 145; 63/12, pp. 164-5; 66/11, pp. 190-1.} Nearly as profitable as Sleidan was the much more modest work of a little known French writer, Jean de Hainault. Hainault’s \textit{L’estat de l’Eglise}, less a work of historical writing than an annotated chronology, went through four editions between 1556 and 1562.\footnote{Ibid., 56/11, pp. 70-1; 57/8, p. 81; 58/11, p. 99, 62/3, pp. 148-9.}

A monopoly of both of these authors allowed Crespin’s firm to become the pre-eminent publisher of historical writings in French. Yet, Crespin became more famous for his own work of church history; his \textit{Livre des Martyrs} of 1554. More successful and durable than any other book in his \textit{oeuvre}, it was Crespin’s greatest contribution to the development of French historical literature.\footnote{He produced 14 editions of the martyrology in 18 years.} Printed in French, Latin and German, it was reprinted for the last time some 350 years after the death of its author. Its appearance in August 1554 coincided with the publication of two other great Protestant martyrological works: Rabus’ \textit{Historien der heyligen Ausswerwöhlten Gottes Zeügen, Bekennern und Martyren} and Foxe’s \textit{Rerum in Ecclesia gestarum commentarii}.\footnote{On the works of Rabus and Foxe, as well as Haemstede's \textit{Geschiedenisse}, see Gilmont, ‘Les martyrologes du XVIe siècle’.

These works were integral in creating a sense of identity and heritage for the Protestant movement. Their pages preserved a testimony to all those who had suffered at the hands of religious intolerance. Crespin’s \textit{Histoire des vrays tesmoins} has shaped our view of the history of early French Protestantism ever since.
2

THE RELIABILITY OF THE HISTOIRE DES VRAYS TESMOINS AS A HISTORICAL SOURCE

In order to assess the worth of the Histoire as an authentic chronicle, Professor Gilmont has suggested the following working method:

To utilise the martyrology correctly as a historical source, two rules are essential. First, the collection is not a homogeneous block: some documents of a rigorous authenticity and of a irreplaceable worth sit side by side with accounts where the hagiographical exaggeration is evident. It is necessary therefore to examine each part of the case without prejudice. Furthermore, the evolution of the martyrology from 1554 to 1619 is important: a healthy critique cannot limit itself to the definitive state of the text, but it should follow it since its first appearance in the martyrology.¹

This chapter will follow this working method, but will also explore other issues which cast light on the value of Crespin’s collection to the historian of the French Reformation. Any worthwhile investigation of this sort must first acknowledge how different Crespin’s view of history was from that of our own time and the effect that this would have on the composition of his book. Inevitably also, the reliability of the martyrology depends very much on those sources upon which Crespin based his collection; what they were, whence he received them and how he edited them once they were in his possession. It will also be emphasised that the evolution of the martyrology was a gradual process. The process by which Crespin accumulated material affected not only the composition of individual notices, but also the make-up and character of the book.

Some of Crespin’s most successful publications were those which dealt with the history of the church.² On occasion, Crespin would use the preface to these works to articulate his view of the purpose and value of history writing. One of Crespin’s most lucrative projects was the publication in French, for the first time, of Johannes Sleidan’s Commentaries on Religion and the State in the reign of Emperor Charles V (first published in Latin in 1555; in French in 1556) and his further work, Of the Four Greatest Empires (published in Latin

² See chapter 1, pp. 11-12.
in 1556 and in French in 1557). Covering the events from the origins of the Reformation in 1517 to February 1555 in 25 books, Sleidan’s Commentaries were at the forefront of sixteenth-century Protestant history writing, and have been called ‘...the fullest, broadest and most famous contemporary narrative of the Protestant Reformation.’ In the preface to Sleidan’s Oeuvres, Crespin wrote admiringly of Sleidan’s ability and objectivity in his writing of history:

Several have attempted to write about what has happened during our times, but there have been very few who have illustrated the councils and enterprises of Princes with such integrity and truth, as Jean Sleidan has done...

Crespin went on to draw a flattering comparison between Sleidan, who was not satisfied with hearsay but sought out the truth from public acts and town registers, and Thucydides who, in writing his history of the Peloponnesian War, even paid his enemies for information in order to secure the truth. It was clearly Sleidan who provided the model of historical methodology which Crespin wished to emulate.

A less celebrated exponent of the historian’s craft was Jean de Hainault, whose work Crespin also published for the first time in 1556. Although Hainault’s L’estat de l’Eglise is now far less well-known than Sleidan’s Commentaries, at the time it proved extremely popular, and Crespin published four editions of Hainault’s work between 1556 and 1562. This work tells the story of 15 centuries of the history of the Church, gathered together from histories of olden times and medieval chronicles. As with Sleidan’s Commentaries, the preface to this work was written by Crespin and it does show, to some extent at least, what Crespin saw as the purpose of history-writing:

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4 Dickens, ‘Sleidan and Reformation History’, p. 17.
5 Jean Sleidan, Oeuvres (Geneva, 1566), sig. *ii*.
6 Ibid., sig. *ii*.
Those who apply their spirits to compiling histories must aim at this principal goal, to propose as in a mirror, the strength, wisdom, justice and admirable kindness of God living and eternal.⁸

Furthermore, for Crespin divine action was all-powerful, and the reader should not be surprised if history tells how kingdoms, once decadent and wasted, can be restored; for they should expect such things of God.⁹ Crespin saw in the lessons of history some individual lessons of morality. The reader was reminded that no matter how wealthy, magnificent or long-established a monarchy might be, it was in no position to resist the admirable judgement of God. The preface to L'estat de L'Eglise was built on the theme of those oppressed being exalted by Providence, and those of overbearing arrogance being justly punished. He saw no limit to the power of the Lord in punishing the arrogant:

We see the crowns of Kings fall to the ground; the sceptres of Emperors break and smash; the glory of republics wither. And it is the ambition, proud ingratitude, and insatiable greed of those who are ordained to rule and do not recognise God, who are the cause of such reversals and such mutations.¹⁰

These were clearly covert assurances to the Reformed community in France that God will, in his own time, deal with the abuses of power by the monarchy, and deliver his chosen people. Before this will be done, however, those under persecution will have to endure hardships and danger: 'But the spiritual kingdom of the Son of God, which is his Church, must not be judged by the dangers of the present life: for it is preserved in the middle of impetuous waves.'¹¹ Crespin then cited Isaiah, 60:20 to assure the Reformed that their day will come:

Thy sun shall be no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

These introductory pieces tell us something of Crespin's attitudes and perceptions of the historian's task. For Crespin, obviously, history must be written faithfully, with no

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⁹ Preface to Jean de Hainault, L'estat de L'Eglise (Geneva, Crespin, 1564), sig. aa².
¹⁰ Ibid., sig. aa²ⁿ
¹¹ Ibid., sig. aa²ⁿ⁻aa³.
other motives than to tell the truth and let the lessons of history educate and guide present happenings. This was an unexceptional goal if, within the context of the polemical conflicts of the sixteenth century, scarcely attainable. A more profound insight into his view of history-writing is to be found in an extensive preface introducing the 1570 edition of his martyrology. In this *Preface montrant une conformité des persecutions et martyrs de ces derniers temps à ceux de la première église...*, Crespin expounded his sense of the continuity of history. This is not especially sophisticated in theological or historical terms, although his aim is clear: to demonstrate that the martyrs of his time and of his faith bear comparison with those of the Early Church. A part of the preface is given over to the biblical martyr stories of Jesus, Stephen and John the Baptist, although in a very direct and simple fashion, very much as a short paraphrase of the biblical text. The reader is shown how John the Baptist, like the Reformers, witnessed the truth and chastised those in charge of the Church for falsifying the doctrine of God, both actions that would bring home to even the most uneducated reader the conformity of times past and times present.

Aspects of Christ’s story are also held up for comparison with contemporary events by Crespin, aspects that bear direct relation to situations in which his readers would have found themselves. The reader is told how Christ also had enemies, who called him to dispute and who excommunicated him. According to Crespin, Christ was accused of, amongst other things, teaching without legitimate authority, disrupting the religion ordered by Moses according to the word of God and seducing the people. The readers are assured by Crespin that their path is following that of Christ, who also, he assured them, condemned salvation by good works alone. Indeed, Crespin asked, what were the causes of Christ’s persecution? The reply could equally be a description of the failings of the authorities in more recent times:

One of the principal (causes) was great blindness in this people, who glorified themselves in being the people of God: and besides this, the hypocrisy and malice of rulers, who are not at all able to suffer that their traditions, their abuses and their vices were taken away from them once again.

Fittingly, Stephen the first Christian martyr is also included, as Crespin drew an analogy between the persecuted Church of the Apostles’ times and his own. Not only was he the

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13 Crespin 1570, preface, sig. α4’.
14 Ibid., sig. α4’.
15 Ibid., sig. α5’.
shining example for all Protestant martyrs, but it seems he also shared some of their fundamental beliefs. He also believed, according to Crespin, that salvation would not be secured by good works, but only by faith.

These accounts in the preface to the 1570 edition are striking for their brevity and simplicity. Crespin’s view of history is conventional and, within the context of the new Protestant-history writing, orthodox. He sees all the goodness of the primitive Church being wiped out by the arrival of ‘miserable idolatry’ in the form of the Papacy. He also shares a contemporary faith in the omnipotence and omnipresence of divine action. Crespin’s view of history accommodates only divine action, seeing the goal of the historian to propose to readers, as if in a mirror, ‘...the strength, the wisdom, the justice and the kindness of God’.\footnote{Preface to Jean de Hainault, \textit{L’estat de L’Eglise} (Geneva, 1564), sig. aa 2'.}

Yet this is not to say that history does not provide a cautionary tale to those responsible for the persecution of the truth. Crespin warns not only the enemies of the Gospel, such as Archbishops, Cardinals, Bishops and the entire Roman hierarchy, but also Kings and Queens, Dukes and Lords, Chancellors and Presidents, Councillors, Lieutenants, Commissioners and Governors of towns and provinces. Terrible judgements will befall great houses and others in charge of persecuting Christians.

Crespin gives the reader several instances of retribution from the Bible. For example, from Exodus chapter 14, he cites the story of the pursuit of Moses and the Israelites from Egypt by Pharaoh. The Israelites are allowed by the Lord to cross the divided sea, which crashes down upon the cream of Egypt’s troops when they attempt to cross. Also, the story of Ahab in 1 Kings 16-22, whose house and wife were both brought to ruin by his greed and defiance of the Lord.\footnote{Crespin 1570, preface sig. a7'. On Old Testament imagery in Crespin’s martyrology see Parker, ‘French Calvinists as the Children of Israel’, 227-47.} From Acts 12, Crespin relates the story of Herod Agrippa, the murderer of the apostle James, who met death eaten alive by worms, because he did not give praise to the Lord. The fate of all these characters as well as others from classical history, such as Mark Anthony and Diocletian, are mentioned by Crespin as indications of the vengeance of God. These are all well-known stories and figures, whose fate, and the role of God’s actions in it, would not be lost on Crespin’s readership.\footnote{On the role of divine judgement in martyr accounts see below, pp. 36-38. Also see chapter 7 for an appraisal of Simon Goulart’s more extensive use of divine judgements as literary tools.}

It is here, in these prefaces, that Crespin attempts to fit the suffering of his contemporaries into the wider picture of the persecution of the Church and thus create a
Protestant scheme of history that links the first Christian centuries with contemporary events. He also writes most directly about what he sees as the historian’s task, and the purpose of history-writing. Whether in fact Crespin always lived up to the lofty purposes expressed in these introductions is something that needs to be tested in an examination of the text of the Histoire itself. Obviously in any modern critical assessment of the value of Crespin’s book, an examination of his use of and approach to sources is crucial. By identifying the source of a particular account and Crespin’s use of it, one can gain some idea of its reliability and of the extent his editorial technique.

From the earliest days of its conception, Crespin wanted his martyrology to consist of the ‘acts’ of martyrs, and that meant including extensive documentation which attested to the authenticity of his accounts. Consequently, to begin with the Livre des Martyrs was much more a collection of documents than a history of the persecuted Church. This process of collation meant that the martyrology was more the work of a journalist than a historian. Whatever information Crespin could lay his hands on, he included it in his collection, even if it was nothing more than a stray letter or treatise of the imprisoned, which makes no mention of their present predicament, as it may well have been written several years previously.¹⁹

In addition, Crespin was keen to provide as much up-to-date information as possible, as evidenced by his inclusion of the martyrdom of Richard Le Fevre.²⁰ Although executed only on 7 July 1554, Crespin included an account of the execution in the Livre des Martyrs, published less than a month later. The efficiency of Crespin’s compilation of information in this particular case was undoubtedly due to the fact that Le Fevre had been a correspondent of Calvin’s, and indeed some of the Calvin’s letters to Le Fevre were included in the account. Such late inclusions, together with the reproduction of contemporary documentary material, undoubtedly contributed to the authentic feel and immediate atmosphere of the book, but they did little to improve its readability. Indeed, in compiling his Acta martyrum of 1556 Crespin’s enthusiasm for the wholesale incorporation of documents and texts at the expense of the lucidity and coherence of the volume brought him into conflict with his fellow editor, Claude Baduel.²¹

As the succeeding chapters will make clear, Crespin relied heavily on previously-published material. When dealing with the early Protestant martyrs of the German Empire,

¹⁹ For example, Crespin’s accounts of the first victims of the Marian persecution in England are a patchwork of details, letters and treatises. See chapter 6.
²⁰ Crespin 1554, pp. 666-87.
²¹ Baduel reproached Crespin for his prolixity. Gilmont, Jean Crespin, pp. 173-4. Crespin’s response was to introduction into the next edition of his Recueil a preface justifying the inclusion of whole documents of this sort.
Crespin drew his accounts extensively from the large number of martyr pamphlets that appeared as *Flugschriften* to celebrate the death of these first martyrs of the Reformation.\(^{22}\) One example where it is possible to locate the source of Crespin’s account is the history of Henry of Zutphen. This preacher was a student of Luther’s and arrived in Meldorf in December, 1524, where he began to preach.\(^{23}\) But as a result of considerable agitation by the prior of the local Dominicans, and with the co-operation of other Church leaders and civil authorities, certain peasants of the neighborhood were persuaded to kidnap Henry. After they had accomplished this, they drank themselves into a frenzy and lynched him on December 10, 1524.

After Zutphen’s death, Luther wrote a small book about Henry’s death, ‘The Burning of Brother Henry’ in response to a request that he console the Christians in Bremen who grieved over the loss of their pastor.\(^{24}\) He based the story on letters and oral reports and framed it in the style of a passion narrative. Luther’s text is replicated almost exactly by Crespin’s in his account of Zutphen in his 1554 edition. This includes standard embellishments of a martyr story such as the inability of the wood in the pyre to be lit and Henry’s refusal to die in spite of his many wounds, thus forcing the mob to resort to strangulation to kill him. It is clear that Crespin simply adopted Luther’s account wholesale, despite the ahistorical elaborations.

In this particular case, Crespin had an almost contemporary account conveniently to hand. For his accounts of French martyrs, Crespin had no such sources on which to rely. There were no pamphlets or broadsheets describing the burning of heretics printed in France in the whole of the sixteenth century.\(^{25}\) The lack of such a ready-made account meant that Crespin was forced to base his accounts on other sources which he could obtain, such as published letters or writings of the victim.

An example of this methodology was the story of Louis de Berquin, a Flemish nobleman of modest income.\(^{26}\) Eventually executed in 1529, he was tried on three separate occasions by the Parlement and the Sorbonne, only to be released by the King’s pardon. This was a well-known story, and on this occasion Crespin had available to him a valuable

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\(^{22}\) See Gilmont, *Les martyrologes protestants du XVie siècle*, chapter 1. Crespin’s widespread use of these publications is detailed further in chapter 6 of this study.

\(^{23}\) On Henry of Zutphen see *BMP*, vol. 1, pp. 539-629.


\(^{26}\) On Berquin, see chapter 3, pp. 50ff.
2. The reliability of the *Livre des Martyrs*

contemporary source: a letter from Erasmus to Charles d'Utenhove dated 1 July 1529.\(^{27}\) This forms the backbone of Crespin's account.\(^{28}\) From it Crespin draws considerable detail regarding the intricacies of Berquin's case despite the fact that in the letter, Erasmus admits to not having known Berquin personally. But Crespin is also selective. Omitted from Crespin's account is any mention of Berquin's recantation of 1526; something that would not have lain easily with Crespin's portrayal of Berquin as a paragon of constancy.\(^{29}\)

For the most part however, and especially when dealing with the native French martyrs, Crespin had to construct his own narrative, and often one can only speculate as to the precise source of his information. Undoubtedly, on occasions, Crespin had access to some first-hand materials. Sometimes he quotes directly from letters written by the martyrs to their parents and friends, as well as reproducing confessions of faith given as their testimony.\(^{30}\) Compiling such information would have proved a formidable task. The preface to his first edition of 1554, however, gives us an insight into how he hoped to gather his material, and how this process could lead to a vast array of historical documentation of varying relevance and reliability. In it he requests of the faithful, in the name of Jesus Christ 'the great leader and captain of martyrs', that they gather all the relevant information they can; to recall:

...all that they were able to hear, and that could be gathered of their constancy, their words and letters, their replies, the confessions of their faith, their words and last exhortations; in order to hold them all in the remembrance of the Church forever.\(^{31}\)

In his preface to the edition of 1570, he repeated his plea for help and collaboration. Exhorting the faithful to apply themselves rigorously to the task, he called upon them to follow the model of the primitive Church, its zeal and activity and its painstaking care to put down in writing the acts of the martyrs and to conserve the registers as very precious treasuries.\(^{32}\)

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\(^{28}\) Crespin 1550, fols. 70*-71*.

\(^{29}\) See N. Weiss, "Louis de Berquin, son premier procès et sa rétraction d’après quelques documents inédits (1523)", *BSHPF*, 67 (1918), 180-81.

\(^{30}\) For example, confessions given by Claude Monier in 1551 (Crespin 1570, fols. 182*-184*). The letters and confessions of Godefroid de Hamal, executed in 1552 (Crespin 1570, fols. 186*-191*) and Pierre Brilly, executed in 1545 (Crespin 1570, fols. 134*-140*).


\(^{32}\) Crespin 1570, sig. α5*". 
Yet Crespin did not have to depend solely upon the efforts of his readers to gather information for him. He was an associate and friend of many famous European Protestants, and their own experiences provided him with some of his most extensive narratives. For example, for the Spanish Protestant Juan Diaz murdered by his brother in Neuburg in 1546, Crespin’s account stretched to nearly 15,000 words. Crespin was personally acquainted with Diaz; the Spanish reformer was a member of the group of pupils of Guillaume Budé whom Crespin encountered on his first trip to Paris. It is also true that very soon after the conception of his martyrological project, he established contacts of his own from whom he was able to garner information about cases. Evidence of this network of contacts established by Crespin in his search for information is provided when one of his informants himself became a martyr. Thus Antoine Magne, from the Auvergne, executed in Paris in 1553, is credited by Crespin with providing the information which formed the basis of the other narratives in Crespin’s book for the same year: 'this person ... brought news to the church of Geneva of the imprisonment of the foresaid martyr and others.'

Crespin’s network of contacts was extremely extensive. The Netherlandish minister Guy de Brès, for example, became the main source of Crespin’s information for events in the Low Countries in the period before his own execution in 1567. Indeed, Crespin was kept so well-informed by de Brès that he was able to ignore Haemstede’s published account in his Dutch martyrology of the martyr Christopher Fabritius in his Historien as de Brès had sent him a copy of the original source, translated into French. This excellent source of information contrasts strikingly with an almost total absence of detailed information for some of the early martyrs of the French Reformation. Some of Crespin’s accounts are so brief as to be almost wholly uninformative. The account of Jean L’Anglois from Burgundy, martyred at Sens in March 1547, for instance amounts to a mere 60 words. All we are told is that he was an advocate, condemned by the Parlement of Paris for maintaining the truth of the Lord. This is presumably all the information Crespin had to

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33 See chapter 6.
35 Gilmont, Jean Crespin, p. 36. The source for Crespin’s account of Diaz is an earlier publication, Claude Senarcens, Historia vera de morte sancti utri Ioannis Diazii Hispani... (Basle, J. Oporinus, 1546). Crespin personally knew Senarcens, see Crespin-Gouart 1885-9, vol. i, p. ix.
36 Crespin 1570, fol. 269f.
37 See chapter 6, pp. 144ff.
38 Gilmont, Les martyrologes protestants du XVle siècle, p. 274.
hand when compiling his first collection in 1554, and in fact a considerable proportion of the accounts of native French martyrs are of this nature.\textsuperscript{40} This suggests that Crespin was simply not well-informed of the circumstances which led to many of the executions of evangelical believers in France up to the time of the first publication of his martyrlogy.

It is also clear that Crespin was far better-informed of events in some parts of France than in others. Examining the first edition of the martyrlogy of 1554, 380 pages are given over to accounts of French martyrs. Of those over 70\% are devoted to the martyrs of Lyon and Villefranche alone.\textsuperscript{41} This compares to only ten pages being given over to Parisian martyrs, despite the fact that the capital witnessed a far greater persecution than the provinces. The martyrs of Lyon and Villefranche were so well documented because of the close connections they had maintained before their deaths with the Reformed community in Geneva. In addition, sheer geography made the collation of information easier; Lyon and Villefranche were both comparatively close to Geneva. In fact, Crespin was consistently better informed about those regions nearest to Geneva throughout the gestation of his martyrlogy. For the Parlement of Dijon, Crespin was aware of 82\% of those executed, whereas he knew of only 14\% of those condemned to death by the Parlement of Rouen, and 13\% of those executed by the Parlement of Toulouse.\textsuperscript{42}

Obviously, the historical worth of a particular account was largely dependant on the nature and the origin of the information that he used. However, the examples given so far only touch upon those cases where Crespin had reliable first-hand information. In these cases Crespin was obviously able to gather sufficient information about the accused to ascertain the dates, places and circumstances of their arrest and execution. He could also sometimes supplement that brief information with a letter written by the victim before or during his incarceration. Yet how did Crespin obtain such documentation? How did he come to include the trial records and interrogations or confessions of faith that sometimes fill out his accounts? This is information to which the public would not be privy, as the accused would be alone in front of the judges. This was especially the case if the authorities, as was apparently the normal practice, burned the trial documents along with the accused. It seems that they too had realised the propaganda value of the trial records.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{40} For example, in Crespin 1554, the accounts of Hubert Burrô, Gillot Vivier, Macé Moreau, Maurice Secenat, René Poyet and François Bribard are all less than fifty words in length.
\textsuperscript{41} Crespin 1554, pp. 325-615. On these martyrs, see chapter 8.
\textsuperscript{42} W. Monter, 'Les exécutés pour hérésie par arrêt du Parlement du Paris', 191-224.
\textsuperscript{43} See below, footnote no. 45.
2. The reliability of the *Livre des Martyrs*

The Dutch martyrologist Haemstede frequently included writings and confessions of faith that had been written by the prisoners themselves and then passed out to friends.\(^{44}\) Crespin made use of similar material. In the case of the martyr Pierre Denocheau, executed in Chartres in 1553, Crespin tells us that Denocheau:

had a method of leaving, in writing, in the prison, his confession, based on the pure doctrine of the Gospel, which we have inserted here, as if we have plucked it from the middle of the fire. Few people realise the difficulty which there is in recovering the judicial acts and confessions of those who were held prisoner for the true doctrine, all the more so because Satan knew to suggest this trickery to the brains of his henchmen, so that they completely burnt the cases along with those executed.\(^{45}\)

As far as trial documents were concerned, access to them would be easier if the judges were sympathetic to the cause of the Reformed. Agrippa d’Aubigné, in his *Histoire Universelle*, tells us the Reformed religion was:

primarily taken up by men of letters, so there were few enough seats of justice in France where there was not some officer in favour of this doctrine. By this method, those who compiled the huge *Livre des Martyrs* authenticated their reports by acts and entire cases taken from clerks.\(^{46}\)

In the account of Simon Laloë, Crespin was even able to draw upon the testimony of the executioner, who was so moved by the execution of such an honourable man as Laloë, that he abandoned his career as ‘an executioner of innocent blood’ and fled to Geneva, ‘in order to live according to the Reformation of the Gospel.’\(^{47}\)

A more common source of the details of the trial would have been letters written by the prisoners themselves detailing their interrogations. Some martyrs found a way of writing up their inquisition from memory and confiding them to some courageous friends, who would apparently pass the material on to Crespin. One of these martyrs was Jean Sorret, a

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\(^{45}\) Crespin 1570, fol. 274\(^a\).


\(^{47}\) Crespin 1570, fol. 274\(^a\). See chapter 5, p. 131.
Walloon member of the Reformed Church at Tournai, executed in 1569. Writing to fellow members of his congregation, he requested:

I beseech you not to show my interrogations to anyone, at least until after my death, for besides the fact that they have been written with great speed, if it is known that anyone gave me assistance to get these to you, they will be in great danger. ... 

However, although Crespin makes great use of letters, or confessions written by the accused to their friends, sisters or brothers, it is difficult to know how or in what state he received them. And yet how Crespin treated these raw materials is crucial in establishing his editorial practice, and his willingness to tamper with the testimonies. Often, with a great deal of time to pass, the prisoners would write letters of considerable length. We have little or no indication of the conditions in which these letters were written, but despite any hardships the letters as presented by Crespin were often crammed with a remarkable quantity of biblical and patristic citations. Even bearing in mind the much greater biblical literacy of the sixteenth century, their proficiency was suspiciously remarkable. One could understand this level of accomplishment in the case of students of theology, such as Pierre Navihères or Bernard Seguin, two of the five students of Lyon, yet the same fluency and quality of citation is also often evident in letters written by more humble martyrs: merchants, booksellers, tradesmen.

An excellent example of this phenomenon is provided by the case of Jean Chambon, highwayman and thief, who was imprisoned for several months at the same time as the five students of Lyon. Whilst in prison, he was visited by Pierre Berger, pastry-chef and future martyr. He was converted. According to Bernard Seguin, one of his fellow prisoners, Chambon spent nearly his whole time clasped in irons, his feet in stocks and his hands

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49 Crespin 1570, fol. 707.
50 For an idea of how some prisoners were able to write down their experiences for Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* see Susan Wabuda, 'Henry Bull, Miles Coverdale, and the making of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, in D. Wood (ed.), *Martyr and Martyrologies*, Studies in Church History, 30 (Oxford, 1993), pp. 248-49.
51 The confessions of the five students include a wide variety of citations. For example, Seguin draws, to some extent, from nearly every book of the New Testament and many from the Old Testament. The other four students are equally proficient. See Parker, 'French Calvinists as the Children of Israel', 227-48. In addition, the confessions of the above-mentioned Godefroy de Hamelle and Pierre Bruly show similar biblical expertise. Examples of more humble martyrs being remarkably well-educated include the merchant Pierre Millet (Crespin 1570, fols. 524'-524'), Guillaume Cornu, an apprentice dressmaker (Crespin 1570, fols. 623'-624'), and Jean de Lannoy, a tapestry-maker (Crespin 1570, fols. 577'-578'). There are also the examples of the labourers Joan Cornon and Estienne Brun astonishing their more learned accusers with the depth of their biblical knowledge (Crespin 1570, fol. 85' and Crespin 1570, fols. 94'-95').
52 Ibid., fol. 237'.
bound by manacles.\textsuperscript{53} Despite these manacles, he found a way of sending a letter to the five students asking for some book of consolation. This letter was published by Crespin and in it we learn of the difficult conditions in which it was written:

If my letter is awkward to read, excuse me. For I only have brightness by a hole to pass my hand, and cannot cut my feather quill, which is therefore worthless. Moreover, I write in great pain, more than you could believe, yet I must write secretly, for it is forbidden for me, and they have taken away from me ink and paper. I have only obtained this with great difficulty, and there is only a servant who knows this.\textsuperscript{54}

Obviously, conditions in the prison were not conducive to writing, yet Chambon the highwayman wrote like a theologian.\textsuperscript{55} In the words of the \textit{Histoire ecclésiastique}: "In an instant, by manner of speaking, he was transformed from a murderer to an excellent preacher of the truth."\textsuperscript{56} Chambon did indeed write skilfully. His account of his fellow prisoner, who was also converted, does seem the work of more than just a common thief:

He who also entered blind into these prisons of Rouen, but, by the pain and example way of our brother Pierre Berger, he will leave, by the mercy of our good God, with the light of truth. I even reckon that he has acquired all the gold of this world. For if Jacques is killed, Pierre will stay in order to teach the blind.\textsuperscript{57}

Chambon was desperately keen to die in the right manner. He asked the five students to teach him how to be led to death, at which point he wished to say something for the honour and glory of God and for the salvation of his soul. According to Crespin, the letter was in Chambon's own language, and there are some vulgar references, more befitting of a brigand. Chambon recalled of his two months of incarceration, that "... I was not able to turn or move, so that often I had to piss under me."\textsuperscript{58} Aside from the occasional vulgar phrase, the rest of his letter is written well and with knowledge. Now it is possible that Chambon was a man of some education. But it seems equally likely that the refinement so obvious in his writing was added by Crespin in his compilation of the events and material.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., fol. 215\textsuperscript{v}.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., fol. 238\textsuperscript{v}.
\textsuperscript{55} Piaget & Berthoud, \textit{Notes sur le Livre des Martyrs}, p.39.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Histoire ecclésiastique}, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{57} Crespin 1570, fol. 238\textsuperscript{v}.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., fol. 238\textsuperscript{v}.
Of course, it is certainly true that the authors of these letters often intended them for public consumption, and fashioned them accordingly. Crespin also received much additional information from the victims’ relatives and friends, who naturally wished to publicise the sufferings of loved ones. This meant that many stories grew in length as Crespin’s martyrology developed. For example, the story of Paris Panier, executed in 1554, grows tenfold between the first edition of 1554 and the Histoire of 1570. The initial entry consisted of only 32 words and only mentioned that Panier was an advocate from Burgundy who had died ‘for the pure doctrine of the Son of God’ in the town of Dole on Saturday 7 April 1554. Much more detail is offered in the edition of 1570, including his age (24), the names of those priests who had ‘conspired’ against him and the fact that he was one of the foremost jurisconsults in the region. Similarly, the account of Richard Le Fevre expands considerably between the two editions. Executed in 1554, Le Fevre was a correspondent of Calvin’s, and it was the inclusion of one of the Reformer’s letters that accounts for the expansion of the story from around 5,500 words to nearly 15,000 words by 1570.

Some idea of Crespin’s working method in collating his material can be ascertained when one examines the account of Macé Moreau. The account of this ‘notorious chapman and bookseller’ executed in October 1546 in Troyes first appeared in the Livre des Martyrs of 1554. It also appeared in the Actiones of 1560. Both these accounts provided only minimal information; that he was burnt in Troyes, and that he constantly persevered in the confession of this doctrine: a sum total of 23 words. Yet, by the time that the account appeared in the edition of 1564, it had considerably expanded to 825 words. The same account was reproduced in the Histoire of 1570. The more recent account is far better-informed than that in the first edition. Clearly, the question that needs to be asked is from whence did Crespin obtain this new information? Most probably, Crespin was furnished with the greater details of...
the account by Nicolas Pithou, elder and chronicler of the Reformed church at Troyes. In the early 1560s, Theodore Beza had begun to compile the materials for the official history of the Calvinist churches, the *Histoire ecclésiastique* which recounted the history of the churches in France, region by region. *For the city of Troyes, Nicolas Pithou was chosen for the task, probably at the provincial synod at La Ferté in April 1564.*

A direct comparison between the account in the *Histoire* of 1570 and the manuscript of Pithou makes it clear that Crespin was indebted to Pithou for the details of his new account. Many of the details included by Crespin are lifted straight from Pithou’s account. It is clear that he did not receive the account from Beza, as Beza only received Pithou’s manuscript in May 1565, some time after Crespin had the necessary information to hand to include it in his *Actes des Martyrs* of 1564. The most likely solution is that Crespin extracted this information from Pithou when he visited Geneva in the year 1560–1.

This example also provides some interesting glimpses of how Crespin treated the materials that he received. Although Crespin includes large sections of Pithou’s account, he does miss out some crucial details. Crespin provides a far briefer introduction to the circumstances of Moreau’s arrest than Pithou does, moving straight onto the particular episode that brings about Moreau’s capture; his willingness to show an old friend one of the books he was carrying. Pithou describes this book as

*Le livre des marchans* which is a small book which was composed and published in 1544 by a Picard called Antoine Marcou, formerly a Dominican or other monk, and now minister in a place called Versoix, a small town of Savoy, close to Geneva.

Crespin, however, omits these details, identifying the book merely as ‘one of the books that he was carrying.’ Crespin then continues his story on much the same lines as Pithou, occasionally paraphrasing sections of Pithou’s narrative. Crespin does, however, include

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72 I am most grateful to Dr Penny Roberts, who sent me a copy of the account of Macé Moreau to be found in Pithou’s manuscript ‘L’histoire ecclésiastique de l’église réformée de la ville de Troyes’ in Bibliothèque nationale MS Dupuy 698.
74 In the immediate aftermath of his own confirmation experience, Pithou left Troyes for Geneva, in order to be free to practise his religion. He stayed there only a year, returning to Troyes in 1561. Greengrass, ‘Nicolas Pithou’, pp. 17-18.
75 Pithou, ‘L’histoire ecclésiastique de l’église réformée de la ville de Troyes’, fol. 43v.
76 Crespin 1570, fol. 181v.
2. The reliability of the *Livre des Martyrs*

verbatim a large section which detailed Moreau’s heroic defiance of his interrogators’ torture, stoically resistant in the face of great pain. Crespin’s account ends with Moreau singing a Psalm en route to the gallows. In the account of Pithou, the first four lines of this ‘Psalm’ are given:

Quand j’ay bien à mon cas pensé
Une chose me reconforte,
Quand mon corps sera tressassé
Mon ame ne sera pas morte.\(^77\)

This could be described as an edifying verse or hymn, but it is certainly not one of the Psalms.

These changes give an interesting insight into some of the martyrologist’s main priorities in compiling his narratives. The verbatim incorporation of Pithou’s account of the torture and Moreau’s defiance of their barbarity is clear evidence that those aspects of the story are what were important to Crespin. The personification of the authorities as evil and the victims as heroic was one of the cornerstones of Crespin’s narrative. The substitution of the reference to Moreau singing a Psalm with no further detail in place of the actual quotation given by Pithou is also worthy of comment. Given that Crespin had himself published editions of the Psalter, it must have been clear to him that this was not a verse from the Psalms, but martyrs were expected to go to their fate with Scripture on their lips and Crespin seems to have had no scruple about adjusting the historical circumstances to bring Moreau into this tradition.\(^78\)

Furthermore, why did Crespin not include the full title of the book that Moreau was carrying? There is little reason to doubt that such an omission by Crespin, normally the master of the mass of circumstantial detail, was quite deliberate. The answer almost certainly lies in the identity of the author of the *Livre des Marchans*, Antoine Marcourt. Marcourt was one of the pioneering generation of French evangelism, and a figure of great honour in the French Protestant movement: but not in Geneva. For Marcourt had committed the fatal mistake of agreeing to fill the ministerial post vacated by Calvin’s expulsion from the city in 1538, a decision which earned him the enduring enmity of Calvin and his circle. After Calvin’s return, Marcourt was effectively banished to a country parish; the fact that any reference to him is

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\(^78\) Crespin was the first to publish Beza’s translations of Psalms in verse, with and without music. See chapter 1.
excised from Crespin's account, some twenty years later, is testimony to the depth of his
disgrace.\textsuperscript{79}

Such observations on the nature of Crespin's treatment of his sources raises questions
as to what extent Crespin refined his stories from edition to edition. The martyrological
project extended over nearly 20 years and during that time Crespin received much
information which he had to incorporate into his collection. But such incorporations and
other changes to his narratives were always sensitive to the parallel changes in the
evolution of the French Reformed Church. For example, the changes undergone in the
account of one of the proto-martyrs of French Protestantism, Jacques Pavanès, martyred in
1525, are important not only for the fact that they significantly increase the length of
Crespin's account, but because they show a significant development in their presentation of
Pavanès' doctrinal belief between successive editions. These are changes which certainly
raise doubts as to the reliability of what appears if these are to be treated as simple
historical, narrative accounts.

The considerable variations between the editions of 1554 and 1570 bring to light
discrepancies in Crespin's developing account of this martyr which indicate a growing
concern with doctrinal precision, even to the point of introducing new material which
identifies these early evangelicals more clearly with Crespin's Calvinist readership. As an
example, when discussing Pavanès' unflinching commitment to his beliefs when in front of
the Judges, '...he maintains a pure confession of the Christian religion' in the edition of
1554 becomes '...he maintains a pure confession of the Christian religion and above all the
matter of the Holy Supper' in the 1556 edition, a manifestly more explicit reference to a
doctrine of primary importance to Calvinists, indeed all orthodox Protestants.\textsuperscript{80} In the same
way, the account of Pavanès' death in the 1556 edition ends with the words, '...soon after
(h) he was burnt alive in Paris at the place de Greve, in the year 1525' whereas a comparison
with the 1570 edition shows the addition of the following references to the Lord's Supper:

...soon after (h) was burnt alive in Paris at the place de Greve, in the year 1525 to the
great honour of the doctrine of the Gospel and edification of several of the faithful, who
until then were unaware of the true usage and institution of the Holy Supper of the Lord
Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{79} Crespin also disapproved of Marcourt's part in the posting of the Placards of 1534, which Crespin reproved as
'impetuous.' See chapter 3, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{80} Crespin 1554, p. 263.
\textsuperscript{81} Crespin 1570, fol. 68.
Sensitivity to which edition one is using, and the ways in which it varies from its predecessors, is crucial if one is using Crespin's narratives for matters of historical fact. Undoubtedly some such changes would have resulted from Crespin's concern to provide the fullest and most accurate account of these martyr narratives and his wish to incorporate new material as it came to hand. But was this the likely reason for Crespin's elaboration of the account of the execution of Pavanès - events which had happened some forty years previously - particularly when in this particular case the new materials smoothly accommodated Pavanès' views to those of Crespin's present readership? This process of accommodation is perhaps most obvious in cases of this nature, concerning martyrs of the earliest years of the French Reformation, a time when doctrine was inevitably still fluid and unsettled. Tales from the early evangelical period were clearly embellished with successive editions, and in ways which brought them more into the Calvinist mainstream.

Whatever the extent of Crespin's editorial licence, the gradual accumulation of material saw Crespin's martyrology grow and expand far beyond his original concept.82 New stories were added, and old ones expanded. It changed from being an illicit book for private reading into an established tome for more public consumption. It grew from a small, pocket-size booklet in 1554 designed to be concealed perhaps under one's coat and comprising only 180,000 words into a folio edition in 1570 of more than one million words, designed to be read from a lectern or pulpit.83 These additions changed not only the shape, but also the nature of the book. In order to gauge some idea of the extent to which the martyrology expanded and grew, a brief outline of its progress between editions is necessary.

In creating his first edition, Crespin had sought to include only a selection of detailed notices, illustrated with first-hand documents. These notices were lengthy accounts of friends and acquaintances such as Juan Diaz, or of those from whom Crespin could obtain correspondence, such as the martyrs of Lyon and Villefranche.84 During the printing of the collection, Crespin decided to enlarge the project, including a number of much smaller accounts, which offered only the briefest of details; this late change of plan accounts for the rather messy organisation of the 1554 edition. Whilst these inclusions attested to the extent of the persecution, they lacked the corroborative detail of his more extended notices.85 Following the publication and great success of this Livre des Martyrs, Crespin published another edition.

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82 He had originally intended only to create a 'pattern and example' and leave others to carry on the project. Gilmont, Jean Crespin, p. 167.
84 In fact, the project was suggested to Crespin by the plight of the martyrs of Lyon and Villefranche. See chapters 1 and 8.
85 Gilmont, Jean Crespin, p. 168.
the following year, the *Recueil de plusieurs personnes* of 1555.\textsuperscript{86} This contained two 'parts', and indicated Crespin's desire not to print previously-published notices, but to publish a series of successive, independent volumes. Now began a period of gathering information for Crespin; a third part followed in 1556.\textsuperscript{87} In 1560, Crespin provided a compilation of these three parts for a wider audience, producing his *Actiones et monimenta martyrum* in Latin in 1560.\textsuperscript{88} His French-speaking audience had to wait until 1564 for their compilation of previous parts to appear, supplemented by the addition of a fourth and a fifth part.\textsuperscript{89}

It was this *Actes des martyrs* of 1564 which was to prove the definitive form of the martyrology. Not only was this a compilation of the accounts already published, but it had developed from a collection of martyr stories into 'a collection of true ecclesiastical history'.\textsuperscript{90} The *Actes des martyrs* now included not only accounts of martyrs, but also r\'ecits d'histoire which detailed the victims of persecutions, wars and rebellions; not all of them martyrs in the strictest sense of the word. Crespin placed these accounts within the wider framework of a history of the persecuted Church. Along with these sections of historical commentary, Crespin also included other documents, such as a copy of the Placards of 1534 that he had obtained in 1560.\textsuperscript{91}

This creation of a history of the persecuted church continued with the *Histoire des vrayes tesmoins* of 1570, the edition used for this study. The long preface tied the collection into the sufferings of the early Church, and more of the text was taken up with historical commentary.\textsuperscript{92} In addition, Crespin also included for the first time in this edition commentaries on theological disputes, such as an account of the struggle against Anabaptism and a defence of Genevan ecclesiastical discipline against the criticisms of Jean Mor\'ely.\textsuperscript{93} Not only did the definitive editions of 1564 and 1570 cover a far broader spectrum of church history, but they also changed the tone of the martyrology. The more coherent plan offered in the *Actes des martyrs* was at the expense of the more authentic

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\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 60/5, pp. 128-31.

\textsuperscript{89} It was entitled *Actes des martyrs*; ibid., 64/4, pp. 168-9. Those parts were a Quatrieme partie in 1561 (61/4) and a Cinquieme partie in 1563 (63/9); pp. 139-41 and 163-3.

\textsuperscript{90} This is taken from the title of the book, the full title of which was *Actes des martyrs deduict en sept livres depuis le temps de Wicel & de Hus, iusques \'a present. Contenans un Recueil de vraye Histoire Ecclesiastique, de ceux qui ont constamment endur\'e la mort \'et dernier temps, pour la vertu du Fils de Dieu*. See BMP, vol. II, pp. 137-43.

\textsuperscript{91} See chapter 3, p. 72.

\textsuperscript{92} The r\'ecits d'histoire grow from 13\% to 18\% of the text; Gilmont, *Jean Crespin*, p. 181.

\textsuperscript{93} 'Comment l'uyroye des Anabaptistes fut premierement sen\'e, & s'esleva en ce temps parny le ble de l'Evangile' (fols. 83'-85'); 'Touchant les Consistories & la discipline Ecclesiasticques des Eglises reformees, & comment elle a est\'e estable en France & aileurs' (fols. 654'-655'). There was also a recounting of the story of the Colloquy of Poissy: 'De l'Assembl\'ee des Prelats de France & des Ministres de l'Evangile tenant \'a Poissy devant le Roy Charles IX en laquelle le Seigneur fit retentir la voix de sa Verite aux oreilles des plus grands, maugr\'e toute contradiction' (fols. 586'-588').
atmosphere of previous editions. Furthermore, the more extensive volumes took a tone that was 'more polemical and consequently, less impartial'.

This partisan character has often been disregarded by historians who have exploited the martyrology without hesitation and with little critical appraisal. By being unaware of the purpose and prejudiced nature of the collection, historians have failed to question sufficiently the suitability and reliability of the Histoire as a historical source. As an example of this one may take the story of Alexander Canus. This passage contains a confession of faith, like many of the accounts of martyrs, and historians have built considerably on their analysis of Crespin's account. David Nicholls is not the first to put great store by Crespin's account of Canus' beliefs: 'But there is no doubt that the Eucharist and other Catholic sacraments did come under attack at an early date. If Alexander Canus, burnt in 1534, made the "only explicit sacramentarian confession of faith", he was far from alone in attacking the mass.'

Émile Leonard also put great emphasis on this confession as an indication of how the beliefs of the early French evangelicals were increasingly being influenced by a Zwingli-orientated theology. Yet, our only indication of a source for Canus' beliefs comes from Crespin's account of the condemned preaching a sermon to bystanders and to the crowd at his execution, which Crespin claims some of them had written down. For an event which proves to be so critical for modern interpretations of the theological orientation of the French Reformation at this date, this cannot be adequate verification, particularly given what we now know of Crespin's apparent licence with these early martyr accounts.

For other narratives the source seems to be Crespin himself. When Crespin describes the election of Pierre Le Clerc as minister of the new Church at Meaux in 1546, Crespin described his duties as, 'declaring the word of God and administering the Sacraments.' This probably says more to us of Crespin's own bias and preoccupations than actual events, since this is simply a classic formulation of the Calvinist view of the marks of the true Church. One is led to wonder whether what one has here is the relating of a historical event, as occurred among the evangelicals at Meaux in 1546, or Crespin's own understanding of what should have occurred at the formation of a Church. Yet Henry

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94 Moreau, 'Contribution à l'histoire du Livre des Martyrs', 177.
95 See below, chapter 3, pp. 66ff.
98 Crespin 1554, p. 271.
Heller, for one, accepts this quite uncritically, as an accurate recording of historical fact. Crespin was more probably writing here a guideline and description of doctrinal policy for nascent Calvinist Churches rather than a faithful recording of events.

By including statements of faith supposedly professed by the condemned, Crespin sought to provide some doctrinal guidance, unity and coherence to his readers at a time when many of them might have found themselves in similar situations; and at a time when the growth of the evangelical movement was so rapid that it threatened to overwhelm any controls sent out from Geneva and to develop all sorts of diverse influences. One important aim of the Livre des Martyrs was an attempt to secure some degree of direction in the beliefs of its readers. Andrew Pettegree has written about similar inclusions in Haemstede's Geschiedenisse, and one can see in them ‘a teaching tool in its way as effective as the better known and ubiquitous pedagogic weapon of all Protestant churches, the Catechism, but with a force heightened by the drama of the martyr’s situation.’

This is more than a technical or historiographical point, since such embellishments of his text by Crespin, if that is what they are, have greatly affected our understanding of the French Reformation. For example, as a result of a dependence upon Crespin’s text, it has been generally accepted that a speech made by the martyr Constantin as he was being driven to the stake in Rouen in 1542 is the first indication of the spread of Calvin's Institutes within France. As Heller writes, 'Constantin was quoting the 1541 edition of the Christian Institutes.' A cursory inspection of both passages suggests that this may indeed be a valid observation. This is Crespin's account of Constantin's words:

Vrayement, nous sommes l'ordure et les balieux des monde, lesquelle puens maintenant aux homme mais resioissons-nous: car l'odeur de nostre mort sera plaisante et precieuse devant Dieu...

Compare Calvin's Institutes:

...c'est à sceauoir, devant Dieu meribles pecheurs, envers les hommes, contemnez et defiectez, et mesme si tu veux, l'ordure et balance du monde: ou si on peut encore nommer quelque chose plus vile.

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100 ‘Meaux was the first French protestant community in which it could be said that the two essential markings of a Calvinist church, that is to say, preaching and the proper administration of the sacraments by a minister, were carried out.’ Heller, The Conquest of Poverty, p. 132.
101 Pettegree, 'Adriaan van Haemstede: the Heretic as Historian', p. 70.
103 Crespin 1554, p. 636.
Heller concludes, 'At Rouen the martyr Constantin had a passage from the Christian Institutes on his lips at the time of his death in 1542. From that time onward evangelicals in that city began to be referred to as Calvinists rather than Lutherans.'

Yet two problems arise here. First, on the evidence presented thus far of Crespin's willingness to elaborate these early martyr tales, he was probably not beyond inserting such a quotation to embellish the story of someone who had been dead for twelve years. And even if Crespin could be relied on not to tamper with the testimony of Constantin, is it not more likely that he was quoting the Bible, 1 Corinthians 4:13, just as Calvin had done? 'Nous sommes blâmez, et nous prions: nous sommes faits comme baillierres de ce monde, et comme la raculture de tous jusques à maintenant.'

Although Crespin does not reveal to us the nature of Constantin's profession or trade, or intellectual abilities, it seems by the nature of his title that he did not come from the higher levels of society, and therefore there was a fair chance that he did not read Latin. So, bearing in mind that the first French edition of the Institutes appeared in 1541, and Constantin was executed in 1542 (having possibly been arrested the year before), is it not intrinsically unlikely that Constantin could have absorbed the substance of Calvin's new book to the extent that these words were on his lips at the moment of his martyrdom? A balance of plausibility favours the contention that either Constantin was quoting from Scripture, or that Crespin inserted the quotation himself. Certainly either conjecture is equally plausible as the generally accepted view that Constantin's declaration is clear evidence of the early penetration of Calvin's Institutes into France.

If Crespin had inserted this quotation, he did so because the humble defiance of a martyr whilst awaiting the excruciating pain of execution by fire was a standard component of his martyr narratives. The stories in his collection, as well as those that appear in the collections of Haemstedt, Foxe and Rabus, all include embellishments of this nature. These motifs give the narratives much of their dramatic force. Indeed, these elements of the story were in many respects the most memorable to the reader; yet they were surely the least reliable. Whilst Crespin prided himself on the documentary testimony which added to

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106 Jean Bonnefoy, La Sainte Bible (Genova, 1566). In addition, the second part of Constantin's remark is surely more likely to be a paraphrase of Psalm 116:15, 'La mort des bien-aimés de l'Eternal est précieuse à ses yeux,'
107 For an appraisal of similar conventions of writing in the martyrology of Haemstedt and Foxe, see Petegree, 'Haemstedt and Foxe', pp. 278-94.
the authenticity of his stories, for these other large sections of his narrative he turned to biblical, Early Church and contemporary paradigms, based more on literary tropes and anecdotal devices than actual fact.

For example, in many of Crespin’s stories the early lives of his heroes fell into one of two categories. First, there were those simple folk, such as Estienne Brun, Jean Cornon or Guillaume Dongnon, who had become convinced of the truth of the Word of God. Their lack of formal education did not prevent them expounding scripture, highlighting the purity and simplicity of the biblical message. Similar characters are to be found in the martyrologies of Foxe and Haemstede. Alternatively, there were those men, such as Macé Moreau and Barthelemey Milon, who prior to discovering the Gospel, had led dissolute lives. Moreau admitted in his confession that he had been ‘a true Epicurean’, whereas Milon had abused his body and spirit ‘with all intemperance and dissolution’.

When the story moves onto the capture of the victim, it is often a case of entrapment by betrayal or trickery, echoing Jesus’ betrayal at the hands of Judas Iscariot. There are the examples of Guillaume Dalençon being ‘betrayed and given up by false brothers’, or the example of Julien Leveille and Jean Filleul being deceived by Gilles Le Pers, their interrogator, into confessing their beliefs. An interesting development of this literary trait is the identification of women as the source of the betrayal. Instances of this include Valeton’s gullible wife being tricked by the investigators into disclosing the whereabouts of her husband’s books, Guillaume Husson being reported to the authorities by his landlady (an old widow), and Pierre Serre being betrayed by brother’s wife.

The steadfastness of the condemned is emphasised when their friends and family would come to visit to plead that they recant before it was too late. Estienne Brun was visited by his wife and five children, whereas Octovien Blondel’s parents and friends solicited him to recant, as did the parents of Hubert Burre. When the interrogations began, the victims’ constancy was reaffirmed. The wisdom of Jean de Caturce’s answers rebuffed the judges, and the power of the message of Estienne Brun, Marie Becaudelle and Jean Cornon all left the judges dumbfounded.

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108 Crespin 1570, fols. 94r-95r, fol. 85r, fols. 319r-321r. On these martyrs, see chapters 4 and 5 respectively.
109 One of many examples in Foxe is the account of Rawlins White, an illiterate Welsh fisherman. For Foxe, the simplicity of many of his martyrs was crucial to his vision of a true church. See R. Helgerson, *Forms of nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago, 1992), pp. 264-66. In Haemstede, one example was the account of the simple rustic Arnoud Dierickx, Petegreve, ‘Haemstede and Foxe, pp. 288-89.
110 Crespin 1570, fols. 131r, 81v.
111 Ibid., fols. 277r, 289v. It is also worth mentioning two other instances of this convention. Octovien Blondel was betrayed by the innkeeper with whom he lodged (ibid., fol. 174v) and Estienne Brun was also tricked into signing a recantation that he could only half understand (ibid., fol. 95v).
112 Ibid., fols. 81r, 131v, 276v.
113 Ibid., fols. 95, 174v, 178v.
114 Ibid., fols. 73r-74r, 95r, 82v, 85v. See chapters 3 and 4.
Similarly, many of Crespin’s martyrs were asked to give praise to an image or idol; they all refused in proper martyrological tradition. When asked to genuflect to an image, Jean Pointet refused, pushing the confessor away.\textsuperscript{115} Likewise, Nicolas Nair turned his back on an idol to which he had been instructed to pray and Denis Le Vayr refused to take a cross of wood given to him before his execution and turned his back on the the monk who had given it to him.\textsuperscript{116} Guillaume Husson turned his back when forced to listen to a sermon on the merits of the Saints.\textsuperscript{117} Jean Brugière reacted in the same fashion when instructed during his confession to acknowledge a cross of wood.\textsuperscript{118}

The stoicism of the condemned often extended to their praying for the forgiveness of their persecutors. Both Simon Laloë and Jean Brugière imitated the first Christian martyr, Stephen, by seeking the forgiveness of those that had brought them to their fate.\textsuperscript{119} On other occasions, the power of the martyr’s performance converted some of those watching. In the cases of Octovien Blondel and Jean Godeau and Gabriel Beraudin, several in the crowd ‘were edified by their constancy.’\textsuperscript{120} In other accounts the crowds were somewhat less affected; in those stories of Guillaume Husson, Pierre Serre and Jean Brugière the crowd were ‘astonished’ or ‘impressed’ by the resolution of the victim. In the account of Guillaume Neel the crowd, witnessing the great cruelty he experienced as the result of a botched execution, felt that he must be a man of virtue.\textsuperscript{121}

Although Crespin in the preface to his original edition declared that he wanted to reproduce the accounts as faithfully as possible, without miracles or flights of fancy, it is clear that the pedagogic purposes of the book weighed as heavily with him as strict fidelity to a demanding standard of historical accuracy. Perhaps such a standard is in any case anachronistic in a culture which retained a highly developed sense of divine activity and providential intervention. While Protestants rejected bogus miracles and saint cults, they recognised that if theirs were the true religion it would certainly be visited by manifestations of divine favour.\textsuperscript{122} This might take several forms: either examples of martyrs showing miraculous powers in the course of their execution, or the horrific counter-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{113} Ibid., fol. 79'. See chapter 3.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Ibid., fols. 268', 293'.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid., fol. 131'.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Ibid., fol. 172'. Also Pierre Serre refused to pay homage to a statue of the Virgin Mary in Toulouse en route to his execution, fol. 277'. Also see chapter 4, p. 103 on how Pierre Le Clerc reacted to the attentions of the theologians who were attempting to ‘divert him from the truth.’
\item \textsuperscript{119} Ibid., fols. 274', 173'. Acts 7: 59-60.
\item \textsuperscript{120} Ibid., fols. 174', 181'.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Ibid., fol. 274'. This obviously recalled the reaction of the centurion upon witnessing the death of Jesus (Luke 23:47): ‘Certainly this was a righteous man.’
\end{itemize}
examples of judgements on their enemies which provided the cautionary aspects of these tales.

The realms of the miraculous that appear in Crespin include several cases where the victim, prior to his execution, managed to speak to the crowd, despite the fact that his tongue had been cut out. For example, both Jean Filleul and Julien Leveille had their tongues removed; yet:

‘God gave them the ability to speak: for these words were heard coming from the gallows, as they were being tied up: “We now say good-bye to sin, to the flesh, to the world and to the devil...”’\(^{123}\)

Their miraculous ability echoed the experience of Romanus, the Early Church martyr, who was able to praise God despite the removal of his tongue.\(^{124}\) Romanus’ execution was also visited by a providential storm which doused the flames of his pyre, forcing the postponement of his execution. The device of a failed execution was one used by Crespin as well as other martyrologists.\(^{125}\) Crespin accounts the story of Denis Le Vayr, who was executed on a scaffold from which he was to be lowered to the pyre. But when the flames were lit, on three occasions the contraposition stuck and the fire burnt below Le Vayr harmlessly. The executioners were unable to raise him up again, and when they turned to the crowd for help, ‘not one person would lend a hand.’\(^{126}\)

Crespin includes several instances where persecutors of the faithful were visited with a swift retribution. The long account of the destruction of the Waldensians in 1545 contains one such example. In the story of the massacre at Cabrières and Merindol, Jean de Roma, a Jacobin monk, was so fierce in his persecution that:

he fell ill of a strange and horrible illness, which was so contagious that he was taken to the hospital, and more and more no-one dared approach him, for the smell and infection which emanated from his body and his flesh which was all ulcerated and lice-ridden: so

\(^{123}\) Crespin 1570, fol. 290\(^v\). Also see the account of the execution of Jean Pointet, chapter 3, p. 62 and that of Etienne Mangin, chapter 4, pp. 101.


\(^{125}\) The execution of Patrick Hamilton was also affected by the weather. Crespin 1570, fol. 95\(^v\). See Jane Dawson, ‘The Scottish Reformation and the Theatre of Martyrdom’, in Wood (ed.), Martyrs and Martyrologies, pp. 259-70.

\(^{126}\) Crespin 1570, fol. 293\(^v\). Also see the account of Estienne Brun which mirrors very strongly that of Polycarp. Chapter 4, pp. 82-3.
much that he himself was not able to suffer his smell, in this way often crying, "Who will deliver or kill me?".\textsuperscript{127}

Thus, the edition of 1570 includes a whole separate section of judgements of God, presented in the shape of a letter to King Henry II. In this letter, Crespin sees divine retribution as the root of Henry's misfortune. In reference to the outbreak of war with Charles V in 1552, and the alliance between Henry II and Maurice of Saxony the previous year, Crespin writes:

When you made the Edict of Chateaubriand, God sent you war: but when you deferred its execution and even made enemies of the Pope by entering Germany in defence of religious liberty, your affairs prospered beyond all riches.\textsuperscript{128}

Pierre du Chastel, Bishop of Orléans, also met an unfortunate end. Having turned his back on the Reformed cause, he continued his persecution of Orléans. As a direct consequence of this, however, he was '...touched in the pulpit by God's finger, and struck by an illness unknown to doctors, which burned the greater part of his body, and left the rest as cold as ice, before he died, moaning and crying.'\textsuperscript{129}

Antoine Duprat, Chancellor of France, also paid for his crimes against the evangelicals. Having given the first orders to kill the faithful, '...he died in the house of Nantouillet, cursing and despising God, and was found with his stomach pierced and worm-eaten.'\textsuperscript{130}

Equally unfortunate was Claude des Asses, councillor of the Parlement of Paris. After dinner on the day on which he had given the order for the faithful to be burnt, in the process of committing a lewd act with a chambermaid, he had a fit of apoplexy and died.\textsuperscript{131}

Of course merely because the uniformity of these stories raises the suspicions of the modern-day historian, it does not necessarily make them untrue. The victims themselves may have behaved in the way described by the martyrlogies.\textsuperscript{132} They too were aware of the traditions of behaviour and action expected from a martyr awaiting death, and may have conformed to these models in their own conduct at the place of execution. Indeed, collections such as the Histoire, which described how a martyr should behave as much as

\textsuperscript{127} Crespin 1570, fol. 126\textsuperscript{v}.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., fol. 47\textsuperscript{v}.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., fol. 473\textsuperscript{v}.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., fol. 473\textsuperscript{v}.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., fol. 473\textsuperscript{v}.
\textsuperscript{132} For example, the eye-witness report of the execution of Claude Le Painctre by Eustache Knobelsdorf, a Catholic German student, makes it clear that Le Painctre's behaviour was stylised and ritualistic. See chapter 4, pp. 85ff.
2. The reliability of the *Livre des Martyrs*

how a martyr did behave, became a 'sort of specialist sixteenth-century conduct book.' The eye-witnesses, whose accounts can provide such important corroborative detail may also have been susceptible to such a modelling process. Reading this account of the execution of Guillaume Dalençon in Montpellier in 1553, it is clear that the eye-witness, a Swiss Protestant, had a sense of the behaviour expected of the victim. On the way to his execution pyre Dalençon:

sang Psalms all the way. At the pyre, he sat down on a log and himself took off his clothes as far as his shirt, and arranged them beside him tidily, as though he would be putting them on again.... When the monks, formed in a curve around him, and mounted on horseback, told him that it was time to make an end, he leapt joyously on to the pyre and sat down at the foot of the stake that rose in the centre of it.... The executioner put the cord round Dalençon’s neck, tied his hands across his breast, and placed near him the religious books he had brought from Geneva. Then he set fire to the pyre. The martyr remained seated, calm and resigned, with his eyes raised towards heaven.

None of this should be surprising, reflecting as it does the very different sense of historical authenticity prevalent in the sixteenth century. Theirs was a different sense of historical reality. But it should cast further doubt on the uncritical use of Crespin’s work as a narrative source, particularly when it is used, as has so often been the case, to draw important conclusions regarding the nature of the beliefs of French evangelicals in this period.

Undeniably, for the purpose of educating and inspiring the faithful, Crespin’s *Histoire* was an outstanding collection. The bravery of the martyrs was consecrated and preserved for posterity in Crespin’s pages. For the faithful, repressed and persecuted, the martyrs provided the example to follow. In order to secure ‘... the restoration of the ruins of the Church of the Lord,’ the inspiration given by these brave men and women was priceless to the Reformed cause.

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In the preface to his edition of 1570, Crespin spoke of his editorial intentions, claiming all he sought was to write of the life, the doctrine and the fortunate end of the faithful. He himself complained of the unreliability of human witnesses. And before one judges Crespin too harshly for his lack of historical sophistication and seeming haste in compiling his collections, it is as well to remember that his martyrology was only one of many projects he was involved with. Unlike Foxe and Haemstede, he had the going concern of a printing workshop to maintain. Indeed, it was one of the busiest of any in the Reformed community, producing more than 250 editions in the 22 years he was in charge, not to mention his other duties as a leading member in the Reformed community in Geneva.

Crespin saw the fruits to be gained by the publication of his martyrology. The deaths of these faithful served an important pedagogic function within the life of the community. The recognition of this fact should caution us against expecting a narrative which would pass a modern standard of objectivity. For Crespin, the role of history was to teach, guide and act as exemplar. He believed that history could, and should, be used as a mirror to advance the cause that he saw as the rightful Church of Christ. As he wrote in the preface to the edition of 1570:

I hope therefore that this history will serve not only the faithful of the Church, in order to put in front of them the works made so admirable by God, but also the poor, ignorant people in order to force them to remember the merits of the cause of those condemned and slaughtered for the truth of the Gospel, so that they can judge at their leisure whether if there had been reason to perpetrate so much cruelty.

In this Crespin was fully consistent with the intentions of other Protestant historians of the sixteenth century. To Crespin and his like the past was a repository of edifying and instructional texts, guiding those who followed in the path of true Christians in a very direct way. To understand this pedagogic purpose is not to diminish the art and craftsmanship of

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136 See Crespin 1570, preface, sig. α7": 'Et au regard des escris et confessions, je n'y ay rien mis sans avoir eu ou de l'escriture meme de ceux qui sont morts, ou appris de al bouche de ceux qui les ont solicitiez, ou extrait des registres des greffes, ou bien receu de fidelles testemoins. J'ay trouve quelquefois des choses obscurres, comme escrites en cachots tenereux et souvent de sang que les povres martyrs s'estoyent fait sortir par faute d'encore; les autres, en assez nauvais langage, selon qu'ils estoyent de diverses nations ou gens de mestier, que j'ay fait traduire et redresser le plus fiatement que faire se pouvoit. De leurs interrogatoires et responses qui ont esté quelquefois tirees des greffes, tout y est coustumierement si confus et couché à l'appetit des greffiers, ou ignorans ou malins, que besoin a esté de donner extrait sommaire, en gardant une meme substance des demandes et responses. Bref, en ce dernier point, tout mon but a esté d'escrire la vie, la doctrine and la fin heureuse de ceux qui ont suffisant teesnoignage d'avoir scelle par leur mort la verité de l'Evangile.'

137 Crespin 1570, preface, sig. α7°.
2. The reliability of the Livre des Martyrs

Crespin's work; but certainly it makes one more aware of its limitations as a historical source.
THE EARLY FRENCH EVANGELICAL MOVEMENT, 1523-1535

Thanks to the work of men such as Lefèvre d'Étaples, whose translation of the Epistles of St Paul in 1512 was a milestone of the new scholarship, France can be said to have been at the forefront of the humanist teaching that pre-dated the Reformation.¹ This native scholarship, coupled with a royal appreciation and patronage of the new forms of learning, encouraged an early receptiveness to the ideas of Martin Luther. Indeed, by February 1519, Lutheran ideas in print were said to be widely available in France.²

Work on the early Reformation in France has centred on the experiment of diocesan renovation undertaken at Meaux in the early 1520s.³ Held up as the ‘cradle of the French Reformation’, the Cercle de Meaux provided a base for many of the new ideas to develop and permeate through France.⁴ Encouraged to come to this small diocese just outside Paris by the Bishop of Meaux, Guillaume Briçonnet, scholars soon became engaged in an attempt to put into practice many of the key ideas of the new evangelism such as the proper provision of widespread popular preaching, and biblical translation.⁵

Encouraged in this project by the King’s sister Marguerite of Navarre, Briçonnet used such royal protection to stave off violent criticism, especially from the local Franciscan order. Men such as Gérard Roussel, Martial Mazurier and Guillaume Farel all came to Meaux in the hope that it would provide the springboard for the further spread of such evangelism all over France.

However, such a cosseted environment made the diocese a centripetal force for increasingly radical ideas.⁶ Francis’ absence at war in 1523 and imprisonment for the next two years at the hands of Charles V meant a weakening of the protection afforded the group, as

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² A letter from Johannes Froben to Luther of 14 February, 1519, in which Froben told Luther that he could sell 600 copies of the reformer’s work in France and that the theologians of Paris were taking an increasing interest in his writings. Cited in F.M. Higman, ‘Le domaine français, 1520-1562’, in J.-F. Gilmont (ed.) La Réforme et le livre, l’Europe de l'imprimé (1517-1570) (Paris, 1990), p. 105.


⁶ It is also the case that once the persecution began, many of those who had been present at Meaux took their message to other parts of France; Heller, The Conquest of Poverty, p. 28.
Louise of Savoy became regent. The hiatus in royal protection offered the Sorbonne a rare chance for a crackdown. The persecution that followed brought the dissipation of the movement and some of the most prominent figures were forced into exile in Strasbourg.7

Although Briçonnet’s achievements were short-lived, the eminence of the group he collected about him placed Meaux at the centre of evangelism in France. This accent is mirrored in Crespin’s Histoire des vrais témoins. Crespin’s portrayal of the earliest years of evangelism reflect the dominant influence of the community of Meaux. Arriving to find the parishioners ‘destitute of the Word of God’, Crespin related how the work of Briçonnet and others soon ensured that the ‘knowledge of the Gospel began to grow’.8 It is also not surprising that the earliest account of a French martyr to appear in the Histoire is that of Jean Le Clerc, a one-time inhabitant of Meaux.9

Jean Le Clerc, who was executed at Metz, 29 July 1525, was a carder of wool. Clearly imbued with the evangelical spirit of the diocese, Le Clerc was found guilty of posting anti-Papal tracts. For this he was condemned to be whipped, then banished from Meaux sometime in 1523. From Meaux, he headed east and arrived in Metz, where he stayed for some time, earning a living as a carder. One evening however, before a procession in the city, Le Clerc, ‘moved with an ardent zeal and affection’, smashed the statues (including two of the Virgin and Child) that were to be used during the procession.10 The next morning, having come upon the destruction, the local ecclesiastical authorities quickly sought out and imprisoned Le Clerc.11 Having willingly confessed his crime, and having ‘maintained a pure doctrine of the Son of God in front of the Judges’, Le Clerc was mutilated (a fate befitting an iconoclast) and burnt alive in the central square of the city.12

The lowly social status and relative insignificance of Le Clerc raises interesting questions as to what sources were available to Crespin in this instance. It seems that Crespin’s principal source for his account is the preface to a commentary on the book of Micah by François Lambert dedicated to the Town Council of Besançon, 15 August 1525.13 In this, Lambert, a Franciscan preacher from Avignon, who may well have been present at the execution,
describes the execution in some detail. If this was the case, Lambert was so impressed with the dignity and Christian spirit of this ‘invincible athlete of Christ’ that he resolved immediately to write an account of the execution in order to denounce such idol worship.

This account was first published in Latin in 1525 in Strasbourg.\textsuperscript{14} It later appears in a slightly different translation in Ludwig Rabus’ martyrology of 1555.\textsuperscript{15} There is little doubt that Lambert’s narrative forms the essential basis of Crespin’s account. Nevertheless, there are certain differences between the two. First, Crespin is imprecise about the date. He places Le Clerc’s arrest in France as 1523, when the beginning of 1525 seems more likely; and then does not put a date on the execution itself.\textsuperscript{16} Also, the account in the Histoire places a greater emphasis on Le Clerc’s time in Meaux, including the reaction of Le Clerc’s mother to his public fustigation. Information such as this implies that Crespin had access to an oral tradition from Meaux itself. This is certainly possible, as Jean Le Clerc’s younger brother was Pierre Le Clerc, who was to be martyred at Meaux in 1546.\textsuperscript{17} For his part, Lambert’s location at Metz meant he was in a better position to comment on the religious situation in Metz at this time. The city authorities in Metz, Lambert relates, ‘added to their cruelty a sort of idolatrous fury, and despite the commandments of God, demanded the worship of images.’\textsuperscript{18}

Both accounts concentrate quite heavily on the barbaric nature of the actual execution. There are, however, some significant differences between the account that appears in the Histoire, and that put forward by Lambert. Lambert’s portrayal of events offers more detail concerning the execution. True to the heroic stature and constancy of a Christian martyr, Crespin writes how, while about to be burnt, Le Clerc began to sing Psalm 115, to the astonishment of the crowd.\textsuperscript{19} Lambert’s account, however, relates that, before the recital of the Psalm, Le Clerc lamented how the people had been led astray by false prophets. Interrupted by someone in the crowd, Le Clerc was challenged to ask the people to recite a Pater Noster and an Ave Maria for him. According to Lambert, Le Clerc agreed that the Lord’s Prayer could be said for him. When pressed as to why he did not seek an Ave Maria, he retorted:

If anyone wishes to recite it, let him; but I do not ask for it, not because I despise the Blessed Virgin, but because I am beholden to the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for me. It is he who is mediator and advocate between God and men.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{14} F. Lambert D’Avignon, Commentarii in Micheam, Naum et Ahabuc (Strasbourg, 1525), fols. 3v-iv.
\textsuperscript{15} L. Rabus, Historien der heyligen ausserwolten Gottes Zeigen, Bekennen und Martyrern. Der dritte Theyl. (Strasbourg, 1555), fols. lviiij-xlviij.
\textsuperscript{16} The actual date of the execution was 29 July 1525.
\textsuperscript{17} Crespin 1570, fols. 160v-163v. Also, see chapter 4, pp. 95ff.
\textsuperscript{18} Herminjard, vol. I, p. 372.
\textsuperscript{19} Crespin 1570, fol. 61v. Psalm 115, verse 4: ‘Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands.’
\textsuperscript{20} Herminjard, vol. I, pp. 372-3. Also, 1 Timothy 2:5.
The question arises of why Crespin omits such testimony. There certainly seems no reason to leave it out on the grounds of doctrine, as it hardly suggests a controversial stance, or a doctrinal position from which Crespin would have wished to disassociate himself. Most likely, Crespin was inclined to avoid detailed discussions of doctrine when dealing with a time, the 1520s, when the preoccupations of critics of the Church were significantly different from those of Crespin’s contemporaries. For Crespin, the purpose of the account of Le Clerc’s death was primarily to testify to his nobility in the face of unbelievable cruelty. His response to the vicious retribution for his crime was in the best traditions of the Early Church. His behaviour was in stark contrast to the evil, almost vindictive cruelty, of the authorities. In the wider context of his book, these were the important issues for Crespin, rather than precise matters of doctrine.

However, it is also the case that when relating the story of Le Clerc’s martyrdom, Crespin was inclined to proceed with a degree of caution. From reading the story, it is clear that Crespin admired the deep-felt faith of Le Clerc. This is in spite of the fact that Crespin evidently shared much of the Calvinist leadership’s unease at iconoclasm and the violent behaviour associated with it. This distrust of the more popular manifestations of religious dissent is borne out by a preface that Crespin felt necessary to include in the account of Le Clerc. Whilst careful not to condemn outright the actions of Le Clerc, Crespin does make it clear that such action would have to have been properly motivated and that it should not act as an example to others.

Reader, please note in the story of this martyr: although it is right that images should be abolished, it is not up to an individual to remove them, especially as he does not have them in his power. If such a thing is done, either it is by human will or by divine will. If it is human will pushing man to do this, it is a sin: if it is from God’s spirit, we would admire and revere the deed: but we would not take it as an example or as a model.\(^{21}\)

Thus, in addition to the heroism of Le Clerc and the maleficence of the persecutors, this case could serve also serve to reinforce the opinions of the Genevan hierarchy on iconoclasm and other such popular outbursts of violence. Included in the martyrology for the first time in 1564, this commentary reflected the increasingly conservative stance taken by the authorities.

\[^{21}\] Crespin 1570, fol. 61'.
towards the matter of image-breaking. As David Nicholls has written, 'While Calvin urged patience on the suffering faithful, waves of iconoclasm and attacks on the clergy spread through the south-west.' The warning given by Crespin would have been part of the same message directed at the more violent elements within French Protestantism who were taking advantage of the state of virtual lawlessness upon the outbreak of war to ransack churches and smash images.

For the period of the mid to late 1520s, the Histoire des vrays tesmoins' concentration on the Meaux circle certainly leads the collection seriously to underestimate the level of the persecution around France at this time. In fact, somewhat astonishingly, Crespin includes only the accounts of three martyrs executed during this period. The first of these is that of Jacques Pavanès. A young preacher from Picardy, Pavanès was brought to Meaux by either the reputation or patronage of Bishop Briçonnet. As one of the more radical members of the congregation at Meaux, he quickly attracted the attention of the guardians of orthodoxy. At the time when Francis' absence afforded the opportunity to these enemies of Briçonnet's circle, Pavanès was one of the first to be indicted. He was condemned to perform an Amende in Paris in December 1525. Pavanès' repentance, however, did not sit easily with him; and the following summer of 1526, he restated his beliefs and crimes. As a relapsed heretic, Pavanès faced certain death, which he endured on 28 August 1526.

The story of Denis de Rieux is much less detailed. Succumbing to pressure from the Sorbonne, Briçonnet was forced to close the evangelical experiment at Meaux. An artisan by trade, de Rieux was sent to the stake by Briçonnet in July 1528. This martyr is someone about whom Crespin has very little information whilst compiling the first edition of the martyrrology, and he was in no position to augment his account in later editions. The story remains a bare outline. Nonetheless, Crespin does offer the reader some testimony as to the cause for which de Rieux died, claiming that he was someone who perished, 'for the doctrine of the Son of God and who maintained that the Mass was a true disavowal of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Echoing a common feature of many martyr narratives, Crespin wrote that Briçonnet offered de Rieux an annual pension if he were to recant his opinions on the Mass. Needless to

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24 Crespin 1554, pp. 632-33; Crespin 1570, fols. 70r.
25 Crespin 1570, fols. 70r.
say, de Rieux declined the opportunity to renounce his God. Furthermore, the accounts in both the *Livre des martyrs* of 1554 and the *Histoire des vrais témoins* of 1570 both make mention of the use for the first time of the infamous device called *l’estrapade*, by which de Rieux was suspended with iron chains over the flames, into which he was alternately lowered and raised three times to prolong his torment, as he was ‘burnt alive to the delight of the enemies of the truth’. 

As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, Pavanés’ account underwent significant changes through successive editions of the *Histoire des vrais témoins*. Indeed, the whole account more than doubles in length. Not only is there increased emphasis on the doctrine of the Holy Supper, but also the account in the later editions gives a much fuller appreciation of prominent figures in the Meaux circle such as d’Étaples, Farel and Roussel. The account in the 1554 edition is only the briefest of outlines, sketching a portrait which states baldly the origins of Pavanés and his links with Meaux, his *Amende*, his subsequent retraction, and his execution at the Place de Grève.

The later account is filled out with a description of some of the leading members of the circle gathered there. This is a community which, Crespin tells us, encouraged the provision of learning by giving away books, and soon knowledge of the Gospel began to grow ‘like an open school to all piety’. The impression given is that the naive Pavanés was solicited into recanting his faith by the unscrupulous Mazurier, who had himself abjured a few months earlier. Several months later, however, Pavanés was racked with such guilt at his recantation that he submitted a written confession of faith to the authorities in which he ‘maintained the pure confession of the Christian religion’. His fate thus determined, his martyrdom took place, ‘for the edification of several faithful, who at this time were ignorant of the true usage and institution of the Holy Supper of the Lord Jesus Christ’. To underline further the specific crime for which Pavanés died, Crespin adds in the margin, ‘The point of the Holy Supper unknown in France.’

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26 Crespin 1570, fol. 70°. In Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, there is the case of William Hunter being offered financial gain if he were to recant and in Haemstede’s *Geschichtentzisse*, Carolus de Koninck was offered the opportunity to leave religious life with a generous pension if he were to recant. See Pettegree, ‘Haemstede and Foxe’, pp. 289-90.


28 See chapter 2, pp. 29-30.

29 This section originally appears in the account of the execution of the fourteen martyrs of Meaux in 1546. It is transferred to the account of Pavanés in the edition of 1570. Crespin 1554, pp. 267-8; and Crespin 1570, fol. 68°.

30 Crespin 1554, pp. 630-1.

31 Crespin 1570, fol. 68°.

32 Ibid., fol. 68°.

33 Ibid., fol. 68°.

34 Ibid., fol. 68°.
As in the case of Le Clerc, the dates given in *Histoire des vrais témoins* in the account of Pavan's execution are incorrect. Crespin places the date of Pavan's retraction as December 1524, and his execution as 1525, when both events actually occurred twelve months later. It is impossible to determine definitely the source of Crespin's account of Pavan's execution. It is most likely, however, that de Rieux's close links with the community at Meaux (some of them destined to be prominent members of the French Protestant community abroad) provided a medium for the story of Pavan to be relayed to Crespin. More specifically, Guillaume Farel knew of Pavan, most probably from his time in Meaux. Indeed, they were close enough to have corresponded. One letter from Pavan to Farel dated 5 October 1524 has a postscript with a note in Farel's hand testifying to the constancy of this martyr. Farel also makes mention of the reaction of the theologian Pierre Cornu to the execution. Quite possibly, Farel was also Crespin's principal source for these events.

The martyrdom of Jacques Pavan does offer the opportunity to compare Crespin's version of events with other, independent evidence. The *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris*, a contemporary account of events in Paris during the first twenty years of the reign of Francis I, reports the execution of Pavan thus:

In the said year, 1526, Tuesday, 28 August, a young man, a beneficed scholar, not yet having priestly orders, named Master..., native of Thérouanne, in Picardy, was by the decision of the Court, burnt in Grève, Paris, because he was Lutheran, saying that the Virgin Mary had no more power than any other saint, with several other lunacies: and in which he still persevered, despite being preached at and counselled by the chief penitenciary of Paris, Master Jean Merlin, Doctor in theology, that he would die in this error. Before his death, he was to perform an *Amende Honorable* in front of the Church of Notre-Dame, which he refused to do, saying that he had done no wrong. Last Christmas Eve, he had performed an *Amende Honorable*, holding a burning candle, completely bare, only in his shirt, in front of the Church of Notre-Dame, crying mercy to God and to the Virgin Mary for several errors and lunacies that he had said and professed which he now greatly regretted and gave him great displeasure. And for this, he was condemned to the prisons of Saint-Martin des Champs in Paris for seven years, on bread and water, by the

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36. Farel was at Meaux until 1523, whence he fled to Strasbourg. He did, however, maintain an extensive correspondence with his those still resident at Meaux.
decision of the Court. But, whilst in the said prisons, he repeated his error and madness. So that, finally, the said Court, informed by the prior of Saint-Martin and others, opened his case, and condemned him, as above, to be burnt.\textsuperscript{38}

More importantly still, an apparently authentic version survives of the heretical propositions put forward by Pavanes during his interrogation by officers of the Sorbonne at the time of his first arrest in 1525.\textsuperscript{39} Pavanes was imprisoned with his fellow evangelical, Matthew Saulnier for doctrines variously described as Waldensian, Wycliffite, Bohemian and Lutheran. They certainly represent an emphatic rejection of the traditional teachings of the church:

1) There is no such place as Purgatory, since the Gospel affirms that there is no pardon of sins outwith the death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
2) Purgatory is an invention of the greed of Priests.
3) God has no need for a vicar nor a lieutenant.
4) To make the Virgin a queen of mercy and a source of life and salvation is to proclaim a vain faith, since there is no salvation except in Jesus Christ.
5) Images and candles are conducive to idolatry. It is better to destroy the images of saints than to see the simple people exploited by them.
6) Masses cannot ensure the forgiveness of sins.
7) The sacrament of the Eucharist is for the living and not for the dead.
8) It is better to hear one good sermon than a hundred masses.
9) God alone pardons sins.
10) The Pope has no power to pardon spirits if he does not have the Holy Spirit with him.
11) Apart from faith, baptism amounts to nothing.
12) Holy bread and Holy water deprive the faithful of the noble sacrament of the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These propositions were sufficiently radical to lead to Pavanes' condemnation, along with his companion. Pavanes on this occasion secured a stay of execution; the fate of Saulnier is unclear.

Why did Crespin not see fit to include such details of the beliefs of Pavanes? The most likely scenario would seem to be that Crespin had no access to these documents. Yet Crespin


makes the quite explicit statement, hardly justified by the surviving contemporary evidence, that Pavanes 'maintained a pure confession of the Christian religion', expanded in the 1556 edition to include the reference 'above all the matter of the Holy Supper'. Even had Crespin had access to the records of Pavanes' interrogation, this is hardly a fair summary of the much more general criticisms recorded by Pavanes' interrogators. It is indeed somewhat implausible that Pavanes could have held the opinions Crespin seems to imply at this juncture of evangelical belief. There is no doubt that attacks on the power of the Saints and the cult of the Virgin Mary in particular were significantly more common in this decade of evangelism in France than was widespread discussion of the doctrine of the Eucharist.  

That was something that was to only become increasingly important to Reformed Protestants such as Crespin only in later decades. Furthermore, the timing of the manipulation of Pavanes' views on the Eucharist by Crespin, (which has been dealt with in the previous chapter) does seem to imply that Crespin's construction of the narrative was influenced by contemporary events. It was no coincidence that these changes took place at precisely the time that Calvin was writing against Westphal during the controversy over the Eucharist in 1555-7. Crespin's determination to emphasize doctrinal propriety came at a time of acute sensitivity in inter-confessional relations within Switzerland.

The execution of members of the Meaux circle apparently did nothing to shake the basic loyalty of the king to advanced learning. Despite being continually pressed to halt his patronage of scholarship, Francis refused to see the link between the new learning that he encouraged amongst men of education and the heresy which he so detested. The Sorbonne and the Parlement did, however, detect a link, and continued to investigate even those closely associated with the king and his court, despite the king's frequent displeasure.

Perhaps the most famous recipient of the King's favour during the 1520s was Louis de Berquin. At about the time that the Sorbonne began its investigations into the Cercle de

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40 For example, in the account of Louis de Berquin, Crespin tells us that Berquin was drawn by the Sorbonne to declare opinions that were strongly critical of the Virgin Mary. Crespin 1570, fol. 70'.


Meaux in the early 1520s, Berquin began to attract the attention of the Sorbonne. A Flemish nobleman, with an approximate landed annual income of 600 écus, Berquin’s upbringing exposed him extensively to the world of scholarship that was to imbue him with a spirit of evangelism. He took his civil law doctorate at Orléans. Indelibly associated with the humanist movement in France, Berquin’s activities in translating ‘Christian books from Latin into French’ soon attracted the attention of the Sorbonne. Indeed, he was tried three times for heresy in 1523, 1526 and 1529. The protection of Francis I after the first two trials allowed him to survive until 1529, despite the Sorbonne’s attempts to destroy him. By 1529, however, Berquin was found guilty of heresy for the third and final time. Francis’ patience and willingness to save Berquin’s skin had clearly run out and he was strangled and burnt on 17 April 1529.

The story of Berquin does not appear in the Livre des Martyrs of 1554. It is included for the first time by Crespin in the Recueil de plusieurs personnes of 1555. This first account is very vague; a eulogy of the martyr, mention of his origin, and of the two arrêts of the Parlement of Paris, the first condemning him to an Amende, the second to his death. In addition, the month of the execution is incorrectly given as May, rather than April. It is in the Latin edition of 1560 that the account takes its definitive form. The Histoire des vray tesmoins of 1570 reproduces this account. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Crespin relies heavily for his version of events on a letter from Erasmus to Charles d’Utenshove dated 1 July 1529. This letter would have been available to Crespin as early as 1538, when it was published in Basle. Yet the very sketchy nature of the account in the Recueil of 1555 makes it clear that Crespin did not have such information to hand in 1555. Crespin does have an additional and valuable oral testimony to supplement his material on Berquin. Through his close friendship with the Budé children in Geneva, he was able to secure an account of the last meeting between their father and Berquin.

Although Erasmus’ letter forms the essential core of Crespin’s account of Berquin, he does not reproduce it verbatim. Erasmus, for all his admiration for Berquin, still retained a degree of critical distance:

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43 Crespin 1570, fol. 70v.
44 Ibid., fols. 70r-71r.
45 Crespin 1555, pp. 758-759.
46 Crespin 1560, pp. 57r-59r.
48 D. Erasmus, Epistolatarum opus. (Basle, 1538).
49 Gilmont, Jean Crespin, p. 192.
You now know what sort Berquin was; your compatriot, who was like a son to me. I have not come to a decision on his judgement, for his case is entirely unknown to me. If he did not deserve the gallows, I feel sorry for him; if he did deserve it, I feel doubly sorry for him.  

Erasmus goes on to express scepticism about Berquin’s conversion, and of the firmness of his religious convictions. Furthermore, Erasmus lacks sympathy for the courage so eulogised by Crespin. Erasmus writes to Utenbove that his first correspondence with Berquin was when Berquin wrote to him requesting advice on his first trial. Erasmus replied:

However, I warned him in friendship and without beating about the bush, that if he was wise, he would withdraw his *Apologie*, leaving the hornets to buzz and to withdraw himself in the gentleness of study. But having obtained a sort of victory, he held his head high against the danger.

Although Crespin had no intention of reproducing any of Erasmus’ reservations about Berquin, the careful editing does not detract from the fact that this account in the *Histoire* has much to offer as a well-informed contemporary account. According to Crespin, despite his age and the temptations of his wealth and position as a courtier to Francis I, Berquin had reached the age of forty, having lived with such ‘integrity and chastity, that he was never suspected of any debauchery.’ Berquin was a devout and pious man, whose decision to follow the new evangelism could not have been taken lightly:

before the Lord attracted him to the knowledge of his Gospel, he (Berquin) was openly a great follower of the Papist constitutions, a great listener of masses and sermons, and observer of fast and festival days.

This was an extremely common rhetorical strategy for dealing with the experience of conversion and one must not assume that it was literally thus. The wording of it, and God's role in it, mirrors the conversion experience of Calvin:

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51 When Berquin was tried on this first occasion, on May 1 1523, he was found to be in possession of several writings by Melanchthon, Hutten, Karlstadt and Luther. In addition, he was found to have composed his own *Apologia ad calumniatores Lutheri*. It is clearly this to which Erasmus is referring.
53 Crespin 1570, fol. 70v.
And first, since I was too obstinately devoted to the superstitions of Popery to be easily extricated from so profound an abyss of mire, God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame.\textsuperscript{54}

Berquin’s activities in devoting himself to the study of ‘true piety’, that is to say by reading Holy Scripture and translating Christian books from Latin into French were also highlighted in the martyrology.\textsuperscript{55} Not surprisingly, such activity soon attracted the attention of the ‘Sorbonistes and the Monks’ whom Crespin describes as Berquin’s greatest enemies.\textsuperscript{56}

What stands out in Crespin’s account is the accurate portrayal of the stop-start nature of Berquin’s trial. It is impressively detailed, with his original arrest, the burning of his books, the further two trials, the appointment of juges-délégués to judge the case, and the final attempts of Budé to persuade Berquin not to appeal once he had been condemned to imprisonment all present in the account. The account also brings out the personal relationships that affected Berquin’s struggle. First, there is that of Noel Beda, President of the Sorbonne, Berquin’s tormentor-in-chief, who is himself venegfully indicted for heresy by Berquin in 1526.\textsuperscript{57} Berquin’s relationship with Erasmus is also of great importance to Crespin. As has been mentioned earlier, this was a relationship that was not always cordial. Crespin notes that Erasmus did not wish to get involved in Berquin’s controversy, as Erasmus sought ‘to maintain neutrality between the Gospel and the Papacy, and swim between the two’.\textsuperscript{58} Furthermore, Berquin was responsible for translating Erasmus’ *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*. However, the additions made to the book by Berquin which, according to Crespin, ‘nearer approached the evangelical truth’ did not endear him to Erasmus, who reproached Berquin for his indiscretion.\textsuperscript{59} Also, if Erasmus is to be believed, their relationship became uneasy as Berquin confronted the authorities, over-confident of the support of Francis and the righteousness of his cause.

It is clear then, that whilst Crespin’s portrayal of Berquin’s relationship with Erasmus is not strictly accurate, it does convey some of the apparent tensions. Nevertheless, Crespin clearly saw the value of emphasising the close association between Erasmus and the young

\textsuperscript{54} Crespin 1570, fol. 70\textsuperscript{v}. see Calvin’s autobiographical fragment in the preface to his commentary on the Psalms. J. Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Calvin Translation Society, London, 1945), pp. xi-xl. In turn this has similarities with the story of Saul’s conversion, Acts, 9:1-19.

\textsuperscript{55} Crespin 1570, fol. 70\textsuperscript{v}.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., fol. 70\textsuperscript{v}.

\textsuperscript{57} On Beda, see J.K. Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France*. *The Faculty of Theology of Paris, 1500-1563* (Leiden, 1985). Also Bietenholz and Deutscher (eds.) *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, vol. I, pp.116-18.

\textsuperscript{58} Crespin 1570, fol. 71\textsuperscript{v}.

scholar. This is in stark contrast to the distance that Crespin was eager to put between Berquin and any link with Luther. Crespin was insistent that the opinions of Berquin were unrelated to the doctrine of Martin Luther: "The doctrine of Martin Luther, then very new in France, was a sovereign abomination to him." Yet, contrary to this assurance from Crespin, Berquin was found in possession of books (which were later burnt on 8 August 1523) which included Luther's De captivitate babylonica, and a copy of Luther's complaint against the bull Exsurge Domine. Furthermore, Berquin actually wrote an Apologia in Luther's defence, which was also burnt at this time. It is true that Berquin's whole relationship with the German Reformer is somewhat confusing. Forced to detach himself categorically from association with Luther in his declaration of repentance of November 1523, three years later he was found in possession of some Lutheran books which had been condemned. These included Luther's Opera, but also an anti-Lutheran tract by John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester. Margaret Mann Philips has shown that translations of Luther's writings were added to translations of Erasmus that appeared in French in October 1525. Beda certainly thought that they were the work of Berquin, but it is not definite that Berquin was responsible for the insertions. Whatever the truth of this situation, there is no doubt that the Luther-Berquin relationship was not as straightforward as Crespin would have us believe.

This clear desire on the part of Crespin to play down the unwelcome association between Luther and Berquin is certainly worthy of comment. For Crespin, it had now become important that the proud inheritance of French evangelism should not be tainted with the brush of Lutheranism. There is little doubt that this development reflects the changes in relationship between the confessions at the time that Crespin was compiling his martyrology. Up until the mid-1550s, as we have seen, Crespin was an admirer of Martin Luther. Among the many translations of German works published by his press, there were a number by Luther; Crespin was indeed responsible for a high proportion of the later French translations of Luther's work. This situation changed abruptly with the renewed outbreak of doctrinal controversy between Calvin and the German Lutherans in the mid-1550s. Calvin's controversy with the Lutheran minister Westphal was both bitter and prolonged and seems to have affected Crespin's attitudes quite fundamentally. Crespin's presses printed two of Calvin's polemical works against Westphal; his editions of Luther's works come to an end at about this time.

69 Erasmus was also insistent that Berquin disapproved of Luther and that any link he had with Berquin did not necessarily tie him in with the German heretic.
60 Crespin 1570, fol. 70v.
61 Indeed, Beza in his Icones of 1580, suggested that Berquin may have been another Luther, if he had found in Francis I what Luther had found in Frederick the Wise, Mann Philips, Erasme et les débuts de la réforme française, p. 114.
62 Ibid., chapter 5.
Among the victims of this deterioration of confessional relations was the posthumous reputation of Louis de Berquin. Crespin surpressed the clear evidence that Berquin both read and was strongly influenced by Luther’s works. In the new changed climate of the 1550s, Crespin had no more wish than the French evangelicals themselves to see one of their most notable victims associated with the German heresy.\footnote{\textit{See chapter 1, p. 11.}}

Crespin’s clear manipulation of the evidence in the case of Berquin and Pavanès is one good reason for not relying too heavily on the \textit{Histoire} in constructing an authentic account of the early French evangelical movement. Another is the fact is that Crespin’s accounts of the earliest victims of the French persecution were clearly incomplete.\footnote{\textit{The Parlement} of Paris executed at least seven victims during this period. Monter, ‘Les exécutés pour hérésie’, 191-224.} Crespin seriously underrepresented the level of persecution during these years. He focuses exclusively on a small number of cases, most of whom had strong links with the Meaux circle, consequently ignoring other victims.\footnote{For example those who suffered persecution in Normandy and Languedoc. On Normandy, see D. Nicholls, ‘Social Change and early Protestantism in France; Normandy, 1520-1562’, \textit{European Studies Review}, 10 (1980), 279-308. On Languedoc, see Mentor, \textit{Heresy proceedings in Languedoc}; also D.S. Hemsall, ‘The Languedoc 1520-1540: A study of pre-Calvinist heresy in France’, \textit{ARG}, 62 (1971), 225-243.}

The exclusion of some of those executed in France at this time from Crespin’s collection does raise some interesting questions. First, is there any reason, on doctrinal or social grounds that disqualifies these persons from inclusion? Or is it merely because Crespin was totally reliant on contemporary publications and oral reports that he was able to obtain from his base in Geneva that his selection was so limited? By examining a few of those victims not included in the \textit{Histoire}, an attempt will be made to establish if there was any viable or common reason for their exclusion.

The omission of Guillaume Joubert is perhaps the most surprising of those excluded from the \textit{Histoire}. A young man of around twenty eight years of age from La Rochelle, a \textit{licencié} who had come to Paris to practice the law, he was burnt alive in Paris in February 1526 for ‘having held the doctrine of Luther, and for speaking ill of God, of Our Lady and of the saints and the saints of Paradise.’\footnote{\textit{Journal d’un Bourgeois de Paris}, pp. 250-1.} Information about this young heretic is scarce. One of the inevitable drawbacks of such cases not included in the martyrology is that Crespin is often the primary and principal source for the historian. Nonetheless, what information can be gleamed gives no obvious reason for Joubert’s exclusion from the martyrology. Joubert was no disturber of the social hierarchy, no pariah on the margins of society. His father was also in the legal profession; a magistrate, an \textit{avocat du roi}; an employee of the crown, hence Joubert
and his family would have been notable and impressive figures in the local community. Indeed, his father was so wealthy, that it was said that he attempted to buy his son’s life. The crimes for which he was executed give no further clues as to why he should have been excluded. Their description would seem to be little different from the cases that were included in Crespin’s *Histoire*. The ‘heresy’ for which he was executed was described by Nicholas Versoris, an advocate at the Parlement of Paris, as ‘blasphemies’. The site of his execution, however, does provide some clues as to a more specific nature of his crime. The decision of the Court was that Joubert was to perform an *Amende* in front of Notre Dame and in front of the Church of Ste Genviève, crying for mercy from God, the Virgin Mary and Sainte Geneviève. As David Nicholls writes ‘in 1526 Guillaume Jobert had been burnt in front of the church of Ste Geneviève because he had particularly criticised her cult’. There seems little reason to exclude Joubert from the martyrology, except on the grounds that Crespin may not have been aware of his existence. This is even though his execution took place in Paris, site of the executions of Berquin and de Rieux. It is possible, however, that descriptions such as that by Versoris of Joubert’s crimes as ‘blasphemies’ made Crespin wary of including any possible blasphemers in his collection. There appears more definite reason, however, to exclude the case of Pierre Bar, arrested at Lille-dieu in 1528. A member of the religious orders, his dubious reputation clearly identified him as an undesirable in the eyes of Crespin. Convicted for ‘having talked irreverently of the Virgin Mary’, he was executed in Rouen, on 20 July 1528. Nicholls, however, makes clear that his crime was not as straightforward as that: ‘and the next victim, in 1528, was Pierre Bar, who was said to have converted to Judaism and to have called the Virgin Mary a whore’. It is obvious why Crespin should have been wary of including characters like Bar. The memory of blasphemers had no place in the annals of any church history, Catholic or Protestant. During the earliest times of religious upheaval brought on by the questioning of orthodoxy, hermits were especially vulnerable. Jean Vallièrè, ‘considered the first martyr of the French Reformation’ was one such case. David Nicholls gives a succinct appraisal of Vallièrè’s heresy:

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70 *Journal d’un Bourgeois de Paris*, p. 251.
72 Nicholls, *Theatre of Martyrdom*, 53.
The Norman eremite Jean Vallière, burnt in Paris in 1523, is probably the best known (hermit). Said to be totally illiterate, his chief heresy was to have denied the immaculate conception, preaching to large crowds in villages around Paris that Jesus had been conceived and born like other humans.\textsuperscript{76}

If such beliefs were propounded by Vallière, then it is plain to see why his case did not merit inclusion in the \textit{Histoire}. In even more extreme a fashion than Bart, Vallière disputed the fundamental tenets of Christian orthodoxy. One can only suggest why Bart supposedly converted to Judaism, but it is clear from both cases that certain issues were sacrosanct. In cases where those executed had crossed that line, Crespin did not deem them suitable for inclusion in his collection, and they would be omitted. His martyrology was not supposed to be testimony to a religious freedom of doctrinal diversity, but a handbook of the Reformed religion. Both Catholics and Protestants were aware that doctrinal coherence was necessary in any church. The \textit{Histoire des vrayes tesmoins} sought, as did Foxe's \textit{Acts and Monuments} to 'give lie to the charge that Protestantism was a principle of novelty and variance'.\textsuperscript{77} Crespin had no more wish than Catholics of the time to condone such views as held by characters such as Bart and Vallière.

This brief review of those executed for heresy whether included or excluded from Crespin's account, does permit some general observations about the nature of evangelical criticism during these years. This was clearly a period when criticism was essentially negative and directed at aspects of traditional Catholic practice. Whether this was a period when the Mass became more openly and radically criticised does seem more difficult to sustain on the evidence presented here. Furthermore, during this period there is no doubt of the huge influence of the \textit{Cercle de Meaux}, not only in terms of ideas, but also in terms of personnel. Many of those who cut their teeth in the benevolent atmosphere of Meaux were to become influential figures in the later development of French Protestantism.\textsuperscript{78} Not only did the experiment at Meaux allow for the innovation of evangelical ideas, but it also spread its influence far and wide within French-speaking Europe.

What information that can be gathered from other sources reinforces and confirms some aspects of the profile of dissent revealed in the \textit{Histoire}. Berquin may be the exception, but young men of a low to middling social status are the ones who are attracting the attention of

\textsuperscript{76} Nicholls, 'Popular Heresy in France', 268. Also, \textit{Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris}, pp. 145-6.

\textsuperscript{77} Collinson, 'Truth and Legend', p. 39.

\textsuperscript{78} The name of Guillaume Farel stands out among the more prominent figures.
the authorities at this time. Berquin, himself, while representative of a different group, can still be seen as typical of the coterie of scholars that were prominent in the early years, benefiting from the patronage of both Francis and his sister. When one looks outside the martyrology, the pattern continues, and it does seem the case that Berquin’s fate was as much brought on by overconfidence and hubris, as by anything different and definable that separated him from those who were not executed. There is no doubt that Berquin’s high-profile struggle with the Sorbonne was instrumental in his downfall. As has been argued, ‘heresy could only exist if inquisitors or other churchmen went looking for it and labelled what they found “heretical”.’

It is easier to pinpoint what the evangelicals opposed, rather than identifying what they supported. ‘Lutheranism’, as it was described, meant not believing in images, holy water, prayers for the dead or purgatory. Theirs was a ‘purely negative decision.’ If this was the case, then it is not altogether surprising. It was understandable in this fluid, embryonic stage of religious belief which permitted a certain degree of religious freedom. On both sides, Catholic and Protestant, many fundamental attitudes had yet to be formed. What constituted a divergence from orthodoxy was far from clear. Although Pierre de Sébèville had preached communion in both kinds in Grenoble in 1524, it is clear that such actions were on the periphery of events at this time and far from typical. With the rapidly changing nature of French evangelism, there can be little doubt that the challenge of heresy facing orthodoxy in the early 1530s was considerably different from that of the 1520s. During this time, the Reformation in France was rapidly developing. Influences, both native and foreign, played a considerable part in shaping its growth. The future shapers of the movement were gradually coming to the fore, either in France or elsewhere.

The break-up of the Meaux group in the winter of 1525 ensured the flight abroad of many of the most vigorous and notable members of the group. Although for some such as Lefèvre, their exile was a short and temporary one, the experience was of lasting consequence. Ideas and practices taken from abroad proved a shining example. This diaspora imbued the younger generation of these exiles with ideas that were soon taken back to France. The most influential of these thought systems has been claimed to be that of Zwingli’s. This infiltration has been identified by Professor Knecht: ‘sacramentarianism of the Zwinglian kind was becoming well-

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81 Nicholls, ‘Popular Heresy in France’, 263: ‘The patchy nature of repression and the inconsistencies of royal policy helped to maintain a social space in which individuals could develop their heretical thoughts.’
entrenched and expressing itself in a manner that could readily be construed by the authorities as a threat to public order.\textsuperscript{82} The extent of the spread of Zwingli’s influence was clear: ‘By about 1528 the works of Zwingli were not only known in Paris, but also in Alençon, Guyenne, Agenais, Toulouse and Provence; thus his mounting impact on France must have been becoming apparent.’\textsuperscript{83}

The most substantial agent of Zwingli’s influence had fled France before the persecution that ensured the end to the experiment at Meaux. Guillaume Farel fled France some time in 1523, from whence he moved to Basle and Berne, before arriving in Neuchâtel in 1529. According to Imbert de la Tour, by the time of the Affair of the Placards, Farel had become the most authoritative representative of the French Reformation.\textsuperscript{84} It was through his writings that Farel provided the motor for much of his influence in France. Amongst these were two prayer books, \textit{L’Oraison dominicale}, and \textit{Le Symbole} in 1524, as well as the guideline for a new liturgy in the shape of \textit{La Manière et fasson qu’on tient ès lieux que Dieu de sa grâce a visités}. Perhaps his most significant work was his \textit{Summaire et briefe déclaration} of 1525 which articulated many of Zwingli’s thoughts on the Mass.

Yet to what extent did his writings, as well as those of Zwingli and others percolate down to a more popular audience? David Nicholls contends that the permeation of ideas on an elite level should be differentiated from more popular culture, and this seems a realistic view. As he makes clear, ‘None of the German writings on the eucharistic controversy appears to have been translated, so the theological debate would have only been familiar to readers of Latin.’\textsuperscript{85} Even if one accepts that many of Zwingli’s views on the Mass found their way into the French language through publications such as Farel’s \textit{Summaire et briefe déclaration} of 1525, this does not necessarily equate to a widespread audience for these ideas.

If examples of literature such as these are typical of a new depth and radicalism of criticism of the Catholic church, the question arises whether Crespin’s martyrology is sufficiently precise or perceptive enough to notice this development. It has been shown that the \textit{Histoire}, in the main, does portray a largely accurate picture of the circumstances in France during the 1520s. Yet this was a period of relatively restrained doctrinal debate. What of the next ten years? Issues that were at the heart of French Protestantism were ventilated in these years. Does Crespin’s \textit{Histoire} construct an image of this period with the same reliability? The 1530s were, in many respects, the crucial years for the French Reformation, and their investigation has relied heavily upon the testimony provided by Crespin. Is this faith well-

\textsuperscript{83} Sutherland, \textit{Huguenot Struggle}, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{84} Imbert de la Tour, \textit{Les Origines de la Réforme}, vol. III, p. 478, 480.
\textsuperscript{85} Nicholls, ‘Popular Heresy in France’, 271.
placed? Besides, it was also a time when evangelism spread to further parts of the realm, and to social groups that were previously untainted by the heresy. What has the Histoire have to say about this? In short, are there any discernible differences between the situation of the 1520s, as portrayed in the martyrology, and that of the 1530s?

For the years prior to the Affair of the Placards, Crespin includes only three French martyrs. This period in the martyrology is dominated by accounts of executions in England under Henry VIII. There are seven accounts of English martyrs, as well as the first Scottish account, that of Patrick Hamilton. However, in contrast to the emphasis placed on Meaux and Paris in the early years of the martyrology, Crespin's collection does now cite martyrs from a variety of locations. Indicative of this is the account of Jean de Cature. A licencié in law, from Limoux, he taught at the University of Toulouse. He was found guilty of heresy by the vicar of the Archbishop of Toulouse and the lieutenant of the Inquisitor. De Cature refused to recant his error, and so a further order was issued that he be handed over to secular justice. Because of his link with the university, de Cature was technically a cleric, and so had to first be deprived of his religious status. Following a ceremony of public degradation, de Cature was released to the Parlement of Toulouse, which sentenced him to burn, an order that was carried out on 23 June 1532.

It seems that Crespin was not aware of the story of de Cature until 1564, as it was not until then that Crespin included the story in his martyrology. According to Crespin, de Cature was a man of 'excellent knowledge' who was imprisoned in January 1532 for proposing a toast at a supper on All Saints' Day in Limoux. The Histoire relates that he suggested that, 'instead of proposing the usual toast to the King's health, they should take as the watchword of the banquet, "Christ reigns in our hearts".' He also suggested that after they had eaten, 'each one of them should discuss some passage of Scripture, (instead of unseemly talk and dancing) and that Cature went more deeply into these matters than the rest.'

Whilst imprisoned, de Cature agreed to be questioned, but only by learned men, so that he could dispute with them on various points. On each occasion, de Cature had the most appropriate biblical passage on the tip of his tongue with which to refute his adversaries. The judges tried to tempt Cature into recanting by offering him the opportunity of recanting only three points of doctrine (what these were is not specified); not by an Amende, but by means of a public lesson to the university. But Crespin relates that although initially tempted,

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86 Crespin 1570, fols. 71r-79r.
87 Mentzer, Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc, p. 119.
88 Crespin 1564, fol. 118.
89 Crespin 1570, fol. 73r.
90 Ibid., fols. 73r-74r.
de Caturce behaved 'as if the Lord had strengthened him in some way, so that it was not possible for him to contemplate any sort of recantation.'

Consequently condemned as a heretic, de Caturce was taken to the Place Saint-Estienne, where he was degraded; a process which Crespin tells us took about three hours. During this time, de Caturce was free to speak and each time he did, 'he always had some appropriate passage of scripture, in order to instruct and rebuff the stupidity of the judges.'

It was common for a sermon to be given by a member of the orthodox clergy before an execution, in order to show the errors of the condemned man. In the account of de Caturce, a monk gave the appropriate sermon, based on St Paul to Timothy, chapter four, verse one (about those who will later depart from the faith). The monk, however, only cited the first verse, 'as was their custom, to cut away from and take some patch of scripture.' De Caturce, responsible for Bible study groups and scriptural exposition at the University, found this selective editing too much for him to bear. He demanded at the top of his voice that the monk continue his quotation. Clearly shocked by this, the monk was so taken aback that he was lost for words. De Caturce continued the sermon for him, continuing with verses two and three,

> The words of St Paul are: "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

De Caturce's exposition found great favour amongst the scholars in attendance at the execution. Once this heroic defiance had ended, de Caturce was dressed in clothes for mockery and was led away to his death, although he never stopped praising and glorifying God until his last breath.

If the martyrology does portray an accurate picture of the early 1530s, a characteristic of these years seems to be the infiltration of evangelism within the circles of educated elites, both religious and temporal. The inclusion of the narrative of de Caturce in the Histoire would indicate this, along with the inclusion of Jean Pointet, a surgeon from Savoy, who was based in Paris. In fact, Crespin knew very little about Pointet. What he did know was not included in his martyrology until his Actes des martyrs of 1564, and this story was reproduced on

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91 Ibid., fol. 74f.
92 Ibid., fol. 74f.
93 Ibid., fol. 74f.
94 Ibid., fol. 74f.
95 Crespin 1570, fol. 74f. Nicholls, 'Theatre of Martyrdom', 56.
96 Marcel Royannez claims that Pointet was from Geneva. See Royannez, 'L'eucharisticie chez les évangéliques', 563.
successive occasions. The account recounted in the martyrlogy is an entertaining, if brief portrayal. In his capacity as a surgeon in Paris, Pointet was visited by some priests and monks, suffering from a strange illness. Pointet suggested to them that their malady was due to their ‘evil celibacy’ which ‘was a true retribution: and that it would be better if they were to marry’. Perhaps not surprisingly, his diagnosis incurred the displeasure of the patients, who informed the authorities, who in turn, imprisoned Pointet. Pointet was later condemned to death, by virtue of his ‘vehemence of spirit’.

The court passed sentence on him. He was to be strangled and then burnt. Prior to his execution, Pointet was put in the chapel with a confessor, who demanded that Pointet kneel down in front of an image that was there, in order to seek his pardon from it. Pointet, ‘pushed him away vigorously, calling him Satan, who sought to seduce him and make an idolater of him.’ Pointet’s actions caused him to be declared mad and out of his senses. The President of the Court and two confessors visited Pointet:

but they were soon manipulated by Pointet the same way as the confessors had been: for with the vehemence of his spirit he showed them that they were thieves, bloody and murderous men, who unjustly and against all reason killed the Children of God.

The effect of this ‘vehemence of spirit’ was that the President and confessors decreed that Pointet should have his tongue cut out. This was carried out, but despite this handicap, Pointet, ‘did not stop persevering in the confession of the truth, at the best that he could be heard.’

The sources from which Crespin drew the accounts of de Cature and Pointet are obscure. There are several possibilities. The story of de Cature, well-known within the humanist community, was recalled by Crespin. Amongst those who were aware of de Cature’s fate

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97 Crespin 1564, fol. 127; Crespin 1570, fols. 78'-79'.
98 Crespin 1570, fol. 79'.
99 Ibid., fol. 79'.
100 It is unclear why some victims, such as Pointet, were strangled before being burnt. See Mentzer, *Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc*, pp. 120-21.
101 Crespin 1570, fol. 79'.
102 Ibid., fol. 79'.
103 De Cature’s execution was part of a larger crackdown within Toulouse, when around fifty people were arrested for heresy in 1532. These were mostly humanists. Arnaud de Badet, de Cature’s friend who had become Inquisitor in June 1531, had himself been accused of heresy for failing to prosecute the heretical sect led by de Cature. He was deeply associated with the humanist circle of Marguerite d’Angoulême, whose estates of Nérac lay close to Languedoc. And it appears that the King’s sister knew Badet. During Badet’s trial for heresy, documents relating to de Cature’s trial were available, and it may well have been possible for such documents or accounts of the execution to reach the wider stage and from there, Crespin in Geneva. See Mentzer, *Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc*, pp. 28-34.
was Rabelais, who whilst writing the first book of his *Pantagruel*, refers to the execution of de Caturce:

From thence Pantagruel came to Toulouse, where he learned to dance very well and to play with the two-handed sword, as the fashion of the scholars of the said University is. But he stayed not long there when he saw that they stuck not to burn their regents alive like red herrings, saying Now God forbid that I should die this death, for I am by nature dry enough already without being heated any further.\(^{104}\)

Another possible source of information for the narrative of de Caturce was the presence at the execution of the distinguished Latinist and future martyr, Estienne Dolet.\(^{105}\) Dolet arrived in Toulouse in 1532, and stayed for two years, before fleeing the city upon charges of heresy and arriving in Lyon in August 1534. He presented a sympathetic portrait of de Caturce’s case and his injudicious remarks about the execution in his *Orationes* brought him to the attention of the faculty at the University.\(^{106}\)

Jean Pointet, in contrast, seems an almost unknown figure within the history of the French Reformation. Consequently, his story occupies only the briefest of passages in the *Histoire ecclésiastique*.\(^{107}\) It is almost impossible to identify from whence Crespin secures his facts about Pointet. Indeed, Pointet’s martyrdom goes almost unnoticed by the secondary literature. Émile Léonard states that the execution took place on 18 June 1534, as opposed to the only date mentioned by Crespin for the execution, which is 1533.\(^{108}\)

Clearly of the two, the case of de Caturce was much more significant, not least because it represented the beginning of a concerted assault on heresy in the south. There is no doubt that Languedoc and Toulouse especially were susceptible to the infiltration of radical new ideas. By 1528 it is clear that the heresy had reached Toulouse, as was shown by a report of the King’s agent 26 November, in which he admitted that the city was infected with heterodox opinion.\(^{109}\) Crespin remarked at the end of the story of de Caturce that, ‘one does not know how to express the great fruit made of his death, especially amongst the scholars who were then at the university of Toulouse, in 1532.’\(^{110}\) This claim is reinforced by Ray Mentzer’s

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\(^{107}\) *Histoire ecclésiastique*, p. 23. The account amounts to around 125 words.


\(^{109}\) Ibid, 235.

\(^{110}\) Crespin 1570, fol. 74'.
analysis of the gradually increasing numbers of heresy accusations in Languedoc in this period. Mentzer credits the evident peak of accusations in the year 1532 to 'the repression of Jean de Caturce’s sect and the general attack on the humanist community at Toulouse.'

The beliefs of de Caturce’s circle seem relatively well defined:

(They) advocated freedom of thought, and read Plato as well as Luther. They questioned all institutions and traditions, denying orthodox conventions on free will, the worship of saints and the primacy of Rome. They were enthusiastic readers of the gospel and held secret evening meetings to discuss passages from the Bible.

The focus of their work appears to have been to proselytise across the region, and by 1530, members of the group were free to preach in the city. Such outward manifestations of dissent could not escape the Parlement and de Caturce’s enemies. Proceedings were instigated against the group, which climaxed in the execution of de Caturce and the arrest of around 50 others. Many of those arrested were either imprisoned, forced to recant their faith, or heavily fined. It is clear that the scale of the heresy took the authorities by surprise. The scale of the operation undertaken by the Parlement clearly shows that Crespin was correct in writing about the ‘great fruit’ that was engendered by Caturce’s work and martyrdom.

Despite occasional inaccuracies over dates and other factual mistakes. Crespin rarely resorts to blatant misinformation. His sculpture of the account is much more subtle. Although the histories of Pointet and de Caturce are different in many ways, they are both shaped by a process that affects many of the stories that appear in the martyrology. The backbone and emphasis of both these stories is formed by literary types, derived from the Bible and stories of the Early Church. These tools would have helped structure stories such as these, providing signposts to help place the martyrs in a familiar context to the reader. These concepts would have made the story more memorable and would have given the reader a lasting impression of what was important in the recounting of their story, such as the constancy, propriety and courage of their death which marked them out as members of the true Church of God.

For example, the emphasis of the story of de Caturce lies in his speech at the All Saint’s Day supper; his temptation to perform a limited recantation; and the scene of his public degradation and execution. Likewise, the key issues that make up the narrative of Jean Pointet were carefully crafted: the visit of the clerics; his refusal to pay homage to an idol; the

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112 Hempshall, "The Languedoc 1520-1540: A study of Pre-Calvinist Heresy in France", 236.
vehemence of his spirit which bamboozles his opponents; and his valiant attempts to convey
the message of God, despite having had his tongue removed.

Both stories begin with an episode that brings the hero to the attention of the authorities.
In the case of de Caturce, it is the supper of All Saint’s Day, and his speech; for Pointet it is the
rather amusing story of the visit of the sick clerics. After these beginnings, each story
proceeds with a series of pedagogical reference points. De Caturce’s mental strength derived
from God in order for him to refuse the temptation to recant was the same as that which
allowed Denis de Rieux to turn down the offer of an annual pension if he were to recant. Both
of these examples would have reminded the readers of Jesus’ steadfast refusal of temptation in
the desert. Indeed, Pointet’s reaction to the confessor as he demanded that he beg mercy
from the idol bears the hallmarks of Christ’s reaction to Satan in the desert, as well as Christ’s
rebuke of Peter when he criticised Christ for predicting his own death. When Pointet is
declared deranged and out of his mind by the President and the two confessors, one is
immediately reminded of Paul before Agrippa, when Festus declares him to be out of his
mind.

In the story of de Caturce, despite his ordeal, he continually had an appropriate passage of
scripture at his lips. Whether it was during his original interrogation or during his degradation.
Jesus’ assurances to his disciples about their inevitable persecution echo all around:

But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I
will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or
contradict.

In fact, de Caturce’s answers, which included his three hour-long speech at the pyre and his
extensive citation of 1 Timothy verse 4 which rebuffed ‘the stupidity of the Judges in front of
the scholars’ and found great favour with those scholars present, brings to mind Jesus’
humiliation of his opponents when he healed a woman on the Sabbath.

David Nicholls points out that the degradation of de Caturce by dressing him in ‘clothes
given to him ‘par moquerie’ was not an unusual practice in the degradation of a cleric.

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115 Matthew 4:1-11.
116 Crespin 1570, fol. 78; ‘But Pointet pushed him away vigorously, calling him Satan, who wanted to seduce him
and make him an idolator.’ Also Mark 8:33, Matt 4:10, Matt 16:23.
117 Acts 26:24-25.
Arnoud Dierickx prayed to God the night before his interrogation for inspiration. See Petegree, ‘Foxe and
119 Luke 13:17: ‘And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed; and all the people rejoiced
for all the glorious things that were done by him.’ Furthermore, merely the fact that he spoke at his trial would
have reminded the reader of Paul’s speech of defence at his own trial (Acts 26).
following on from a medieval tradition. Crespin’s readers would equally have been aware of the symmetry with the mocking of Jesus at his own trial. By concentrating on certain aspects of the story, such as the savagery of the persecutors, and other conventions of martyrology-writing, the tangible evidence that can be gleaned from these accounts needs to be specifically identified. In accounts such as those of de Caturc and Pointet, the propagandistic and pedagogical value of the stories outweighs their historical value.

In contrast with the cases of Pointet and de Caturc, the account of Alexander Canus has been used as crucial testimony to the existence of growing criticism of the Mass in France at this time. Indeed, Canus has been described as an ‘advocate and a propagandist of the symbolist Holy Supper’ who delivered ‘the only profession of sacramentarian faith clarified and developed by a martyr in France’.

Alexander Canus, a former Dominican monk, was executed in Paris in 1533. Originally from Normandy, he preached the evangelical message in places such as Bresse, Mâcon and Lyon. Along with Farel and Froment, he was one of the first to take the evangelical message to Geneva, arriving there at the end of July, 1533. He was arrested for interrupting a sermon in the Cathedral of Saint-Pierre, for which he was condemned to die, although his sentence was later commuted to life banishment from the city. From Geneva, he went to Lyon, where he preached to large crowds. The authorities were soon alerted to his presence, and he was imprisoned in Lyon. The appeal against his sentence took him to Paris, where he was interrogated again and tortured several times, before being burnt alive on 18 June 1534.

Not surprisingly for a martyr with such close connections with Geneva, Crespin is well-informed about the details of Canus’ case. In the Livre des martyrs of 1554, the account is only a brief one. It mentions his imprisonment and degradation in Lyon, as well as his execution in Paris at the Place Maubert in 1533. It also highlights his constancy and strength whilst suffering the horrible torture inflicted upon him. The Recueil de plusieurs personnes of 1556 added numerous details on the case in Paris, as well as proclaiming him to be a man of justice, renowned throughout Europe for his knowledge. The appearance of the Actes des Martyrs in 1564 saw the definitive account, which was then reproduced in the Histoire in 1570.

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120 Nicholls, "Theatre of Martyrdom", 56.
122 Royannez, "L'eucharistie chez les évangéliques", 563.
124 Herminjard, vol. IV, p. 112.
125 Crespin 1554, p. 633.
127 Crespin 1564, fols. 125-127; Crespin 1570, fols. 78'-78".
The significance of Canus as one of the leading evangelists of his day is not missed by Crespin, who places him in the ‘first rank of the ministers of France’. His travels are well-documented by Crespin who remarks on Canus’ arrival in Geneva, ‘where M. Guillaume Farel and other servants of God began to proclaim the Gospel, to the great regret of the Canons, Priests and Monks’.

Having been forced to leave Geneva, Canus returned to France, where he spread the doctrine of the Gospel, ‘with daring, as if he did not care for his life.’ It was a sermon to the faithful on Easter Day at Lyon and several subsequent days’ preaching that attracted the attention of the authorities there. The appeal against his sentence was unsuccessful, but while in Paris he was tortured to such an extent that his legs were broken. Crespin writes that while being tortured, Canus cried out,

My God, is there no pity or forgiveness within these men, such as I find in you? Is there no Gamaliel who could ease this cruelty against me?

In the face of such savagery, Canus’ patience astonished those present. Unusually, Canus went on to be tried in the open air, an event which Crespin describes as God’s work, ‘so that the firmness and constancy of his faithful servant would become better known, to the confusion of his enemies.’ Once he was found guilty, Canus reacted joyously to his martyr’s crown: ‘O God, is there a greater grace and honour than that which you have given me today: the same livery as your only son received in the house of Herod?’ His request to speak at the gallows was granted, where he gave ‘an excellent sermon of marvellous efficacy’. After this, he was lifted onto the pyre. His death caused great consternation amongst the crowd:

some said, that if this man was not saved, then never would a man be: the others left beating their breasts, saying that wrong had been done to this man, who spoke only of God.

From the extensive commentary produced by Crespin, it does seem that he had access to a full and extensive source on which to base his account. Crespin himself, in fact, acknowledges

128 Crespin 1570, fol. 78'.
129 Gamaliel was a learned and respected Pharisee who spoke against the rough handling of the apostles on the grounds that, if their work was of human origin, then it would fail, yet if they were doing God’s work, opposition to them was futile. Later legend has it that he retrieved the body of Stephen after he had been stoned to death; Acts 5:34-40, Crespin 1570, fol. 78'.
130 Crespin 1570, fol. 78'.
131 Ibid., fol. 78'.
that Canus’ speech at his execution was a public act, about which reports were written. The source from which Crespin derives his account is Froment’s *Les Actes et Gestes merveilleux de la cité de Geneve*. Froment, a close acquaintance of Canus, claims like Crespin that the final words of Canus were ‘composed faithfully in writing and those who had heard it testified to it’. Froment includes the sermon in his account, something which Crespin copies word for word. For the details of the life of Canus prior to his execution, Crespin also relied on the authority of Froment, who tells of Canus’ exclusion from Geneva, his trip to Lyon, and then to Paris. When Canus was being tortured, his cry for a Gamaliel to ease his pain was answered. One of the judges spoke up and his torture was ended. This man was Guillaume Budé. Consequently, as in the case of Louis de Berquin, Budé could offer Crespin first-hand testimony to Canus’ plight. This is acknowledged in the martyrology:

among them (the judges), there was one who was of great authority and credit because of his knowledge and exquisite erudition, who showed the others that they had tortured the poor patient too much, and that they should be satisfied. This word was the reason for the stopping of this cruelty of extraordinary hell.

As with the accounts of Pointet and de Cature, the narrative of Canus was crafted using several biblical embellishments. However, the story of Canus in the *Histoire* offers more than that for the historian. For the first time in the martyrology, the account of Canus offers a detailed picture of Canus’ specific opinions concerning the Eucharist. As has been mentioned, his last speech has been called an ‘explicit sacramentarian confession of faith’. It is undoubted that the words attributed to him by Froment and in turn, by Crespin, do amount to an categorical proclamation of a sacramentarian position.

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132 Crespin 1570, fol. 78v.
135 Crespin 1570, fol. 78. Crespin adds in the margin, ‘This was Monsieur G. Budé.’
136 Examples of this include: having heard that he was to be executed, Canus is supposed to have reacted joyously, echoing the reaction of the apostles who rejoiced because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name: Acts 5:41. As in the case of de Cature, when he was given the robe of a jester, Canus clearly saw the parallels with Christ, as would those reading the martyrology; Matt 27:28, Mark 15:16-20.
Here therefore is what I have confessed and affirmed: it is that our Lord Jesus Christ, in perpetual memory of his death and passion, did ordain the Holy Supper, saying to his Apostles, *Hoec quotiescunque feceritis, in mei memoriam facietis*: Each and every time that you do this, you will do it in memory of me. As the Apostle St Paul writes, *Quotiescunque maducabis in hunc et calicem bibetis mortem Domini annunciatibis donec veniat*. That is to say, each and every time that you eat this bread and drink this wine, you will announce the death of the Lord until his coming. He said this whilst giving the bread, so that we will live of the same accord in charity, praying for one another and when announcing the death of Jesus Christ, we will take this bread as a sign and memorial of his death and passion.

Canus continued:

And so Messieurs, hear the scriptures and be moved by them; I said that this bread we have been given as a memorial sign of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, not in the real presence, but in the form that would please him.140

Such a unequivocal expression of belief leaves no doubt as to the stance taken by Canus on the matter of the real presence. Words such as ‘sign’ and ‘memorial’ could not be clearer. This exposition would have provided Crespin with a lucid description of Reformed doctrine, which could be applied in shaping the opinions of those who read the martyrology. Furthermore, Crespin’s account has been taken from the contemporary memoir of Froment, who claimed that the contents of the sermon were written down and copied. Even if one doubts the reliability of a scribe so obviously partial as Froment, it is difficult to question the authenticity of this narrative. Thus, it seems that the funeral speech of Alexander Canus does reinforce claims of historians such as Knecht and Royannex for the impact of a sacramentarian theology within France at this time. Indeed, with the Affair of the Placards only four months in the future, such a development in the doctrine of the evangelicals in France would seem logical.

There are, however, some serious flaws in portraying the sermon of Canus as such a crucial episode. For a start, he was hardly typical of adherents to Protestantism in France. As an ex-Dominican monk, he would have been more knowledgeable in matters of doctrine, theology and biblical exegesis than many others. His education with the Dominican order took him to Paris, which would have exposed him to a melting-pot of ideas and radical religious

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140 Crespin 1570, fol. 78r.
criticism. Also, Crespin informs us that Canus was one of the first to bring the gospel to Geneva which surely marked him out as one of the leading evangelicals of the time. In addition, his close association with Farel placed him in a position to absorb some of the most radical changes in theology that were occurring. His time outside of France, and in such places close to the border with Switzerland as Lyon, surely located him in the margins of evangelism in France, not just in terms of geography, but also in terms of theology.

The narratives recorded in the *Histoire* are not the only examples of martyrdom in France at this time. Others, excluded from Crespin, do seem to indicate that attacks on the Catholic doctrine of the Mass were occurring at this time on a more extensive level than before: men such as Estienne Jamyneau of Poitiers, who was condemned to death in 1531 for ‘detestable and enormous blasphemies against the Catholic faith, the holy sacrament of the altar, and the glorious virgin Mary’, or Abraham Ferreboeuf, who was sentenced to death in Tours in 1533, for the offence caused by him to God and the holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Nevertheless, it is significant that in these cases we rely entirely on the authorities’ description of the crime and belief of the condemned. Yet the authorities were not attempting to distinguish with any clarity between different strands of heretical belief. This is a point also made by Nicholls:

> Popular sacramentarism was to an extent an official creation, as the magistrates came to realize that the heretical dynamic went beyond attacks on particular practices to the very doctrinal heart of catholicism. In this way “sacramentaire” as an official description could be as vague as “Lutheran”.

It is clear that the religious situation in France was being influenced by events and theologies from over the border. At what rate and to what extent these ideas were permeating through society is a matter of debate. Nonetheless, as far as the martyrlogy is concerned, it is clearly an influence of which Crespin’s collection is aware. This developing situation is reflected, at least to some extent by Crespin, and it marks out these years in the martyrlogy as distinct from the previous decade. Nonetheless, if the previous five years or so had been

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141 Royannez claims that ‘at least nine people were executed for sacramentarism during the first nine months of 1534’; Royannez, *L’eucharistie chez les évangéliques*, 564.

142 Nicholls, *Popular Heresy in France*, 272. Also, Weiss, *Jean du Bellay, les Protestants et la Sorbonne*, 101. There is not sufficient space in this study to mention more than a couple of examples of those excluded from the martyrology. For an unparalled listing of those prosecuted and sentenced to one form of punishment or another, see Weiss, *Jean du Bellay, les Protestants et la Sorbonne*, 53, 97-106.

143 Nicholls, *Popular Heresy in France*, 271.
significant, the Affair of the Placards hovering on the horizon made the next twelve months and beyond even more so.

The Affair of the Placards has long been seen as the turning point of the French Reformation. Francis has been portrayed as sympathetic toward the evangelicals until the appearance of broadsheets attacking the Mass appeared all over Paris and five other French towns on the morning of Sunday, 18 October 1534. It certainly seemed that way to contemporaries. Just over four years previously, in August 1530, Bucer had written to Luther, telling him that Francis was ‘not far from the truth’. Yet, after the terrible persecutions visited upon the Reformers that shocked the whole of Europe in the aftermath of the posting of the Placards, Francis was castigated as the worst criminal who had ever sat on the throne of France.

There is no doubt that the Affair of the Placards irrevocably changed the atmosphere for religious criticism in France. The credibility of negotiations that had been going on between Lutheran princes in Germany and the Gallican party within the French church with the help of Philip Melanchthon was destroyed. The well-organised distribution of broadsheets that attacked the very centre of the Catholic community seemed to identify Protestantism with sedition, something of which Catholics had been accusing them for years. It was clear that the propagators of this outburst were different men from humanists such as Lefèvre and Briconnet, who for all their criticisms of the Catholic church, remained within its confines. From 1534, most French Catholics saw in Protestantism a religion of rebellion. In turn, this much more definite association with social upheaval and attacks on the fundamental tenets of Catholic sacral and civic life forced many of the evangelical movement’s more outspoken and powerful backers to retreat from publicly espousing its cause. Yet, perhaps the most significant result of the Affair and its ensuing persecution was the forcing of so many French evangelicals into exile. From now on, French Protestantism was to be guided from abroad to an even greater extent; from Strasbourg, Basel, Zurich and most significantly, Geneva.

Indeed, it was an exile of an earlier persecution Antoine Marcourt, a Protestant minister in Neuchâtel, who was responsible for the Placards. For four centuries, it was assumed that the original text of the Placards was that which appeared in the Histoire des vrais témoins. The text of the Placards first appeared in the martyrology in 1564. Prior to that, previous editions

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144 These were Blois, Rouen, Tours, Amboise and Orléans.
146 A. Bouvier, Henri Bullinger (Neuchâtel, 1940), pp. 201-2.
150 For the text of the Placards, see G. Berthoud, Antoine Marcourt, pp. 287-9.
such as the *Actes des Martyrs* of 1554 did not include a text, but only outlined the causes, the consequences and listed the most noticeable victims. Since the discovery in 1943 of an authentic copy of the Placards, it is clear that the version in the *Histoire* is not reliable. It seems that a pirated version of Marcourt's Placards was for sale in Normandy in 1560. A letter from a minister in Normandy to Calvin of August 1560, tells how broadsheets denouncing the Mass were for sale during the fair of Guibray. In all probability, this is where Crespin obtained his copy of the Placards.\(^{151}\) Hari argues that whatever alterations were made to this account, they were not the work of Crespin; and that he committed this version to his martyrology in all good faith, believing it to be the genuine Placards, as composed by Marcourt. The version in the *Histoire* does show considerable changes from the original. The differences between versions, however, are not of sufficient significance to alter the meaning and directness of the attack on the Mass. They are essentially changes of language, albeit clumsy and lacking the crispness and effectiveness of Marcourt's original text.\(^{152}\)

Within the *Histoire*, Crespin's text is introduced by a preamble which notes the significance of the Placards, then inserts the text itself, before listing those martyrs that lost their lives in the ensuing persecution.\(^{153}\) 1534, according to Crespin, was a year of great marvels, but none was more worthy of memory than what took place in Paris. Under the protection of Maguerite of Navarre, many reformers, such as Gerard Roussel, began to preach in Paris. Their actions, however, displeased Satan, who roused his henchmen in the shape those 'enemies of light and all truth', the Sorbonne, to exclude these preachers from the pulpits, to the great regret of the faithful. This clampdown, which deprived the faithful of 'all doctrine and exhortation', led them to request from 'a town in Savoy, where the Gospel had started to be preached, a summary of what to teach the people for instruction in the Christian faith and religion.'\(^{154}\)

Crespin writes that Ferret, a servant of a King's apothecary, was entrusted with securing these articles, which also came in the form of small booklets. The corrupted text is then included after this preamble. Interestingly, according to Crespin, these booklets were only for the education of the faithful, and were not to be made public. However, the 'impetuosity of some', influenced by their 'fiery affections' unleashed a persecution so frenzied 'that never has a tempest approached this fieriness.'\(^{155}\) The clampdown was such that the King ordered an '...indiscriminate taking of all those remotely suspected of Lutheranism.' Crespin identified the

\(^{152}\) Ibid., fol. 79'.'
\(^{153}\) Crespin 1570, fols. 79'-81'.
\(^{154}\) Ibid., fol. 79'.'
\(^{155}\) Crespin's reaction was not dissimilar from that of the *Histoire ecclésiastique*, pp. 28-9, which recorded that 'Everything was shattered by the indiscreet zeal of a few'.

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orchestrator of this barbarity as Jean Morin, *lieutenant criminel de Paris*, whose impact was such that ‘he made the whole town tremble’ as he carried out his work.\(^{156}\)

Morin’s work was indeed a bloody reprisal. The violence of the attack on the Mass was only matched by the violence of the ensuing persecution. At least six suspects were rounded up and executed by the end of November. Francis’ return from Blois in December 1534 led to an unprecedented religious procession in Paris on January 21 1535 which was aimed at a purification of the community as a whole. Six further heretics were burnt after the parade of Paris’ civic identity. Prior to this, the persecution in France had amounted to one or two isolated executions. This was the first time such multiple *auto-da-fé* had been carried out to extirpate heresy from the realm.

The number of heretics executed in the slaughter immediately after the posting the Placards was considerable. Robert Hari estimates that by the end of 1534, nine executions had taken place; and within nine months of the Placards appearing, there were twenty-two burnings in Paris alone.\(^{157}\) In addition to these victims, fifty-one others were condemned *in absentia*.\(^{158}\) Of these twenty-two martyrs, Crespin includes in his collection only six, as well as one martyr from outside Paris. Three of the nine executed by the end of 1534 find a place in the martyrology. These are the accounts of Barthélemy Milon, Henry Poille, and Jean du Bourg. Crespin claims that he could have included more victims of the fury.\(^{159}\) Why he did not is unclear. Lack of information would not suffice as an explanation, as the only two accounts of this period to amount to any decent length are those of Valeton and Milon. The other stories offer little detail. The case of La Catelle is notable for the fact that she was the first woman to appear in the martyrology, and that of Quoquillard as the only example of someone executed outside Paris in the aftermath of the Placards.\(^{160}\) Nothing is told about either of them, except that La Catelle was a schoolmistress. In this same category is the account of Jean du Bourg, about whom all is known was the location of his house in Paris, and that he worked as a clothworker. Interestingly, Crespin mentioned that neither goods nor his parents could divert him from the truth, a constancy mirrored by several martyrs.\(^{161}\) Details from other sources tell a fuller story. It seems that he was a rich draper, who had himself attached the placards to the corners of street. He refused to try and save himself by implicating any others. It appears that he suffered the fate of an iconoclast by having his fist cut off.\(^{162}\) The details of the execution

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\(^{156}\) Crespin 1570, fol. 79v.


\(^{159}\) Crespin 1570, fol. 82v.

\(^{160}\) Ibid., fol. 82v.\(^{2}\).

\(^{161}\) For example, see the story of Estienne Brun in the next chapter.

of Henry Poille, a mason originally from Meaux and said to have been inspired by the example of Jacques Pavanès, are more explicit. His tongue was removed and attached to his cheek, in order to prevent him speaking to the people.\(^\text{163}\)

An interesting case is that of Estienne de la Forge. A wealthy merchant, native of Tournai, but resident for a long time in Paris, he was a significant acquaintance of Calvin.\(^\text{164}\) Crespin was at pains to point out that, despite de la Forge’s not inconsiderable wealth, he was a devout man who ‘always saved for the poor.’\(^\text{165}\) Not much else is clear, except for his activities in printing of the holy gospel at his own expense, and the location of his execution in Paris. This is curiously short entry for a martyr who was one of Calvin’s close associates, as well as a correspondent of Farel.

The only two substantial stories included in the Histoire are those of Barthelemy Milon and Nicholas Valeton.\(^\text{166}\) Milon, one of the first suspects to be arrested, was the son of a shoemaker. His misfortune in being paralysed awoke in him a fervent interest in the gospel. Having previously been imprisoned for heresy, he was quickly re-arrested after the Placards. After having endured horrific cruelty, he was executed at the Place de Grève in November 1534.

The length of the account in the Histoire was undoubtedly down to the unique nature of his conversion, which Crespin deemed worthy of reciting. Previously he was a dissolute youth who was contemptuous of the word of God.\(^\text{167}\) One day, however, whilst Milon was mocking a man of faith, the Lord sought to give him knowledge of the truth by a passer-by, who gave Milon a copy of the New Testament. Having been thus introduced to the word of the gospel, he never stopped reading it, day or night. People marvelled at the change in his personality. He now taught a local youth the gospel, as well as giving all his earnings from his craftwork to the poor: ‘In short, his room was a true school of piety, in which the glory of God was maintained all day long.’\(^\text{168}\) When Morin came to arrest him, he demanded that Milon get up. The cripple remained defiant, and he retorted that it would take a greater master than him to allow him to get up. Despite being cruelly tortured, with no regard to his condition, the constancy of this ‘admirable servant and witness of the Son of God’ astonished the enemies of the truth.\(^\text{169}\)

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\(^\text{163}\) Crespin 1570, fol. 82'.
\(^\text{164}\) In the account Crespin cites the reference to de la Forge in Calvin’s book against the Libertines, chapter 4; Crespin 1570, fol. 82'.
\(^\text{165}\) Ibid., fol. 82'.
\(^\text{166}\) Ibid., fols. 81'-82'.
\(^\text{167}\) Ibid., fol. 81'.
\(^\text{168}\) Ibid., fol. 81'.
\(^\text{169}\) Ibid., fol. 81'. The Journal d’un Bourgeois de Paris claims that Milon had the Placards and notices with him (p. 444).
3. The early French evangelical movement, 1523-1535

The story of Valeton which appears in the martyrology is about half the length of that of Milon, that is to say, just over 400 words. A tax-collector from Nantes in Brittany, he was unwittingly betrayed by his wife. Found guilty of heresy, he was one of those burnt during the great procession led by Francis I in Paris, on 21 January 1535. If Crespin is to be trusted, then it seems that Valeton had had a difference of opinion with Morin previously. When Valeton heard of the persecution and that Morin was on the way to his house, he ordered his wife to remove his chest of books. Being scared for his safety, his wife decided it would be better to throw the contents of his chest down the privy.\(^\text{170}\) When Morin came to the Valeton household, Valeton was sent to prison, and Morin searched the house, but to no avail. Morin resorted to cunning, and told Valeton’s wife that she should tell him where the books were hidden, in return for a reward. Although it is unclear precisely what Valeton’s books were, their illegality was sufficient for Valeton to be condemned to be burnt alive. Despite the little instruction he had received, he showed great constancy and firmness. Crespin speculated that Valeton was merely a ‘good soul’ who had been sacrificed for good order.\(^\text{171}\)

As in many of the previous accounts, especially those of Pointet and de Caturce mentioned above, both these accounts follow a specific pattern. For the construction of a story in the best martyrrological tradition, certain aspects were highlighted, and others were barely mentioned. In both these narratives, the cruelty of Morin and other ‘enemies of the truth’ was emphasised in stark contrast to the constancy and nobility of the death and defiance of Milon and Valeton. Both stories have memorable, easy to recall episodes that still succeed in conveying their purpose: Milon’s paraplegia and Valeton’s books being hidden in the toilet. In these two cases, as well as that of de la Forge, Crespin was keen to draw attention to the propriety of their living; in Milon’s story, this is as the direct result of the actions of God. From all of these accounts no real evidence of the doctrine held by these men can be ascertained. By drawing on the accounts of Crespin, there seems no evidence of whether these people were imbued with a new sacramentarianism. Indeed, in both cases, Milon and Valeton had been on the wrong side of the law previously, and their arrest seemed to arise out of earlier conflicts as much as their current transgressions.

Yet these stories do point up certain authentic aspects of the evangelical movement in these years. The Meaux circle was clearly quite a closely-knit evangelical community, whose members were quickly identified and arrested by the authorities. If the authorities knew who

\(^{170}\) Ibid., fol. 81°.
\(^{171}\) Ibid., fol. 82°. The *Journal d’un Bourgeois de Paris* states that Valeton was burnt along with his books (p. 447).
these people were, and acted against them only in such moments of crisis, then perhaps Crespin’s suggestion that Valeton was executed for the sake of public order, rather than a specific punishment, rings true. As in the case of Valeton and de la Forge, they consciously and deliberately gave to the poor. There is some evidence of a shadowy network within the community, responsible for the posting of the Placards. A character named Ferret was delegated to retrieve the Placards from Neuchâtel, and he was the servant of Guillaume Husson, later to try and flee across the Channel, before being captured and executed. If the *Journal d’un Bourgeois de Paris* is correct, then the Placards were found at Milon’s house, where, Hari speculates, a ‘Council of War’ took place in order to organise the posting after Ferret’s return to Paris.

In terms of the beliefs of these men, Professor Knecht’s assertion is interesting:

> The widow of Estienne de la Forge was allowed by the King to recover part of his property on condition she could prove that he had not been a sacramentarian.

This conditional accusation may seem to indicate that de la Forge was amongst those who were increasingly influenced by sacramentarian views. Yet as has been outlined above, such definitions by the authorities were vague and at times unreliable. For instance, of all those actually brought to face justice that are identified by Hari (not just to capital sentences), three are indicted as ‘Lutheran’. In addition, three others were condemned for either having printed or sold ‘Lutheran books’ or books of the ‘Lutheran sect’, and two more were found guilty of bringing books back from Germany. I have already mentioned the dangers of interpreting such labels too literally. Yet these examples illustrate that if the nature of heresy was changing in this period, it was changing only slowly and, as far as the authorities were concerned at times, imperceptibly.

The *Histoire des vrais témoins*’ portrayal of the Affair of the Placards and its bloody aftermath does provide the historian with some valuable information. It is equally true, however, that the historian must know what sort of information can be gauged from the

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172 Although he was executed in August 1535, Crespin claims that he was executed in 1544. See chapter 4, p. 95n.
175 These were: a printer from Rue St. Jacques who had ‘printed and sold the books of Luther’, who was burnt alive on 10 November 1534; a bookseller who ‘sold and bound the books of Luther’ and stayed near the Place Maubert, burnt on 19 November; a sheath-maker and a couturier who were ‘Lutheran’ and whose fate is unknown; a labourer and a painter staying on the Bridge St. Michel who were banished and whipped on 19 February 1535; a cobbler from Tournai, who was found with forbidden books of the ‘Lutheran sect’ and was burnt on 5 May 1535; two apprentices, described as ‘Lutherans’, who had carried books from Germany which they wanted to bind and sell in Paris. Hari, ‘Les Placards de 1534’, pp. 98-104.
collection. Only the story of Canus in this early period specifies the nature of his doctrine. For Crespin, the important factor in the story was the response of the condemned to his persecution, an attitude that would define his suitability as a true Christian martyr. If one is looking for confirmation of those trends identified by historians that have already been mentioned for this period, then it would be in vain. There is no doubt that this period (1530-1535) was a crucial one for Reformers. Influences from abroad were permeating into France and instilling key figures with beliefs that did differentiate them from previous evangelicals. Nonetheless, it is difficult to argue that these changes were as widespread as some would have us believe. Canus’ propagation of such ideas was not necessarily typical. The degree of penetration of these ideas was clearly limited. The author of the Placards, Marcourt, was based abroad; and the surprise engendered by his attack on the Mass amongst both Protestants as well as Catholics was indicative of the fact that such attitudes had no tradition, no popular basis in French evangelism. It is the diversity of dissent and ideas that is brought out by a detailed reading of the Histoire. The situation was not as simply compartmentalised as has sometimes been stated. 176

Certain figures and attitudes were prominent, but their influence was not overriding at the expense of a continual evolution of native attitudes, developed over years of evangelical struggle. To deny the diversity of the situation and place undue emphasis on one particular belief system fails to appreciate the widely divergent attitudes at work during this period. As will be seen in the next chapter, this multiformity of belief continued into the next decade.

It is easy to overstate the effect of the Affair of the Placards. As has been seen above, there was plenty of repression before October 1534. The divergence of attitudes toward persecution within each region throughout the period had more effect on French Protestantism than alternative influences from abroad. The next twelve years were to settle many issues and define the struggle for the rest of the century. The codification of heresy laws in 1539-42, the drawing-up of a confession of faith by the Sorbonne in 1543 and an index of forbidden books in 1545 all defined the nature of the struggle between Catholic and Protestant much more clearly that did the events surrounding the Placards. 177 With such mechanisms of repression finally in place, the blood-letting would gradually increase to an unprecedented level. The

176 ‘It was round Farel that the French exiles tended to gather, and it was predominantly his radical Zwinglian form of Protestantism that, over a long period of time, prepared the foundations for Calvinism in France’, Sutherland, Huguenot Struggle for Recognition, p. 23.

177 F.M. Higman, Censorship and the Sorbonne. A bibliographical study of books in French censured by the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris, 1520-1551 (Geneva, 1979), p. 63.
3. The early French evangelical movement, 1523-1535

stories of many of the victims of these years found their place into the bloody annals of the 
_Histoire des vrays tesmoins._
THE LAST YEARS OF FRANCIS I, 1536-1546

The clampdown of October 1534 and January 1535 did not last long. Inspired by Francis I's desire to ally himself with Protestants abroad in his struggle against the Empire, the next eighteen months or so were marked by an easing of the pressure on the evangelical community, most especially in the form of the Edict of Coucy of 16 July 1535. Although the immediate persecution was not long-lasting, the Affair did have a fundamental impact on the evangelical movement in France. In clarifying a previously confused ideological situation, it was undoubtedly 'one of those signal events which did help crystallize and underscore the difference between heterodoxy and heresy.' From this point on, attitudes on both sides hardened, as Catholics increasingly perceived Protestantism in France as a 'religion for rebels'. There is no doubt that the appearance of the Placards awakened the authorities to the threat of what they perceived to be a new, radical strain of Protestantism more associated with rebellion than a renovation of religious life. This attitude was behind the Edict of Fontainebleau of 1 June 1540, which authorised the sovereign courts of the crown to take over the prosecution of heresy from the courts of the church. Heresy was now a matter of popular sedition, a crime of divine and temporal lèse-majesté. According to some historians, the authorities accurately perceived a change in the nature of heresy:

The appearance of an outspoken and aggressive sacramentarianism within the French dissenting community not only alerted the government to a threat which had so far escaped its notice, but helped to polarize opinion.

How was this change portrayed in the writings of the Histoire des vrais témoins? Is the changing nature of heresy in the late 1530s and early 1540s identified by Crespin and conveyed to the reader in his collection of martyr stories?

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1 This called a halt to all persecution, on the grounds that it had been wiped out. It ordered the release of all religious prisoners, and invited those in exile to come home. The general pardon only lasted for six months, however, and evangelicals had to abjure their faith by then. Most crucially, it did not apply to sacramentarians. See Knecht, Francis I, p. 390.
3 Berthoud, Antoine Marcourt, p. 219.
4 Holt, French Wars of Religion, p. 21.
5 Knecht, Francis I, p. 390.
The answer to this question is no. Out of all the martyrs included in the Histoire for the period 1535-1546, none show any evidence of this new ‘aggressive sacramentarianism.’ In the account of Aymon de la Voye, his opinion of the Eucharist is expressly given, but it does not resonate with any sacramentarian influences. Their accounts (as they appear in the Histoire) are indicative of a more basic religious criticism. What strikes the reader is that rather than these cases being evidence of signs of any new influences, the beliefs of the earliest victims are strongly reminiscent still of the earliest years of dissent in France.

The first French cases to be mentioned for these years are those of Marie Becaudelle, Jean Corron and Estienne Brun. They are the only three French natives included in the Histoire for the years between 1535 and 1540. Marie Becaudelle is the first martyr to appear in the martyrology from La Rochelle. Given ‘instruction in the doctrine of the Gospel’ by her (unnamed) master, Becaudelle was driven by the zeal of her new learning to challenge the Franciscans of La Rochelle to a doctrinal debate. Her actions secured her a martyr’s crown, and she was burnt alive ‘with such virtue that she was held in admiration.’ The two other accounts that appear in the Histoire for this period are uncannily similar. Jean Corron, a labourer from Maçon in Bresse, was imprisoned ‘for the word of God.’ Condemned to be burnt alive, he refused the chance to appeal to a higher court to have his sentence reduced, and was dragged to the gallows on a rack, before being burnt at the end of June 1535. The case of Estienne Brun is better-known than the tale of Corron. Brun was a peasant from Réortier in the Dauphiné, who, despite having rarely attended school taught himself to read the New Testament in French, and used his knowledge to educate his family. Confused by his priests’ use of Latin, Brun taught himself a little of that too, so that he was able ‘to talk with great daring to the enemies of the truth’. He was imprisoned in 1538 by the Bishop of Ambrun.

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6 Also mentioned in the Histoire at this point are the cases of Martin Gonin, who will be dealt with later; Louis Courtet and Pierre Gaudet; Crespin 1570, fol. 92° and fol. 83° respectively. Whilst Courtet and Gaudet had strong connections with the city of Geneva, the stories of their martyrdom are of little consequence for the arguments presented in this study. In the case of Courtet, he was a victim of the persecution in Geneva before the reformation there. Pierre Gaudet left the order called the Chevaliers of Rhodes in France for a life free of persecution in Geneva. He was tricked back to France by his uncle, where he was arrested, imprisoned and executed at the end of June, 1534. His story is of little importance, except on two levels. First, this was a story, like that of Alexander Canus, that Crespin obtained from Froment’s Actes et Gestes of 1554. Secondly, it tells us nothing of his beliefs, except that he ‘maintained the party of the Gospel’. This case has precious little bearing on the developing nature of heresy in France at this time. Its inclusion in the martyrology tells the reader more about Crespin’s sources than it does about the nature of heresy. With this case and that of Courtet, Crespin was able to tell the story of the reformation in Geneva within a heroic context.

7 Crespin 1570, fol. 82°, fol. 85°, fol. 94°-95° respectively.

8 As has been shown below in chapter 3, Guillaume Joubert, a native of La Rochelle, was executed in 1526. It seems that in this particular case, the chronological order of the Histoire des vrais temoins is at fault. The narrative of Becaudelle was placed after the account of the Affair of the Placards, despite the fact that she was probably executed before the tumultuous events of October 1534.

9 Crespin 1570, fol. 82°.

10 Ibid., fol. 85°. Also see A. Bost, Histoire de L’Eglise Protestante de Maçon (Maçon, 1977), p. 33.

11 Crespin 1570, fol. 94°-95°. Brun is described as a Vaudois by Cameron, The Reformation of the Heretics, pp. 145-6
whose henchmen tricked Brun into signing an abjuration which he could only half understand. Filled with remorse, Brun vowed, if ever imprisoned again, he would go back on his abjuration. The opportunity again arose in 1540, when he was taken and investigated by an Inquisitor of the faith named Domicelli. Under interrogation, Brun refused to retract his views, and was condemned to death. He was burnt alive in the summer of 1540.12

The accounts of Becaudelle, Corno and Brun show striking similarities. They are a remarkably homogeneous trio. First, all three were of low social status: two farm labourers and a servant girl. According to Crespin, Brun and Corno were ‘an example of the ancient integrity of the rustic life’ and Brun in particular who ‘devoted himself to ploughing and reading the New Testament that had been translated into French’.13 Corno and Brun were self-educated in the gospel, and Becaudelle, although not self-taught, had ‘received instruction in the doctrine of the gospel’ from her master.14 In all three cases, the simplicity of the Scriptures in contrast to the obscurity of the Roman hierarchy is highlighted. Catholicism had corrupted the word of God, and the purity and primacy of Scripture, personified by pure and simple folk, swept away the arguments of the authorities. The cases of Brun and Becaudelle single out the Franciscan order for particular criticism. All three seem to represent a new self-confident believer who, committed to the righteousness of their cause, felt compelled to challenge ecclesiastical authority, regardless of their own status.

The similarities continue. Both Brun and Becaudelle, having confronted the authorities with the veracity of their learning, were tricked into either capture or abjuration. Becaudelle was deceived by a monk who ‘acted cunningly so as to make her confess her opinions when there were witnesses present’.15 Brun, whose knowledge of the truth of God had allowed him to ‘overcome all the tricks and ruses of the fattest of the Dauphiné’, was later ‘manipulated and induced by the lies and vain promises of the henchmen of the bishop’.16 During the judgement of all three crimes, the power of the evangelical message left the judges dumbfounded. They were either ‘rendered confused and astonished’17 in the case of Jean Corno, ‘overcome by virtue of this word of God and rendered confused’ by Estienne Brun,18 or in the case of

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12 Crespin 1570, fol. 95f.
13 Ibid., fols. 94f—95f.
14 Ibid., fol. 82f.
15 Ibid., fol. 82f.
16 Ibid., fol. 94f. 95f. The description of the priesthood as ‘fat’ was also found in the Placards of 1534; in the third article: ‘And I ask these fat hooded people where they invented and found this fat word Transubstantiation.’ See Hari, ‘Les Placards de 1534’, p. 117.
17 Crespin 1570, fol. 85f.
18 Ibid., fol. 95f.
Becaudelle, her confrontation with the Franciscan left the monk ‘in anger and shame having been shown up by a woman’.  

As has been shown already in a previous chapter, these traditions and literary devices are common. What stands out is the emphasis Crespin places on the traditions of history-writing, at the expense of any doctrinal clarity. All the three accounts portray archetypal examples of a martyr’s uneducated courage. In the first instance, mirroring Peter and John’s resolution in front of the Sanhedrin:

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

Or even reminding the reader of Jesus, teaching at the Feast of Tabernacles:

Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?

Brun’s case, being the longest, is the most densely-packed with stylistic embellishments that would have struck a chord with the reader. Imprisoned for a second time in 1540, Brun was solicited yet again to retract his opinions, as he had done previously. Yet he showed enormous courage. The welfare of his family was a not sufficient to distract him, ‘even his wife and five children that he had were put in front of him: but he never swayed in any way.’ Furthermore, when the sentence of death was passed on him, he remained defiant, joyful at his fate. He turned to the judges and said, ‘Poor men, what do you think you are doing? You seek to condemn me to death: you are mistaken, for it will be to life.’

The story of Brun’s execution is told in some detail by Crespin, and his readers would have been struck by the similarity between Brun’s stoicism and courage and that of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, martyred in about 156 A.D. In both cases, it seemed that a divine force was

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19 Ibid., fol. 82’. All three of these examples resonate biblical or Early Church examples. For instance, Jesus’ reply to the synagogue leader, after healing a crippled woman on the sabbath, ‘When he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed...’ (Luke 13:17). Also Apollos’ arrival in Achaia where ‘he mighty convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ’. (Acts 18:28). Such glorious defiance is also found in the case of Aymon de la Voye, who received the news that he was to be burnt ‘...with such affection, that he rendered his enemies astonished’; Crespin 1570, fol. 100’.

22 Joy of persecution was a familiar attitude of martyrs, echoing the apostles: ‘And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.’ (Acts 5:41)
at work preventing the execution going ahead as planned. Crespin wrote that when Brun was attached to the stake and the wood was lit:

he remained upright for nearly an hour before the flames touched him: such as it was at that time that the wind blew and dispersed them, so that they had to place new bundles of wood and several vessels of oil in order to get the flames going. The executioner, seeing that he could not bring this to an end, hit Brun on the head with a long hook that he was holding. Estienne, still living, said to him, “Since that I am condemn’d to be burnt alive, why do you want to knock me out?” Then the executioner hit him in the stomach with the same hook and having beaten him and covered the wood in flames, his body was consumed in fire, until it was reduced to ashes.²³

Compare this account with that of Polycarp, which recounted that when his pyre was lit, a great flame shot up.

The fire took the shape of a vaulted room, like a ship’s sail filled with wind, and made a wall round the martyr’s body, which was in the middle not like burning flesh but like gold and silver refined in a furnace....At last, seeing that the body could not be consumed by the fire, the lawless people summoned a confector to come forward and drive home his sword. When he did so there came out a stream of blood that quenched the fire, so that the whole crowd was astonished at the difference between the unbelievers and the elect.²⁴

In contrast with these three accounts, all of which could be said to concentrate on literary conventions rather than the nature of heresy in the mid to late 1530s, the account of the martyrdom of Claude Le Pâncré is more illuminating. In stark contrast to the rural nature of the heresy in the accounts of Becaudelle, Corden, and Brun, Paris and Geneva play important roles in the story of Le Pâncré.²⁵ For the first time in the Histoire des vrais témoins, Geneva

²³ Crespin 1570, fol. 95v.
²⁴ Eusebius, The History of the Church, book IV, ch. 15. This story was, in turn, clearly based on the tale of Daniel and the fiery furnace. Daniel, 2. Accounts detailing the fate of Patrick Hamilton in St Andrews in 1528 were said to have been diverted by the wind. Crespin 1570, fols. 71r-72v. In the same vein were the stories of martyrs in Phœnicia being thrown to blood-thirsty animals, only for the animals to be stopped short “as if by some divine power”. Eusebius, The History of the Church, book VIII, ch. 7. In addition, in the case of Brun, Polycarp and the martyrs of Phœnicia, the disposal of their remains, when eventually executed by some other means than intended, was carried out to ensure that their memory could not be physically located and worshipped. That is to say, that Brun’s ashes were thrown to the wind, the remains of the martyrs of Phœnicia, having been butchered by the sword, were thrown in the sea, rather than buried underground. In contrast, Polycarp’s remains were secured by the Christians, despite the best efforts of the Jews.
²⁵ Crespin 1570, fol. 97v.
is mentioned as a centre of refuge from the persecution within France at this time. An apprentice goldsmith, Le Painctre was a native of Paris. He fled Paris in around 1538 for Geneva, where ‘the streams of the Gospel had been purely started and preached and spread to the land of France.’ He stayed in Geneva for three years, returning in order ‘to impart to his friends the inestimable good of the knowledge of eternal salvation.’ His proselytising zeal however, did not find favour with one of his workmates, who soon informed on him to the lieutenant criminel, Morin. He was detained, found guilty and condemned to be burnt alive. He appealed against his sentence, but his obstinacy only succeeded in getting his tongue cut out, before being burnt alive at the Place Maubert on 17 November 1541. The source of this narrative was Crespin himself:

I was one of the spectators present at this very fortunate death and exit from this world, which confirmed several who had some idea of the beginnings of the truth, which the Lord rendered in front of our eyes in the person of Claude, a true and living witness.

Crespin was not in fact the only eye-witness to leave a record of Le Painctre’s martyrdom. The testimony of Eustache Knobelsdorff, a Catholic German student who had arrived in Paris just sixteen days before Le Painctre’s execution, also survives. He stayed in the city for eighteen months, pursuing his studies. It seems he took lodgings ‘on the Place Maubert, neighbouring the collège de la Marche.’ Eight months after he arrived in Paris, he wrote to George Cassander, Professor of Theology at the college of Bruges at this time, in response to a request from Cassander to be told what he knew of the executions of ‘Lutherans’ in the capital. Knobelsdorff’s quarters overlooking the Place Maubert enabled him to report precisely what he had seen of the execution of Claude Le Painctre. Like Crespin, Knobelsdorff was clearly shocked by the barbaric nature of his treatment.

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26 Ibid., fol. 97v.
27 Ibid., fol. 97r. Also see N. Weiss, ‘Claude Le Painctre, Parisien. Son Arrêt de Mort, 17 November 1541’, BSHFP, 41 (1892), 466-68.
28 Crespin 1570, fol. 97v. Whilst the account of Le Painctre was included in Crespin’s first edition of 1554, Crespin made no mention of his having been present at the pyre. The first edition only contains details such as Le Painctre’s time in Geneva, his sentence and his appeal. The reasons for this omission are far from clear. Either Crespin was not present at the execution, despite his claims, or he felt that the confines of space precluded him from mentioning his own personal witness and testimony. One can only assume that it was the problem of space that persuaded Crespin to omit this, as it is highly probable that Crespin was present at the execution. See chapter 1, p. 6.
30 This was on 10 July 1542.
I saw two burnt there. Their death inspired in me differing sentiments. If you had been there, you would have hoped for a less severe punishment for these poor unfortunates.... The first was a very young man, not yet with a beard.... He was the son of a cobbler.\textsuperscript{31} He was brought in front of the judges and condemned to have his tongue cut out and to be burnt straight after. Without changing the expression of his face, the young man presented his tongue to the executioner's knife, sticking it out as far as he could. The executioner pulled it out even further with pincers, cut it off, and hit the sufferer several times on the cheek with it. It is said that those nearest in the crowd ... picked up the still throbbing tongue and threw it in the young man's face. Then he was put into a tipcart, which was driven to the place of execution, but, to see him, one would think that he was going to a feast.... When the chain had been placed around his body, I could not describe to you with what equanimity of soul and with what expression in his features he endured the cries of elation and the insults of the crowd that were directed at him. He did not make a sound, but from time to time he spat out the blood that was filling his mouth, and he lifted his eyes to heaven, as if he was waiting for some miraculous rescue. When his head was covered in sulphur, the executioner showed him the fire with a menacing air; but the young man, without being scared, let it be known, by a movement of his body that he was giving himself willingly to be burnt.\textsuperscript{32}

Knobelsdorf's version of events reinforces what Crespin had to say about the gruesome spectacle they both had watched: 'It was an admirable thing to see the constancy and dignity of this young man, his cheerful heart ignoring the infinity of disgraces that were heaped upon him in going to the place Maubert.'\textsuperscript{33} Two things spring out of this comparison. First, the violence of the execution clearly shocked contemporaries, and the extent of its savagery was perhaps unusual.\textsuperscript{34} Secondly, and more importantly, this comparison shows, in this instance, the \textit{Histoire des vrais témoins} to be a reliable source. For Nathaniel Weiss, this is a crucial aspect of this tale: 'It shows, one more time, that the \textit{Histoire des martyrs} is truly a \textit{History}, a collection of authentic deeds, in which one can have total confidence in its reliability'.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{31} Crespin identified \textit{Le Pâinctre} as an apprentice gold or silversmith. It is unclear who is correct.
\textsuperscript{32} A. Muntz, 'Deux exécutions à Paris pour cause d'hérésie. Lettre d'un jeune catholique allemand, témoin oculaire, 1542', \textit{BSHF}, 6 (1858), 420-3.
\textsuperscript{33} Crespin 1570, fol. 97v.
\textsuperscript{34} As was shown in the previous chapter in the case of Jean Le Clerc, testimony to such savagery was often an integral part of a martyr tale, emphasising the evil work of the persecutors in contrast to the godliness and passivity of the faithful. Again, this is a tradition that finds an echo in the history of the Early Church, as the fate of martyrs in Nicomedia was equally gruesome. See Eusebius, \textit{The History of the Church}, book VIII, ch. 6. The inhumanity of this execution, however, was unusual, as Nathaniel Weiss bore out: 'I can confirm, in effect, that no other martyr in Paris was treated with such savage barbarity at the time that this letter was written (that is to say, July 1542)'. Weiss, 'Claude Le Pâinctre, Parisien', 467.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 467.
But on the crucial matter of Le Painctre’s beliefs, Crespin’s account is frustratingly vague. If there was a new ideology sweeping into France from Switzerland, it would be expected that someone such as Le Painctre would be imbued with it. Yet Crespin tells us only that having returned to France to ‘impart to his friends the inestimable good of the knowledge of eternal salvation’, he was arrested and ‘maintained a pure and entire confession of his faith and doctrine’. 36 Happily, not only does Knobelsdorf’s letter survive, but, in addition, so does Le Painctre’s arrêt de mort. According to this, Le Painctre was found guilty ‘on several false propositions, damned doctrines, heretical and blasphemous, said by him, maintained and sustained against our holy faith, the resolutions and ordonnances of our holy Church and of the council of saints.’ 37 Knobelsdorf’s version of events is more helpful still:

The young one had made offensive remarks concerning miraculous images (here they do not merely venerate them, they come running from all parts to adore them) and he had argued that they were no different from the stone Gods of the Pagans, and that they should be thrown out of Christian temples, if they became an opportunity for idolatry. He was even accused of holding other opinions which came closer to the doctrines of Luther. 38

Furthermore, Le Painctre was not the only heretic burnt that day at the Place Maubert. Also with him was an old man, ‘a bourgeois of Paris’. According to Knobelsdorf:

Having held some opinions too freely against the monks on the subject of the invocation of the saints,... and having said that all christians are priests, he was convicted by witnesses and thrown into prison. ... He was tied up by the executioner and placed in a tipcart, beside two young men who were attached to him, dressed in white shirts and carrying burning torches in their hands. They had heard the old man speak against the monks and had not denounced him. That was their crime. Along with the old man, they were taken to the the Church of Notre-Dame, where they obtained their pardon. The old man had to retract yet again, by invoking the Holy Virgin. From there he was taken to the gallows, where he repeated that he had retracted all and that he had nothing in common with Luther. 39

36 Crespin 1570, fol. 97v.
37 Weiss, ‘Claude Le Painctre’, 468.
38 Muntz, ‘Deux exécutions à Paris pour cause d’hérésie’, 422.
39 Ibid., 422-23.
The execution of Le Painctre and the old man offers a rare opportunity to examine, in some depth, independent testimony as to the nature of their heresies. Knobelsdorff's letter identifies as a crucial aspect of Le Painctre's dissent as a strong dislike of imagery. If this iconomachy was the fundamental component of Le Painctre's heresy, then there seems little to separate him from those being prosecuted in the previous decade. In the case of the old man, a more detailed picture is created. He had obviously criticised the invocation of the saints, and his comments that he believed all Christians to be priests, is a clear echo of the Lutheran doctrine of a Priesthood of all Believers. Despite this, during his last moments, whilst at the stake, the old man repeated his denial that he had nothing in common with Luther. The problems with nomenclature have already been mentioned, and little should be drawn from such labels. As A. Fabrice, 'bon observateur des milieux humanistes parisiens' wrote to a correspondent at around this time, such labels could actually be misleading: 'Men of the sects of Zwingli and Oecolampadius, whom the populace calls Lutherans.'

Whatever the precise origin of the beliefs outlined above, they constituted an amalgam of ideas, possibly derived from all kinds of sources, native and foreign. What is more crucial in terms of the argument presented here, is that in these two cases, it seems that the nature of their heresy had barely changed from that of the evangelicals of the 1520s. The old man had attacked the power of the saints, just as Jacques Pavanès and others at Meaux had done fourteen years previously. As David Nicholls has argued, doubts about the power of the saints were the most common of all blasphemies, and clearly continued to remain so.

Yet, if these two cases are deemed to be typical in any way, it does appear that the Mass, notwithstanding the scathing tones of the Placards, was not yet the central issue for French Protestants. Heresy was focused on more tangible manifestations of Catholic orthodoxy such as images or reverence paid to saints or the holy Virgin. Here the evidence of Le Painctre's beliefs was most significant, since he was an almost archetypal Protestant. He fits almost all of the criteria set out by Natalie Davis for those most likely to become Protestants. A young man living in the urban environment of Paris, he was a member of a highly-skilled, technologically-advanced trade - precious metal-smithery. Most crucially, he had lived in Geneva for three years. Yet, none of the accounts of his execution offer evidence of him as a sacramentarian. Furthermore, the only attestations on offer in both the case of Le Painctre and

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40 The letter was written on 23 January 1535; Herminjard, vol. III. p.252; cited in Royanne, 'L'eucharistie chez les évangéliques', 568. Also, see Knecht, Francis I, p.390.
41 Also Guillaume Joubert martyred in 1526, see chapter 3, pp. 55-6.
42 He also cites the example from the Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris of the 'Lutheran' wool-worker from Meaux who performed an Amande in April 1536 for attacking images, holy water, and prayers for the dead. Nicholls, 'Popular Heresy in France', 273.
43 N. Z. Davis, Society and Culture in Early Modern France (London, 1965), p. 7. Davis specifically identifies goldsmithery as a trade in which Protestants were particularly overrepresented.
that of the old man specify opinions that appear outdated in comparison with the changing attitudes suggested by much of the secondary literature.

Throughout Crespin’s account of the martyrdoms of the early 1540s, one notices a steady improvement in the quality of the documentation he reproduces. Clearly, when the Histoire included the contents of official interrogations undergone by those waiting execution the opportunity arises to evaluate their testimony, both in terms of content and its authenticity. This provides a considerably better basis on which to judge the beliefs of Crespin’s martyrs. Such a case is that of Aymon de la Voye, martyred in Sainte-Foy in 1542.44 Arriving secretly from Geneva sometime in 1541 he was ‘among the first who secretly preached in France, and set up a church with a Reformed congregation’.45 A school teacher who had himself converted to Protestantism about 1533, it seems most likely that de la Voye came to the Agenais to be a regent or professor at the school in Ste-Foy-la-Grande.46 His activities of ‘teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the town’ soon brought about his arrest, at the beginning of December 1541.47 He was taken for trial at the Parlement of Bordeaux, where he was imprisoned for about eight months. In order to ascertain the names of his accomplices, he was brutally tortured, before being taken to the gallows and executed on 26 August 1542. He was the first Protestant to be martyred by the Parlement of Bordeaux.48

The account which appears in the Histoire des vrayes tesmoins is a sizeable one; about 3,000 words. In it, Crespin detailed not only the story of de la Voye’s arrest, torture and execution, but also his interrogation. In this is outlined de la Voye’s views on the Eucharist, Purgatory, the Papacy and the nature of the Church. The significance of this inclusion has been correctly emphasised:

Setting aside the Placards of 1534, a polemical broadsheet rather than a confession of faith and not written in France, the most complete account of the beliefs of these first French Protestants, is to be found in the record of the interrogation of Aymon de la Voye, a native

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45 Crespin 1570, fol. 99.
47 Crespin 1570, fol. 99; ‘...about three weeks before Christmas’.
48 Nicholls, Theatre of Martyrdom, 51. De La Voye was one of only eleven to be tortured by the Parlement, and one of only eighteen to be executed between 1541 and 1559. The arrêt pertaining to the arrest and execution of de la Voye are reprinted in H. Patry, Les Débuts de la Réforme Protestante en Guyenne (Bordeaux, 1912). The first arrêt refers to his arrest, the next to the naming of his witnesses (p.10), the next is his condemnation to death (p.19), and a further two relate to payments for jobs carried out during his trial and execution; one to a surgeon, the other to a carpenter (p. 20, p. 33).
of Noyon like Calvin, who founded the community of Sainte-Foy on the Dordogne, and was martyred in 1541.49

From whence Crespin obtained his account of the interrogation and martyrdom is unclear. It certainly provides a narrative that is detailed and informative. Once he had been arrested, de la Voye was allowed to call witnesses for his defence. According to Crespin, he called twenty seven or twenty eight in all. However, their testimony was not accepted, as they were deemed to be of the same sect as de la Voye, and therefore not eligible witnesses. He spent the next eight months or so in prison, remaining steadfast, 'with faith and hope'. He spent much of his captivity regretting his wicked life and rueing the fact that he would no longer be able to serve God.50

Soon enough, he was sentenced to death. Before he was to be burnt, he was 'extraordinarily tortured, more cruelly than any man before... in order for him to name his accomplices.' De la Voye defiantly refused: 'I have no accomplices other than those who know the will of God, my father; be they gentlemen, merchants, labourers or others'.51 After his torture, de la Voye was imprisoned once more. After one more week had passed, the decision to burn him was confirmed. His solitude was broken by the arrival of some monks, who had come to solicit a retraction from him. He refused to cooperate, and only when the magistrates of the Parlement arrived, did he begin to talk of his beliefs. The content of his interrogation was considerable and illuminating. Consequently, it is included here in considerable detail.

He began by talking of the Holy Supper:

Then the condemned man started to talk of the Holy Supper, and said that he believed that, at each and every time that Christians were assembled in union and peace, and teaching all the same doctrine, that with true faith and hope they come and take this bread, and that they truly transmit to the body and blood of Jesus Christ. He then went on to cite St Paul, first Corinthians, chapter eleven.52

After this citation, he returned to his own narrative:

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50 Crespin 1570, fol. 100v.
51 Ibid., fol. 100v.
52 1 Corinthians, 11:17-34.
“Therefore this is my faith, messieurs, of which I am now accused, and I understand the fundamental point in which I believe, concerning the Holy Supper: it is that all Christians share in the body of Christ, if they receive the bread and the wine presented in the Lord’s Supper in faith,”..., and he then cited passages of Scriptures and of the Gospel which spoke of the Holy Supper.  

Then the deputy chief magistrate demanded to know de la Voye’s opinions on Purgatory. In response, de la Voye cited an approximation of Isaiah 53:4. Yet, the magistrate was unimpressed by this scholarly reply. He barked back, ‘See how the Lutherans beat about the bush; we are not asking about that at all. Tell us if there is a place where souls are purged after death, if they had not done penitence during life’. De la Voye replied,

I will say to you that Jesus Christ in his death satisfied all our offenses, and we are washed in his blood: as it is said in Scripture, _Ipse lavit nos in sanguine suo. Redempti estus non auro sed sanguine Christi._ ... Have you not read St Paul in the Scriptures, when he said that we are washed of our sins by the blood of Jesus Christ.

The interrogation then moved onto the matter of Paradise. It proceeded as follows: 

**Deputy chief magistrate:** ‘Where is Paradise?’ **De la Voye:** ‘It is where God is in his majesty and glory.’ **Chief magistrate:** ‘The Canon _Animae Defunctorum_ and other Canons make mention of it, and yet in your sermons you only ever refer to it in terms of the poor.’ To which de la Voye replied that he had taught and carried out the Word of God, and as for the Canons, he had not studied them. **Chief magistrate:** ‘Do you believe in the Church that drew them up?’ To which de la Voye replied that he believed in all of the Church which was regenerated by the blood of Jesus Christ and founded on his Word. **Deputy chief magistrate:** ‘Which Church is that?’ **De la Voye:** ‘“Church” is a Greek term, and in Latin it means congregation and assembly. I say that following the promise of Jesus Christ, each and every time that the faithful are assembled together to honour God and strengthen the Christian religion, truly the holy spirit is with them.’

The interrogation moved onto the nature of the Church and its head. **Deputy chief magistrate:** ‘Who is the head of this Church?’ **De la Voye:** ‘Jesus Christ.’ **Deputy chief magistrate:**

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53 Crespin 1570, fol. 100’.  
54 ‘Surely he hath borne our grieves, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.’  
55 Crespin 1570, fol. 101’.  
56 Ibid., fol. 101’.  
57 Ibid., fol. 101’.
magistrate: ‘And not the Pope?’ De la Voye: ‘No.’ Clearly, the interrogators’ patience was beginning to wear a bit thin. The deputy chief magistrate lamented for de la Voye: ‘O poor man, I am full of pity for you. You are going to be damned.’ De la Voye replied, ‘Damned! Damned! O what consolation; but on the contrary I hope to see my God, my father. Quis me separabit a charitate Dei? An gladius, an fames, an nuditas? No, nothing will separate me from him: but I have great pity for you all.’

After his interrogation, he was taken to the place of execution for his sentence to be carried out. His defiance continued all the way to the gallows. He cited Psalms and scriptural texts. It was clear that his public pronouncements were causing the authorities some embarrassment, and the officers and sergeants demanded that the executioner proceed as quickly as possible. Despite de la Voye’s objections that he wanted to die as a Christian and not as a heretic, he was hoisted up on to the pyre and strangled before being burnt.

Clearly, as with the accounts of Estienne Brun and others, that of de la Voye belongs to a very similar tradition of martyr story. Full of biblical citations, it also contains many more subtle patterns that reflect a genesis of martyr story. For example, de la Voye is warned of his impending arrest, and advised that he should leave, but he refuses to do so, offering as justification Jesus’ story of the shepherd and his flock:

I would prefer never to have been born, than to commit such cowardice, for there is no point in the good office of Pastor if he runs away when dangers seem to be coming; as our Lord said: one should therefore remain, so that the flock would not be scattered.

De la Voye’s defiance is taken a step further, when he declares that, ‘Not only am I ready to be tied up in the town of Bordeaux, but also to die there for Christ.’ This seems a direct quotation of Paul’s words of reassurance in Acts 21:13: “Then Paul answered, ‘What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”’ De la Voye’s story fits this tradition until the very end, when upon climbing the ladder to the gallows, he pleads to the Lord to pardon those that

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58 Ibid., fol. 101'. This is an approximate citation from Romans 8:35: ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?’
59 Psalms 114, 115, John 8:47.
60 Crespin 1570, fol. 101’.
61 Crespin 1570, fol. 99'; John 10:12.
62 Crespin 1570, fol. 100'.
have persecuted him, echoing most obviously Christ on the Cross and Stephen’s words of forgiveness.63

Not only does de la Voye’s story contain biblical allegories, but also episodes recreated from a martyr tradition. For example, according to Crespin, de la Voye’s arrest was due to a corrupt legal procedure, just as Denis de Rieux’s had been.64 When told that he was to be burnt, de la Voye reacted as many before him had done, receiving the news ‘with such affection, that he rendered his enemies astonished.’65 The power of de la Voye’s message was such that he was able to convert one of the more junior monks in charge of his custody, a common feature of martyrological stories.66 Also, just as Brun’s family are brought to tempt him from his steadfastness, so de la Voye’s wife and child are brought to the concierge, where he reassured them it was God’s wish that he should die in Bordeaux.67

Yet the account of de la Voye offers the historian more than just further evidence of a pattern of martyr story-telling. In this particular case, Crespin does offer extensive details of the nature of de la Voye’s heresy. Not surprising for a teacher of the Gospel having recently departed Geneva, the opinions and beliefs of de la Voye were far more sophisticated and developed than those of other contemporary martyrs and this is something that would have been picked up on by Crespin.

What do the beliefs attributed by Crespin to de la Voye tell us of the character of his heresy? Clearly, he rejects central Catholic beliefs such as the Papacy, as well as the idea of Purgatory and the sacrament of penance. De la Voye clearly believed in the unique nature of the ultimate sacrifice of Christ: ‘I will say to you that Jesus Christ in his death satisfied all our offenses, and we are washed in his blood.’68 As he says, the fundamental aspect of his faith was his Protestant view of the Eucharist:

I understand the fundamental point in which I believe, concerning the Holy Supper: it is that all Christians share in the body of Christ, if they receive the bread and the wine presented in the Lord’s Supper in faith.

His clearly-expressed opinion on the Eucharist was certainly not sacramentarian:

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63 Acts 7:60.
64 Crespin 1570, fol. 100’. See chapter 3.
65 Crespin 1570, fol. 100’. De la Voye goes on to cite Philippians 1:21-23.
66 For instance, Simon Lalod, martyred in 1553, converted his executioner. Chapter 5, p. 136. This was also a literary convention that appeared in Adriaan van Haemstede’s Geschiedenisse der womer Martelaren of 1559. See Pettegree, ‘Adriaan van Haemstede: the Heretic as Historian’, pp. 59-76.
67 Crespin 1570, fol. 101’.
68 Crespin 1570, fol. 101’.
At each and every time that Christians were assembled in union and peace, and teaching all the same doctrine, that with true faith and hope they come and take this bread, and that they truly communicate (communiquent) the body and blood of Jesus Christ. He then went on to cite St Paul, first Corinthians, chapter eleven.⁶⁹

Also, his definition of a Church was Protestant in nature: 'I say that following the promise of Jesus Christ, each and every time that the faithful are assembled together to honour God and strengthen the Christian religion, truly the holy spirit is with them.'⁷⁰

If Crespin's account is reliable, then it is the first occasion in the Histoire des vrais témoins that such a firm and detailed refutation of Catholic doctrine is presented. Moreover, his martyrdom does indicate that teachers such as he were beginning to bring their ideas into France, from places such as Geneva. In respect of this and his more advanced theology, de la Voye would appear to represent a turning point in the story of the development of Protestantism in France, as portrayed in Crespin. There seems to have been a shift in the focus of attack offered by the evangelicals. Whereas martyrs in previous years had concentrated their dissent on ideas such as the Virgin Mary, the saints and the Papacy, the 1540s began to see a type of heresy that concentrated criticism on the more magical elements of the Catholic faith, such as the Mass. Drawing on a larger pool of examples than exists in Crespin, David Nicholls has identified a similar pattern, 'a movement through the most obviously venal aspects of catholicism to the magical elements.'⁷¹

However, it seems prudent to bear in mind that de la Voye's status and education made him a rather untypical figure in the French Reformation. Taking into account his profession as a teacher of the gospel recently arrived from Geneva, it is difficult to construct a picture of him as representative of the beliefs of the first French Protestants, as Émile Léonard does.⁷² The evidence presented here does not support claims such as those put forward by Marcel Royannez:

⁶⁹ Article ten of the Augsburg Confession of 1530: 'Our churches teach that the body and blood of Christ are truly present and are distributed to those who eat in the Supper of the Lord.' Cited in B. Lohse, A Short History of Christian Doctrine (revised, Philadelphia, 1985), p. 176.

⁷⁰ Crespin 1570, fol. 101'. Although this echoes Calvin's Institutes, book IV, p. 1023; it is more closely identified with Matthew 18:20: 'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'

⁷¹ Nicholls, 'Popular Heresy in France', 273-4. His observations, in turn, were based upon a similar pattern identified by Alistair Duke, in "The face of popular religious dissent in the Low Countries, 1520-1530", in his Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries (London, 1990), pp. 29-57.

However, the period around the years 1538-1540 is the last in the course of which those condemned for blaspheming the sacrament are sacramentaires, for from now on these were Calvinists confused with the sacramentaires who were condemned to this title.  

Furthermore, from the evidence found in the Histoire, it is even more difficult to substantiate his claims concerning Calvin's influence in the first two years of the 1540s: "The petit traité de la Sainte Cène of 1541 and le catéchisme of 1542 established his doctrine as uncontested amongst the faithful of France."  

This is also the period cited as the time when the influence of Calvin and Genevan theology began to direct the future of French Protestantism. The appearance of first his treatise on the Holy Supper in 1541, his Catechism in 1542 and ultimately the French edition of his Institution of the Christian Religion in 1542 all created what seemed to be a concerted attempt to take control of the direction of the French Reformation.  

The period before the establishment of the first Calvinist church in France in Paris in 1555 has for a long time been the centre of much debate. Forty years ago, Robert Kingdon painted a picture of French Protestantism in which Calvin and Geneva were writ large.  

The influence of Calvin's writings and church structure in his native land has been further underlined by more recent works such as those of Janine Garrisson, Robert Mandrou and Francis Higman, all of whom maintain that Calvin succeeded in drawing together the differing strands of evangelism in France to form a body of dissent whose doctrine was coherently based on that of Geneva.  

In recent times, the book that has done most to reinforce this perception of the ideas of Calvin arriving in France at just the right time to augment and shape the French evangelical movement is Henry Heller's The Conquest of Poverty of 1986. According to Heller, the problem of controlling the democratic element of the reformation among other reasons accounts for the increasing influence of John Calvin from the 1540s onward. He was not only able to master the popular reformation in France but to make it the basis of an effective religious and political movement. Through his intellectual and political

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73 Royannez, 'L'eucharistie chez les évangéliques', 569.
74 Ibid., 570-1.
leadership a subterranean and fragmented movement of reformation gradually became a cohesive force challenging the existing ecclesiastical and political order.\textsuperscript{77}

Within this schema, two episodes derived from the annals of the \textit{Histoire des vroys tesmoins} provide Heller with evidence on which to base his opinion that this was the time that Calvin’s influence was beginning to assert itself. He writes:

But in fact Calvin’s influence over the French evangelical movement long predates the fifteen-fifties.... The church at Strasbourg organized by Calvin served as a model for the church instituted by Pierre Le Clerc and Etienne Mangin at Meaux. At Rouen the martyr Constantin had a passage from the \textit{Christian Institutes} on his lips at the time of his death in 1542.\textsuperscript{78}

In chapter two of this study, I have already dealt with the potential problem of interpreting the testimony of Constantin, as it appears in the \textit{Histoire des vroys tesmoins}, in such a decisive manner.\textsuperscript{79} As for the church at Meaux, the account of the origins of this church and execution of 14 of its members in the autumn of 1546 is one of the most momentous episodes contained in the \textit{Histoire}.\textsuperscript{80} The vibrancy of the evangelical community at Meaux in the 1520s has already been touched upon in the previous chapter. The persecution that followed did not succeed in dissipating the evangelicals from the town forever. According to Henry Heller, it

\textsuperscript{77} Heller, \textit{The Conquest of Poverty}, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., p. 116.
\textsuperscript{79} See above, chapter 2, pp. 33-4. This story seems to have come to Crespin via a poem written in the martyrs’ honour by a learned man of Normandy; Crespin-Goulart 1885-9, vol. I, p. 362.
\textsuperscript{80} In between the story of Constantin and the church at Meaux, there are six accounts of limited interest to this study. First, there is the inclusion of the Sorbonne’s “Twenty-Six Articles of Faith”, of 31 July 1543, coupled with refutation of each point made by the \textit{Sorbonistes}. This is prefaced with an account of the abjuration of François Landry, \textit{curé} of Sainte-Croix-de-la-Cité, and the flight of Clément Marot. Crespin’s inclusion of these articles is taken directly from J. Calvin, \textit{Les Articles de la sacrée Faculté de théologie de Paris, concernans nostre foy et religion chrétienne, et forme de prêcher. Avec le remède contre la poison} (Geneva, J. Girard, 1544). It also appeared in Latin that year. Crespin 1570, fols. 106'-114'. The articles of the Sorbonne are followed in the collection by two accounts which sketch only the barest of outlines. The account of François Bribard, secretary to Jean du Bellay, Cardinal and Bishop of Paris, and executed 8 January 1544 amounts to only some 180 words. That of Jean du Bec, a young cleric from near Sézanne, executed in Troyes, 8 July 1542, amounts to only 80 words, fols. 114". According to Penny Roberts, du Bec had spent some time at the French church at Strasbourg, but Crespin makes no mention of this. See P. Roberts, \textit{A city in conflict. Troyes during the French Wars of Religion} (Manchester, 1996), p. 36. Following these two is the account of the persecution of the peoples of Mérindol and Cabrières, which will be discussed later. Slightly longer than the accounts of du Bec and Bribard is the account of Guillaume Husson at around 550 words, which first appears in the \textit{Troisième Partie du receuil des martyrs} of 1556, pp. 12-14. According to Crespin, Husson, an \textit{apothecary} fled Blois in 1544 and arrived in Rouen. He fled after spreading “small booklets containing doctrine of the Christian religion”; but was apprehended on his way to Dieppe, having been betrayed by his landlady, an old widow. He had his tongue cut out before being executed. Crespin 1570, fols. 131". In fact, Crespin was badly mistaken about the date of Husson’s execution. He was executed on 30 August 1535. Finally, there is an account of the persecution in Metz; a compilation of three works by Guillaume Farel. See Crespin-Goulart 1885-9, vol. I, p. 440.
was a subsistence crisis of the mid-1540s which stimulated the reappearance of a heretical community in the town.\textsuperscript{81} This community became so popular and attracted unprecedented numbers of worshippers, that it soon came to the attention of the authorities. Sixty or so were arrested in September 1546, fourteen of whom were executed. Their death 'became one of the most celebrated events in the martyrology of sixteenth century Protestantism'.\textsuperscript{82}

Crespin was at pains to highlight the strong heretical heritage between the Reformers of the 1520s and those of the second generation. The passage mentions the struggle of the 'enemies of the Gospel' to prevent the truth being proclaimed, and mentions in considerable detail the experiment under Briçonnet and its ultimate failure. Yet, despite the hardships inflicted upon them, the faithful kept up their vigil and gradually began to meet in hiding. The faithful of Meaux gathered together in hiding ‘like the example of the sons of the Prophets from the time of Ahab, and of the Christians of the primitive Church’.\textsuperscript{83} Contrary to hopes of the congregation, ‘superstitions and Papist vilanies’ were growing every day, so, in 1546, they decided to form their own church. For a model of this, the congregation looked to ‘the example of the French Church at Strasbourg, which several of them had diligently visited and considered.’

For leadership of this congregation, they turned to two men: Estienne Mangin and Pierre Le Clerc. Indeed, it was Mangin, a ‘man of substance’, in whose house they held their services.\textsuperscript{84} Le Clerc was chosen because he was a man ‘well-versed in holy letters, most especially in French’ and importantly, he was the brother of Jean Le Clerc, previously driven from Meaux in the 1520s. Led by these two, around forty or fifty elected Le Clerc, on the basis of his erudition, ‘to declare the Word of God to them and administer the Sacraments’. A more detailed description of his tasks is given by Crespin. These included gathering the congregation together every Sunday and holy day in Mangin’s house, where he would read aloud the Scriptures and they would pray, sing Psalms and hymns and, significantly, ‘celebrate the Holy Supper all together, according to the institution and ordonnance of our Lord Jesus Christ.’\textsuperscript{85}

The new church proved popular, and soon it was attended by three to four hundred worshippers, coming from as far away as five or six leagues from the town. Clearly, the sheer size of the congregation would have quickly attracted the attention of the authorities, and the

\textsuperscript{81}Heller, \textit{The Conquest of Poverty}, p. 63; ‘At Meaux the vulnerability of the cloth industry in the face of competition at home and abroad as well as the presence of the humanist reformers accelerated the development of popular heresy’.

\textsuperscript{82}Ibid., p. 66; Heller offers a précis of the story of the church at Meaux, based on Crespin’s account, pp. 63-69.

\textsuperscript{83}Crespin 1570, fol. 161.’

\textsuperscript{84}According to Heller, Mangin was wealthy enough to rent three houses in the Marché area of the town in 1530. Heller, \textit{The Conquest of Poverty}, p. 64.

\textsuperscript{85}Crespin 1570, fol. 161.’
church was warned to keep their guard. Soon enough, the myrmidons of the law came to investigate, arriving whilst the congregation were gathered, listening to Le Clerc read from the Bible. They came in just as he was reciting a passage from first Corinthians. Requesting patience from the lieutenant du bailli as they finished their service, Le Clerc and 61 others then gave themselves up. The account in the Histoire remarked how peacefully the congregation went, considering their numbers would have allowed them to have fought their arrest. It seems that during their walk to prison, they passed along the streets ‘all joyous and singing Psalms, principally the seventy-ninth’. 

The account in the Histoire then includes the decision of the court, taken from the registers of the Parlement of Paris, which lists those condemned to burn. The extract is very informative about the nature of their punishment. The burnings were to take place as near as possible to the site of the illicit assembly, that is to say Mangin’s house, and they were to include the destruction of the books found in their possession. The fourteen were all to be tortured, and those that had been saved from the pyre were faced with a variety of punishments including public amendes, whippings, banishment, and attendance at their co-religionists’ execution. After the execution, a public procession was ordered through the town, the climax of which was a sermon by a doctor of theology. Mangin’s house was to be destroyed and in its place a chapel was to be constructed where a great Mass was to be celebrated every Thursday. The belongings confiscated from the prisoners would be set aside to pay for this. The decree also ordered that all residents of the town were to hand in ‘all books that are of the Holy Scripture in French, or concerning Christain doctrine’ to the authorities. Crespin then continued with his narrative, which outlined their interrogation, the execution and the following day’s procession.

Quite clearly, this episode is amongst the most significant of all in the history of French Protestantism. On one level, the scale of the executions was unprecedented. Not just the sheer numbers, but also the ritualised nature of the killings has attracted much comment and analysis. Furthermore, and more crucially in terms of this study, the church at Meaux was a considerable departure from what had gone before. The church was manifestly a much more sophisticated and developed centre of heresy than had been previously mentioned in the Histoire des vrais tesmoins. This was a organised, structured church as opposed to individually-inspired outbreaks of heresy; and it was this that guaranteed its destruction. With

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86 In response to the warnings of others, they echoed Acts 27:34 in their reply, that their hairs were counted, and that they would only do what pleases the Lord. It was a response in the classic martyr tradition. See chapter 2. Crespin 1570, fol. 161r. ‘O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.’ It appears that this Psalm, translated by Marot, was often sung by the Huguenots; Crespin-Gouart 1885-9, vol. I, p. 495n.
87 Crespin 1570, fols. 161v-163v.
its own minister, its own vernacular readings and scriptures and most crucially, its own administration of the sacraments, the church at Meaux was a real threat to the integrity of the established Church.

It is clear that it was this aspect of the church which most concerned the authorities. The decision of the court specified that the cause of their imprisonment was not just their crime of heresy and blasphemy, but also their attendance at 'private conventicles, and illicit assemblies'.\textsuperscript{89} Those who had to perform an \textit{amende} had to cry out loud that 'they had been found in conventicles in the house of Estienne Mangin, in order to hear readings in French by Pierre Le Clerc.' The \textit{arrêt} went on to instruct the speaker at the procession expressly to reproach:

the afore mentioned conventicles and private assemblies, readings and interpretations by artisans and laymen of damned and condemned French books and of dogmatisations and abusive preaching, which were carried out by the said laity on the holy Gospels.\textsuperscript{90}

The law's preoccupation with the establishment of a separate church was fuelled by its concern at the administration of the Eucharist amongst the evangelicals. In describing the fate that was to befall Mangin's house:

It was ordered that the said house of Estienne Mangin, in which the said conventicles and forbidden readings on the holy Scripture were held by the said Pierre Le Clerc, expounding and interpreting it presumptuously and recklessly; and also the said blasphemous and scandalous Holy Supper mentioned in the said case, ... will be destroyed and raised to the ground.\textsuperscript{91}

Not only was this a heinous crime in the eyes of the court, but it was also a turning point in the development of Protestantism in France. Consequently, its existence and structure has been highly emphasised in the secondary literature. As Marcel Royannez has written:

The first church \textit{dressée} whose faithful were pursued and accused of having celebrated the Holy Supper were those of Meaux in 1546; Meaux was yet again at the forefront. The judicial documents and the account of Jean Crespin do not give a single revelation of the

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., fol. 161\textsuperscript{v}.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., fol. 162\textsuperscript{r}.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., fol. 162\textsuperscript{v}.
condemned concerning the Holy Supper. But Crespin indicates that they had sent some of them to Strasbourg and had modelled themselves on this church: one can conclude with near certainty that they were professing the same doctrine and using the same liturgy.92

On the basis of the same evidence, Henry Heller has come to largely the same conclusions. Heller has seen the fact that Strasbourg served as a model for the church at Meaux as crucial. Based on this, he has developed his argument even further than Marcel Royannez has done:

The implantation of a church at Meaux in the mid-fifteen forties was an important milestone on the way to Calvin's ascendency over French Protestantism. The institution of the Meaux church is commemorated as a decisive event in both the Actes des Martyrs of Jean Crespin and the Histoire ecclésiastique. It has always since occupied a major place in Calvinist historiography. In part the spectacular martyrdom of Meaux is responsible for the attention given to it by Protestants. But the church of Meaux was celebrated also because it was the first place in France where a facsimile of the ecclesiastical order established by Calvin was established on French soil.93

There can be no doubt that any church structure modelled on that of Strasbourg would in turn be based on the ideas of John Calvin and Martin Bucer. However, the only evidence on which to rest the far-reaching remarks of both Henry Heller and Marcel Royannez seems to be Crespin's narrative. Crespin wrote that when the faithful of Meaux decided to form a church "they were mainly inspired by the example of the French Church at Strasbourg, which several of them had diligently visited and considered." 94 In chapter two, it has been argued that in describing the duties of the newly-elected minister (Le Clerc) Crespin was describing what he believed should have taken place at the formation of a church, rather than what actually did take place. In this way, the Histoire would carry out its function as a teaching-aid for clandestine gatherings. But by the same token, it is also possible that in Crespin's identification of Strasbourg as the main inspiration of the Meaux church's set-up, he was merely highlighting the existence of a model on which others could base their inchoate churches. Clearly, it was possible that Mangin and Le Clerc had themselves visited Strasbourg. But it is also the case that when combined with the description of the duties of a

92 Royannez, 'L'eucharistie chez les évangéliques', 572.
94 Crespin 1570, fol. 161v.
minister which were a classic formulation of the marks of a Calvinist church, Crespin’s naming of Strasbourg provided ready-made guidance for his earliest readers.  

Likewise, the theologians came to Le Clerc on the day of the execution to dispute with him one last time, especially on the issue of the Holy Supper. Crespin relates his obstinate reply:

But neither Picard nor the others knew what to say when Le Clerc asked them on what their transubstantiation was based, and if when eating the bread or when drinking the wine, they had ever sensed some taste of flesh or of blood.

Without doubt, this choice of words is hugely significant. In addition it was possibly quite deliberately careful, because although not theologically sophisticated, this wording, with its implicit rejection of any real presence (‘en maschant le pain, ou en buvant le vin’) distances Le Clerc’s congregation and, in turn, Crespin’s readership from Lutheran teaching as well as expressly denouncing the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. By attributing to Le Clerc a point of view aligning him to the Calvinist mainstream, Crespin offered strong direction to his readership. At a time in the 1550s when illicit churches in France were appearing faster than ever before, in telling the story of the church at Meaux, in the Recueil of 1554 and subsequent editions, he would have provided a model example of how a church should be established and organised.

An episode such as the mass execution of the congregation at Meaux in 1546 would have been well-known all over Europe. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that Crespin was so well-informed about what went on in the town in the autumn of 1546. Indeed, Crespin based much of his account on the registers of the Parlement. Not only is just under half of the account taken up with a word for word inclusion of the arrêt of the Parlement, but that is followed with a section entitled ‘L’execution du susdit Arest’, also based on extracts from the Parlement.

Clearly then, Crespin’s account in the Histoire was written with the help of a reliable source. Nonetheless, Crespin was still writing an account that had to fit in with some of the traditions of writing outlined previously. For example, when the condemnation were taken in a tipcart to the site of the execution, the registers of the Parlement tell us that: ‘On the said day

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95 The account of the church at Meaux in the first edition of the martyrology included the references to both Strasbourg and the description of the minister’s duties; Crespin 1554, pp. 270-271.

96 Crespin 1570, fol. 163.  

97 The court registers are faithfully reproduced in the Histoire. See 'Documents inédits et originaux. Arrêt de Meaux', BSHP, 46 (1897), 658-665. See also Harg, La France Protestante, vol VI, pp. 12-14.

98 See 'Documents inédits et originaux. Supplement au bulletin Molido; La forme de l’exécution dudit Arrest', BSHP, 47 (1898), 51-54.
two doctors ordered by the said Chamber, that is to say our master Maillart and our master Picart, are to take themselves to Meaux, in order to reduce and convert the said blasphemers. Crespin wrote of their involvement, but with some embellishment, writing that Maillart and Picart rode alongside the tipcarts on mules, trying to persuade them to 'divert from the truth.' Echoing the actions of Jesus in the desert, as well as other martyrs, Le Clerc turned to the theologians and said, 'Leave us Satan: let us think of our God.'

Furthermore, whilst on the journey to the gallows, the condemned passed through the forest of Livry. Here again, Crespin took the opportunity to furnish his narrative with a reference to the Early Church. According to the Histoire, the procession was met by a man from a neighbouring village, a weaver who followed the carts, imploring them all 'to perseverre in the confession of the truth.' The stranger was arrested for his actions, but not before he had turned the mood of the condemned from one of despair to elation. He was 'like an Angel from the sky voluntarily offering himself.' Crespin goes on to inform the reader of the background of this weaver, writing that because his name was unknown, he was given the name of Adactus, a martyr of the Early Church, who had met up with other Christians in order that he could accompany them to the gallows. Such literary devices were taken a stage further by Crespin with the inclusion of a near-miraculous happening:

At the time of the execution, which was the two o'clock in the afternoon; as they left prison, the executioner asked first for the tongue of Estienne Mangin, which he gave voluntarily; and after the executioner had cut it off, whilst spitting blood, he still spoke quite intelligibly, saying three times: "The Name of God must be blessed."

Notwithstanding these embellishments, the account of the church at Meaux does prompt some important reflections as to the state of Protestantism in France at this time. First, it must be acknowledged that Meaux was hardly typical. As Marcel Royannez noted, it was the forerunner of other churches in hiding. Crucially, it was able to call upon a local legacy of dissent.

In terms of doctrine and practice, the church at Meaux, as has been noted, was manifestly more developed than previous heresy chronicled in the Histoire. Crespin makes clear that the fundamentals of the church were the reading of scripture in the vernacular, the singing of

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99 Ibid., 51.
100 Crespin 1570, fol. 163. See chapter 2. Mark 8:33, Matt 4:10, Matt 16:23
101 Ibid., fols. 163⁴. Adactus was a distinguished magistratus (finance minister), martyred under Diocletian. Eusebius, History of the Church, book VIII, ch. 11.
102 Crespin 1570, fol. 163⁵.
103 Royannez, 'L'eucharistie chez les évangéliques', 572.
Psalms and the taking of communion. Beyond that, I believe it is difficult to make a strong case for the church at Meaux to be described as clearly Calvinist in its orientation, as Heller and Royannez have suggested. To do so is to interpret Crespin's evidence far too literally. When one bears in mind that even this well-documented account contains clearly allegorical elements, and the general tendency (already highlighted in several earlier instances) to overstate the degree of conformity with later Swiss Reformed forms, to regard this church as the first proto-Calvinist community within France is to argue far beyond what the evidence will bear.

The Histoire des vrayes tesmoins also describes an even more infamous episode of the 1540s. Indeed, at just over twenty-seven thousand words, the history of massacre of the Vaudois people of Mérolindol and Cabrières, is one of the longest accounts to appear in the martyrology.\(^{104}\) It was not, however, always so extensive. In the earliest edition Crespin was able to be brief since he intended to expand this history into a separate publication.\(^{105}\) This publication duly appeared the following year, and again the year after.\(^{106}\) It was also in 1556 that Crespin's Histoire memorable de la persecution de Merindol et Cabrières was incorporated in the martyrology for the first time.\(^{107}\) It continued to occupy a significant part in further editions; and more importantly became the standard work on the massacres, copied and borrowed for other publications.\(^{108}\) Ludwig Rabus, Johannes Sleidan, Flacius Illyricus, Heinrich Pantaleon and John Foxe all relied on Crespin's collection for their version of the persecution of the Vaudois.\(^{109}\) The quality of the documents contained in Crespin's narrative make it clear that Crespin relied on person or persons very close to the persecution; perhaps he received his information from someone exiled from Luberon to Geneva sometime after 1545.\(^{110}\)

\(^{104}\) Crespin 1570, fols. 115v-131r. The account is inserted between the accounts of Jean Du Bec and that of Guillaume Husson.


\(^{107}\) Crespin 1560, fols. 88v-117v; Crespin 1564, pp. 189-221.


The Vaudois of Provence had faced spasmodic persecution for much of the first decades of the sixteenth century. The turning point came in the winter of 1540 when, inspired by reports that the Vaudois were preparing to arm themselves against attack, the Parlement issued the arrêt de Méridol of November 1540 which ordered that the village of Méridol should be destroyed. Francis I, however, directed Guillaume du Bellay, his representative in Provence, to report on the life and morals of the Vaudois. Du Bellay reported that despite their unusual practices, they were loyal and God-fearing. Consequently, Francis pardoned the Vaudois, on the condition that they recant their faith within three months. For the next two years, the royal policy towards the Vaudois was marked by indecision as Francis alternated plans for an attack with a series of pardons. But in 1543 the fate of the Vaudois was sealed. Local pressure for their extermination grew rapidly with the succession in December of Jean Meynier, baron d’Oppède as first president of the Parlement of Aix. Not only was Oppède more intolerant than his predecessor, but he also sought a pretext to to seize the land of his neighbour, the Dame de Cental, who owned several Vaudois villages. His appointment led the Vaudois to organise themselves for self-defence, which in turn only angered the authorities further, fuelled as it was by d’Oppède’s rumours of sedition by the Vaudois. On 1 January 1545, therefore, Francis ordered the arrêt de Méridol to be carried out. On 18 April, the army fell upon the Vaudois. Villages were decimated, with Cabrières and Méridol amongst the last to be destroyed.

Crespin made full use of the information available to him. It is a remarkably full narrative, crammed with what is claimed to be original documents. He saw the importance of constructing the history of these unfortunate people, whom he saw as fellow sufferers. As he himself wrote, ‘For it is not a question of two or three martyrs who have endured death: but a multitude of persons, men, women and children, who have all suffered acts of cruelty.’ Keen to associate these noble peoples with the Reformed, Crespin begins his tale with an account of the synod in Méridol of 1530, which drew up a list of points of disputed doctrine, and sent Georges Morel and Pierre Masson to visit Oecolampadius in Basle, Capito and Bucer in Strasbourg, and Haller in Berne. Although Morel returned safely with books and papers, Masson was arrested in Dijon, where his fate is unclear. Their contacts with the Reform
prompted the instruction that they were to appear in front of the court of the Parlement of Aix. Only one of them appeared, so the Parlement issued their arrêt de Méridol. Whilst the members of the Parlement waited for the arrêt to be carried out, a bookseller, who sold bibles in French and Latin, was martyred in the town of Avignon.\textsuperscript{114}

What follows is an account of how the first President Chassané felt uneasy at implementing the arrêt, feeling its purpose was only to scare the Vaudois, rather than actually to be implemented. Du Bellay’s report led to a King’s pardon, the lettres patentes, which are reproduced in the Histoire, as is the confession of faith which they sent to the king.\textsuperscript{115} Crespin wrote how the confession was sent to Cardinal Sadolet, and his reply is included in the account.\textsuperscript{116} The procedure of the commissioners sent to Méridol in March 1542 to persuade the inhabitants to abjure are then included ‘on account of the excellent responses of the poor peasants, against the most cunning of the court of the Parlement of Provence.’\textsuperscript{117} As has been mentioned, the death of the President Chassané and the succession of Meynier sealed the fate of the Vaudois, and this is something recognised by Crespin. He goes on to write how Meynier waited three months from receiving permission in January to carry out the arrêt until April so that he could make use of the bandes de Piémont as his army.\textsuperscript{118}

The actual massacre is described in great detail. Crespin included prayers said by the faithful as they awaited their fate. Villages were burnt, with many fleeing to the hills, as the army was under orders to ‘kill all those in the villages mentioned, without missing the ill, the elderly, nor young children.’\textsuperscript{119} At the village of Loris, about one league from Méridol, huge numbers were sent to the galleys without trial. Finding little resistane at Méridol itself, the village was razed, and a young imbecile Maurizi Blanc was questioned and shot. At Cabrières, the village was bombarded. Meynier agreed to allow the villagers safe passage if they would open the gates, yet once in the open they were either massacred or taken prisoner and sold as slaves. The troops then marched to a church where they massacred around 800 of the elderly, women and children. Then:

\textsuperscript{114} Gonin at the pyre, the judges decided to drown him by night in the Isère in April 1536. His execution by drowning may be a sign that the judges regarded him as an Anabaptist.

\textsuperscript{115} Crespin 1570, fol. 188'. Crespin writes that the bookseller was condemend to death and had two bibles strapped to his neck. As a result of this, all of those in the town were to hand in their copies of the bible, or face death.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., fols. 119'-122'. Cameron argues that Crespin is the only source for this confession, as all other extant copies seem to be derived from his version. Cameron, The Reformation of the Heretics, p.152.

\textsuperscript{117} Crespin wrote that the cardinal advised them that they only needed to change a few phrases, and that they would be welcome at his house the next time they were passing. Crespin 1570, fol. 123'. Others have argued that Sadolet was not so sympathetic. See R. M. Douglas, Jacopo Sadolet 1477-1547, Humanist and Reformer (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), pp. 186-94.

\textsuperscript{118} Crespin 1570, fol. 124'.

\textsuperscript{119} Knecht, Francis I, p. 405.

\textsuperscript{120} Crespin 1570, fol. 127'.

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In order to provide ample testimony of those matters written here and especially to provide evidence of the recent cruelties of the enemies, we have inserted here the letter of a person who was in the company of the said Oppede: who faithfully produced in writing all the procedures and processes of this affair.\textsuperscript{120}

This letter provides an even grislier story than that offered by Crespin:

Most of the poor workers were killed without resistance, women and girls raped; pregnant women and new born babies murdered: the breasts of several women were cut, one saw babies dying of hunger by the breast of their mothers who were dead. Never has one seen such cruelty and tyranny, all was pillaged, burnt and sacked. D'Oppede sent more than 800 men to the galleys of Captain Poulins. (In Cabrières) thirty women, most of whom were pregnant, were imprisoned in a barn, which was set alight. These poor women cried so bitterly, that a soldier had pity on them, and opened a door; but as they left, the cruel President killed them and chopped them into pieces, until the stomachs of these mothers were open, and the babies were trampled underfoot inside their stomachs.\textsuperscript{121}

Estimates vary as to the numbers who died. Protestant and Imperial propagandists both offered what seem to be inflated figures to suit their own purposes. Whatever the truth, the scale of the barbarity shocked all of Protestant Europe. Francis I approved of the action, and informed those who complained that it was none of their business. In time however, the complaints of the Dame de Cental, who had suffered heavy damage to her property in the violence, precipitated an inquiry during the reign of Henry II. All but one of the main protagonists were acquitted, although in Meynier's case, he had not long recovered his lands after the trial before dying in 1558.\textsuperscript{122}

It is outside the scope of this study to attempt to verify all the information found in the Histoire. What is more immediately interesting for our purposes is to see how Crespin constructed the details of the history into a martyrdom story. It is clear that he has adapted a formula used previously to tell the story of individual cases, into a form appropriate to a massacre of many thousands.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., fols. 129'-131'.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., fols. 130'-131'.
\textsuperscript{122} Knecht, Francis I, p. 406. At the end of his history, Crespin promises the reader that the rest of the story will be told later, including the 'manifest judgements of God.' Crespin 1570, fol. 131'.
The importance for Crespin of establishing a historical heritage for sixteenth-century evangelicals has already been noted in chapter two; and this is something that he is very quick to do at the beginning of his history of the Vaudois. They had come from Piedmont some 200 years ago, and having heard that the gospel was being preached in 'some towns of Germany and Switzerland, they sent two from amongst them ... in order to confer on the doctrine of the Gospel with the ministers, and in particular to have their advice on some points about which they were having difficulty.' Thus was placed in the mind of the reader that these emissaries of the Vaudois had looked to the Reformed for advice and therefore established a link between the two parties. The martyrology was keen to associate the Reformed with this most noble and rustic of heresies, "from the manner of their life and conversation they showed that they feared God."\(^{123}\)

Yet as has been shown, the traditions of the martyrology did not demand doctrinal conformity in all cases, nor in all matters. More important to the compiler was the identification of good and evil within the narrative. God and Satan are clearly identified, if necessary, in a very exaggerated form. The faithful are identified as peaceful, God-fearing, simple holy people; and the authorities as devious, corrupt and eventually, as has been seen, grimly barbaric.

Originally constructed as a separate volume, 'La Persecution et Saccagement de Merindol & Cabrieres, etc., peuple fidele en Provence' is in many respects an entity in itself within the martyrology. Whilst the endless insertion of original documents does nothing for the readability of the history, it does testify to its veracity. Yet amongst the plethora of documentation, Crespin has carefully constructed a specific and directed martyr account. The history is presented as a straight-forward struggle between good and evil. Certain characters are identified as reasonable and law-abiding men, who sympathised with the humility of the victims. These include the King, Chassané, Sadoleto and even the foot soldiers responsible for the killings. Their honesty is compromised by the deviousness, the secrecy and the blood-lust of men such as Durandi, Cavaillon and most especially Meynier.

To concentrate on the nature of the heresy of the Vaudois would be misleading. They were themselves from a different tradition, which would barely illustrate the spread of heresy in France. Crespin's portrayal of them is ultimately as simple folk, humble and God-fearing, as in the best rustic tradition. Yet, he does also draw out the similarities between the the Vaudois and his own tradition. The community relied on the purity of the word of Scripture, above all else. The obscurity of the Bible in Latin was all that was bad about the Roman Church. In the story of the bookseller martyred in Avignon, the emphasis is firmly placed on

\(^{123}\) Crespin 1570, fol. 115\(^{e}\).
the fact that he had been selling the Bible and New Testament in French and that this was forbidden. Crespin reproduces the report of du Bellay into the lifestyle of the Vaudois. In it it is reported that they did not pay homage to Saints, images or crosses. They did not hold Mass, nor take Holy water, nor go on Pilgrimmages for pardon, and they did not cross themselves when there was thunder. This description again emphasised the simplicity of the beliefs, the contrast with the superstitions of the Roman Church. On this level, Crespin saw similarities with his own beliefs and a long tradition of dissent, the Vaudois included. Yet although certain parallels can be drawn between the doctrines of both groups, for the martyrologist there was no need to find doctrinal consensus. The Vaudois merited inclusion as they were victims of persecution at the hands of the church of the Antichrist, just as the faithful in France saw themselves. What the Histoire hoped to impress on its readership was this shared tradition at the hands of the evil machinations of the Catholic church.

It is worth considering at this point what function this extremely extended narrative plays within the wider framework of Crespin's collection. This decision to include the Vaudois massacres within his martyrology rather than leave them as a separately published work was one of some significance, not least because it extended the definition of a martyr quite considerably. For this Crespin at least had an important biblical precedent in the massacre of the innocents. To some Protestant martyrologists, the Bethlehem massacres rather than the death of Stephen marked the beginning of Christian martyrology.

But in addition, the massacre of the Vaudois served an important strategic purpose for Crespin. By including such a lengthy account of the Vaudois massacres, Crespin corrected at a stroke the previous comparative lack of attention to the growth of evangelical communities in the south of France. Although the Vaudois could hardly be presented as Calvinists, they could play thus an important symbolic role in emphasising the solidarity between Geneva and the new Christian communitites in Languedoc and the south. Crespin's inclusion of this narrative came at a time when the churches of the south were enjoying their period of most expansive growth, an expansion which soon matched and even outstripped the better-known planting of churches in northern France. Crespin's celebration of this distinguished precursor of southern evangelism was thus extremely timely.

The collection of martyrs in the Histoire for these years does indicate a change in the nature of heresy. During these years, several issues stand out. The story of de la Voye reinforces the widely held acceptance that the evangelical movement was marked with an

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124 Ibid., fol. 118v.
125 Ibid., fol. 119v.
increasing criticism of the Mass and Catholic interpretations of the Eucharist. In addition, many other Catholic traditions and doctrines come under attack. Yet, it also true that the evidence to be found in the martyrology does make it clear that such characters, so advanced in their dissent, were far from the norm. The case of Le Painctre makes it clear that other criticisms were being voiced at this time, such as attacks on the visual elements of Catholic belief that had been evident for many decades. Furthermore, a rigorous approach to the evidence in the *Histoire* has underlined the difficulty in relying heavily on the collection. From the accounts of this period, the links between the evangelicals and Geneva are not so strong as has been described. Without a doubt, the cases of Le Painctre and de la Voye show that Geneva was an increasingly significant factor, but the weaknesses of the evidence in the cases of Constantin and of the church at Meaux suggest that the influence of John Calvin has not been so pervasive as has been suggested.

Nevertheless, those historians who have emphasised the importance of the community at Meaux do accurately reflect Crespin’s own sense in a perceptible change in the nature of heresy in these years. From this time onwards, the martyrology will paint a picture in which the establishment of secret conventicles and organised churches in hiding is more prevalent than before. It seems that evangelising work by men such as de la Voye and Le Painctre had set in train a process whereby individual outrages of heresy are less significant in comparison to ever-growing communities of believers, provided for by the rising numbers of *colporteurs* travelling into France. The rising persecution of the final years of Francis’ reign had tested their faith. The attitude of his son Henry, towards their growing threat, would test their resilience such as never before.
HENRY II AND THE CHAMBRE ARDENTE, 1547-1555

The mid-1540s saw the beginning of a new era in the persecution of heresy in France. As Francis Higman has argued, ‘with the sanctioning of the Sorbonne’s lists of censored texts by the Parlement in June 1545, the structure of France’s defence against heretical literature was more or less complete.’ With this machinery of orthodoxy firmly in place, the last years of Francis’ reign were marked by a repression of evangelism and heretical thought on an unprecedented scale. Episodes such as the massacre of the Vaudois in April 1545 and the destruction of the church at Meaux in the winter of 1546 marked out the final years of Francis’ reign as a time of fierce and unremitting persecution. These claims are supported by evidence taken from the records of the Parlement of Paris which show that, in terms of people brought before the bench, every year from 1540 to 1545 saw an increase over the previous year in the average number of suspects investigated for heresy. Indeed, the whole decade from 1540-1549 has been labelled as ‘the apogee of the anti-Protestant repression in the northern half of France.’ More specifically, the period from 1544 to 1549 saw the Parlement of Paris condemn more heretics to death and to other punishments than at any time before the outbreak of the religious wars.

Discussion of the new level of persecution which characterised these years has tended to be dominated by the establishment in October 1547 of the Chambre ardente. The operation of this notorious institution will be examined later, but its importance should not overshadow the fact that prior to its inception, parts of France were already in the grip of an orthodox backlash. Five martyr stories from the period 1546-1548 that appear in the Histoire predate the Chambre ardente. These five narratives are of considerable importance to a study of heresy in this period.

Although executed on 17 July 1546, nearly three months before the fourteen of Meaux, the account of the martyrdom of Pierre Chapot appears after the story of Meaux in the Histoire.¹

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¹ Higman, Censorship and the Sorbonne, pp. 62-3. William Monter has argued convincingly that the auto-da-fé at Meaux was not due to the policy of the King, but a one-off, a ‘audacious strike by the local authorities’, Monter, ‘Les exécutés pour hérésie’, 201.
² Ibid., 201.
³ Ibid., 202.
⁴ Ibid., 200.
⁵ He is referred to in some instances as Jean Chapot; for example, Histoire ecclésiastique, p. 71. Crepin 1570, tols. 169'-170'. The account of Chapot is quite lengthy, some 2,000 words. It does not appear in the martyrology until 1564. The precise date of his execution is given in Monter, 'Les exécutés pour hérésie', 220. Crepin clearly felt that Chapot's execution took place after that of Meaux as he mentions the role of ‘the burners of the Chambre ardente’ although its establishment was still 15 months away. Between the account of
A young, well-educated man from the Dauphiné, he returned to France having been away in Geneva. It was whilst on this trip that he picked up ‘books of the Holy Scripture to take to Paris, in order to distribute and sell them to the faithful.’ Incautious and over-eager in his distribution of these books, he was arrested by Jean André, a bookseller. Once arrested, Chapot was interrogated where he rendered a confession of faith with modesty and integrity. He persuaded his captors to allow him the chance of a ‘learned disputation’ at the hands of the Sorbonne, amongst them two of the doctors identified by Crespin as persecutors of the faithful at Meaux: Maillard and Picard. Unable to prove that Chapot was in error, and humiliated by the wisdom and scriptural authority of Chapot’s answers, the ‘henchmen of the Sorbonne foamed with a desperate rage and beat their chests.’ According to Crespin, their humiliation made them even more determined to ‘spill his blood’. Chapot’s impressive performance persuaded most of the judges to try to save him, but they were intimidated by the Sorbonistes who were determined to see him destroyed. Chapot was horribly tortured before being brought to the gallows at the Place Maubert in Paris. Crespin’s account offers a detailed description of the last words of Chapot as he addressed the crowd, reciting the Apostles’ Creed and denying that he had ever intended offence to the Virgin Mary. When he began to talk on the matter of the Holy Supper, and ‘on the difference there was with the Mass’, he was interrupted by Maillard who demanded that the execution be hurried along. Chapot was offered the choice of strangulation if he said ‘Ave Maria’. Under pressure, Chapot uttered ‘Jesus Maria’, which he immediately retracted, seeking forgiveness from the Lord. This slip was enough to ensure his strangulation, but only to the extent that he would still ‘feel the fire’.

Estienne Poulliot, from Normandy also faced a grisly end. Having fled the persecution at Meaux, he moved around northern France before being captured and taken to Paris. Found guilty by the Parlement, he was condemned to have his tongue cut out, and be burnt alive. In addition, he was to have a load of books placed on his shoulders, with which he was to be burnt. He was executed at the Place Maubert, 18 January 1547.

The date given in the Histoire for the execution of the colporteur Macé Moreau is 1550. This, however, is incorrect, as Moreau was put to death in Troyes, 5 October 1546.

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the church at Meaux and that of Chapot is the account of Pierre Bonpain, executed 5 January 1547, although Crespin gives the date as 1546. This is an account of only 140 words and is hardly informative. Bonpain fled Meaux in the aftermath of the persecution and advanced ‘the realm of Jesus Christ’ in Aubigny, before being executed in Paris. Crespin 1570, fol. 164°.
6 Ibid., fols. 169°-170°.
7 Ibid., fol. 169°.
8 According to Crespin, savage torture was the norm for those caught peddling books; Ibid., fol. 170°.
Crespin 1570, fol. 181°-182°. This account first appears in the Recueil of 1554; Crespin 1554, p. 640. The accurate date is given in Monter, ‘Les exécutions pour hérésie’, 230. Crespin was not alone in mistaking the date of Macé Moreau’s execution. Nicholas Pithou, chronicler of the reformation in Troyes, gave the date as 18

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Previously a vendor of religious images, Macé Moreau moved to Geneva, seeking instruction in the word of God. Adapting his trade to the changing religious situation, he became a ‘carrier of books of the Holy Scripture’, and returned to France to sell and distribute them. Passing through Troyes, he was tricked by one Nicholas Vaulterin, a hatmaker, into revealing the nature of his religion.\textsuperscript{12} Moreau was arrested and clamped in irons. After being interrogated, during which Moreau was tortured to discover the names of his accomplices, he was condemned to be burnt alive. Whilst being taken to the gallows, Moreau asked to see Morel, a Franciscan at the local monastery whom Moreau had heard was held in good esteem and was a God-fearing man. Morel, however, was unavailable, so Moreau was confronted by two other Franciscans. In true martyr tradition, Moreau requested that the two leave him alone.\textsuperscript{13} Asked if he believed in God, Moreau recited the Apostles’ Creed in French and rebuffed his interrogator so successfully that he returned to his convent, cursing Moreau.\textsuperscript{14}

Eventually Moreau was taken from prison to the gallows, where he sang a Psalm ‘until he was surprised by the fire, in the middle of which he gave up a very fortunate soul to the Lord.’\textsuperscript{15}

The stories of Pouillot, Chapot and Moreau have one highly significant common feature – all three martyrs were involved to some degree with the burgeoning illicit book trade.\textsuperscript{16} Geneva is clearly identified as the source of that trade. For the first time in Crespin’s collection, Geneva is mentioned not just as a place of refuge, but as a source of Protestant books and literature.\textsuperscript{17} These books were ‘silent ministers for those who were destitute of preaching’ as Crespin has called them.\textsuperscript{18} Not only did Pierre Chapot return to France from Geneva, but as has been mentioned, whilst there he picked up ‘books of the Holy Scripture to take to Paris.’ The fate of Estienne Pouillot was to be burnt along with those books found upon his person. Finally, Macé Moreau became a colporteurr after having moved to Geneva, ‘where he placed his vocation at the service of his new faith.’\textsuperscript{19}

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\textsuperscript{12} Vaulterin, pretending to be of the Reformed religion as he suspected Moreau to be, invited him back to his house. Moreau, ‘moved by zeal to advance the glory of God, without finding out more about Vaulterin, presented him with some of the books he was carrying.’ Vaulterin reported Moreau to Champy, the Lieutenant Criminal of Troyes.

\textsuperscript{13} Crespin 1570, fol. 101\textsuperscript{1}.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., fols. 181-182\textsuperscript{2}.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., fol. 182\textsuperscript{2}. As has been shown in chapter 2, this was not, in fact, a Psalm, but a popular hymn of the time.

\textsuperscript{16} Not only is Chapot a colporteurr, but he is also employed as a proofreader in a printer’s shop.

\textsuperscript{17} The previous occasion on which Geneva was mentioned was in the case of Claude Le Paintre, see chapter 4, pp. 83ff.

\textsuperscript{18} Crespin 1570, fol. 169\textsuperscript{2}.

\textsuperscript{19} Galpern, The Religions of the People, p. 115. Galpern also notes that Macé Moreau was employed by Laurent de Normandie, Calvin’s compatriot from the town of Noyon. Penny Roberts has written on how well-placed Troyes was for booksellers and preachers as a stop-over between Paris and Geneva, being only 3 days’ ride south-east of Paris. See P. Roberts, ‘The demands and dangers of the Reformed ministry in Troyes, 1552-72’, in A. Petegree (ed.) The Reformation of the Parishes (Manchester, 1993), p. 155. Professor Galpern, however, believes that Moreau was on his way to Normandy.
The literature carried into France by Moreau and Chapot certainly testifies to the influence of Geneva as a centre of book-production and distribution. Asked as to the books he was carrying, Chapot replied that the greatest number were 'Bibles, that is to say books of the Old and New Testament, and the rest were opuscules and interpretations of them.'\textsuperscript{20} Thus, within the six month period covering the executions of these three men, Crespin's martyrlogy has reinforced the claims of the secondary literature as to the importance of the Genevan printing industry to the burgeoning Protestant movement in France.\textsuperscript{21} Yet it is also possible that the sudden existence of a wealth of evidence in the Histoire of Geneva's role in book production had more to do with the attempts of the authorities' to clamp down on the sale and distribution of contraband literature than an actual rise in the numbers of Genevan books entering France.\textsuperscript{22} As Ray Mentzer has argued:

The various edicts and ordinances promulgated by the crown ought finally to be noted for their effect was a modification in the meaning of heresy. The statutes proscribed in lengthy detail criminal offenses which had political and social as well as religious connotations. Singled out for repeated mention were the sale and transport of prohibited books, association with the Protestant cities of Germany and Switzerland, participation in secret religious assemblies, and attendance at unauthorized preaching or religious instruction. Thus, the monarchy decided which courts should try heresy, fixed the trial procedure, and even defined the crime itself.\textsuperscript{23}

In other words, the authorities during this period were involved in a process of definition. The Articles of the Sorbonne, the Index of Forbidden Books and successive edicts against heresy had the effect of progressively clarifying the nature of orthodoxy, and identifying the greatest threat to the true faith. This was extremely important for the relationship with dissent, since this process made possible the prosecution of wrong belief, as opposed to the earlier situation

\textsuperscript{20} Crespin 1570, fol. 170'. Interestingly, Chapot blames the authorities for condemning all books printed in Geneva without distinction which has meant that they have 'condemned the Holy Bible, which was a work of God, admirably received and kept wholesome and entire until now.' Francis Higman makes the point that to the best of his knowledge the first specification of Geneva as a source of heretical literature was in April 1547 in the case of Denis Perier. May I suggest that this example from the case of Chapot, if reliable, surely predates this? Higman, Censorship and the Sorbonne, p. 64.

\textsuperscript{21} Most recently, Francis Higman has shown that in the period 1511-1551, only Paris prints more editions of French-language religious printing than Geneva. See the introduction of Higman, Pity and the People. Also, see Higman, Censorship and the Sorbonne and Kingdom, Geneva and Coming of the Wars of Religion, chapter 9.

\textsuperscript{22} Such measures included the compilation of an index of forbidden books by the Sorbonne, house searches for books, the prosecution of booksellers and the Edict of Fontainebleau of 1547 that forbade the selling of any book imported from Geneva, without the permission of the Sorbonne. See N. Weiss, 'La Sorbonne, le Parlement de Paris et les livres hérétiques de 1542 à 1546', BSHPF, 34 (1883), 19-28.

\textsuperscript{23} Mentzer, Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc, pp. 159-160.
where heresy identified itself only by flagrantly provocative acts of the sort which almost invariably lay behind the first heresy trials. It is abundantly clear also that Geneva was increasingly identified by the French authorities as the most dangerous source of error. It remains to be seen whether the prosecution of heresy within the kingdom reflected this perceived development in both the nature and source of heretical beliefs.\(^{24}\)

The clampdown on the book trade was only part of the wider repression of the late 1540s. As has been suggested, the Parlement of Paris marked out these years as the years of their harshest repression. This pattern was duplicated in other parts of the country.\(^{25}\) Although the accession of Henry actually marked no real watershed in the treatment of heresy, his reputation as a persecutor of heresy has tended to overshadow that of his father.\(^{26}\) His fierce anti-Protestant reputation was known to all. Only a four months after Henry’s accession, Calvin warned his co-religionists of what to expect. Writing to the faithful of France on 24 July 1547, he urged resolution and patience:

I entreat of you, my dear brethren, continue steadfast on your part also; and let no fear alarm you, even although the dangers were more apparent than you have seen them hitherto....And inasmuch as you know well from experience how frail we are, be ever diligent to continue in the practice which you have established, of prayer and hearing of the holy word, to exercise you, and to sharpen and confirm you more and more.\(^{27}\)

From the very beginning of his reign, Henry II sought to improve the apparatus of persecution. Within a month of his father’s death, an edict against blasphemy reaffirmed the use of torture, public whipping and the cutting off of tongues. By the end of the year, Matthew Ory had been reconfirmed as inquisitor for the realm; and a further edict forbade the publication of books unapproved by the Sorbonne or on the Sorbonne’s Index. Yet, the most significant innovation, and that which secured Henry’s infamous reputation was the establishment in October 1547 of the Chambre ardente. Established within the confines of the Parlement of Paris, the Chambre ardente was a second Tournelle, designed exclusively to hear heresy cases, in order to allow the first Tournelle to concentrate solely on secular crimes. The

\(^{24}\) See Kingdon, Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion, pp. 93-105.

\(^{25}\) Mentzer, Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc, pp. 159-170.

\(^{26}\) Monter, ‘Les exécuteurs pour hérésie’, 201-2: ‘Notwithstanding the exceptional case of Meaux in 1546, the evidence at our disposal suggests that the Chambre ardente of Henry II only prolonged, with perhaps less vigour, a wave of persecution begun during the reign of his father.’

\textit{Chambre ardente} bypassed ecclesiastical justice completely. As a Court of Appeal, as well as a court of first instance, it could receive charges of heresy and blasphemy direct from local officials in the provinces over whom the \textit{Parlement} of Paris had jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{28} It also had the power to act proactively in sending out delegations to seek out and investigate reported outbreaks of heresy.\textsuperscript{29} The new chamber soon attracted infamy, and the spectre of the \textit{Chambre ardente} hangs heavily over the whole reign of Henry II. Although recent research argues such a reputation was undeserved, the \textit{Histoire ecclésiastique} was in no doubt: ‘the fires burned more than ever; and above all in the chamber of the \textit{Parlement} of Paris, that is called the \textit{Chambre ardente}, in sending to the flames as many as fell into its hands.’\textsuperscript{30}

The special reputation of the \textit{Chambre ardente} owes much to the fact that its records have been largely preserved. The originals, preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, were published at the end of the last century by the distinguished Protestant historian, Nathaniel Weiss.\textsuperscript{31} The \textit{arrêt}s published by Weiss fall into two categories. First, those passed in the immediate period before the establishment of the \textit{Chambre ardente}, that is to say April to October 1547. The first six months of the new chamber are amongst those missing, so the second and main part of Weiss’ work centres round the \textit{Chambre}’s activities from May 1548 to April 1549 and November 1549 to March 1550.\textsuperscript{32} During this first pre-\textit{Chambre ardente} period, the \textit{Parlement} heard 57 cases, which resulted in two capital sentences, one of these for blasphemy.\textsuperscript{33} The records that survive for the period of the new chamber’s activities illustrate a much higher execution rate. Three hundred and twenty-five different people were investigated by the new chamber, and definitive sentences were passed in 215 of these cases. Of these, 37 people were handed death sentences, some 17% of those cases settled by March 1550.\textsuperscript{34} However, the situation is not as clear-cut as it seems, and this figure does not correspond to the actual number executed for heresy, which is the figure of interest to this study. One of these cases can be excluded on the grounds that the condemned was found

\textsuperscript{28} F. Baumgartner, \textit{Henry II, King of France} 1547-1559 (Durham, N.C., 1988), p. 128. The first \textit{Tournelle} had been hearing appeals in both heresy and criminal cases.
\textsuperscript{29} The \textit{Parlement} encompassed some two-thirds of the whole kingdom. It was responsible for the whole of northern France, excluding Normandy, as far south as the Lyonnais and upper Auvergne. Knecht, \textit{Francis I}, p.22.
\textsuperscript{32} Between May and October 1549, the records of the \textit{Chambre ardente} have not survived.
\textsuperscript{33} The capital sentences are those of the Jean Morin, alias Thuen, for ‘execrable blasphemies’ and the clothworker, Benoit Ramasset, burnt for ‘sacramentary propositions’. Weiss, \textit{La Chambre ardente}, pp. 12, 14.
\textsuperscript{34} The \textit{arrêt}s ordering execution were: nos. 23, 28, 93, 94, 101, 118, 119, 140, 142, 143, 166, 169, 172, 184, 187, 188, 195, 225, 227, 230, 246, 247, 276, 300, 317. The level of executions as a percentage of all those who appeared in front of the \textit{Chambre ardente} is 11%.
5. Henry II and the Chambre Ardente, 1547-1555

guilty of ‘execrable blasphemies’, as opposed to heresy. One other of the death sentences was for ‘heresy and homicide’. Furthermore, one of the death sentences seems not to have been carried out. In the case of Denis Ragunier, he was condemned in absentia, on 31 January 1550, on the condition that he was apprehended. This seems unlikely as someone of his name registered as a habitant in Geneva on 1 September 1551.

These exclusions make the total of those executed for heresy by the Chambre ardente 35, or 16% of those accused. This figure is clearly indicative of a significantly more severe repression under the Parlement of Paris than was taking place in other jurisdictions. Figures gathered elsewhere allow some degree of (imperfect) comparison. Between 1500 and 1560, the Parlement of Toulouse executed only 6% of those that it investigated for heresy; and between 1541 and 1559 the Parlement of Bordeaux only executed 4% of its suspected heretics. Yet it is very possible that the percentage for the Chambre ardente is an inflated one, and should be treated with some caution. Of the 35 executed, nearly a quarter of these (eight) were burnt in one episode, the auto-da-fé at Langres in September 1548. Secondly, although strictly correct to take the percentage from the number of those cases which had been judged definitively, it seems highly unlikely that the transference of cases back to the ecclesiastical sphere after the break-up of the Chambre ardente would result in equally high levels of capital sentences. Finally, it must be noted that higher levels of executions were

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35 This is the case of Jacques Belon. Weiss, La Chambre ardente, no. 118. See Monter, ‘Les exécutés pour hérésie’, 200.
36 Estienne Rocheta, condemned 13 December 1548, was condemned for heresy and homicide, Weiss, La Chambre ardente, no. 187. Although his case is not included in the figures gathered by Professor Monter, I have included this case in my figures as he was burnt in front of his parish church, which surely indicates that it was the crime of heresy for which he was executed.
39 Also, there are two further cases known of people tried by the Chambre ardente, but not executed until later. These are Florent Venot, whose case is not dealt with definitively in the records of the Chambre ardente, Weiss, La Chambre ardente, no. 110, but he is executed nearly a year later; and that of Jean Bertrand, executed over seven years after coming in front of the Chambre ardente for the first time. Such problems are not the only ones inherent in these figures. Despite the existence of the records of the Chambre ardente in published form for over a hundred years, there seems little consensus amongst historians as to the exact level of repression pursued by the chamber. All of the figures seem to have some level of truth in them. For example, Mentzer argues that the chamber executed 39 of 557 named heresy suspects, a level of 7%, Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc, p. 122. Baumgartner argues that in the six months before the Chambre ardente began to function, the original Tournelle heard 57 cases of heresy and blasphemy, and sentenced two persons to death. For the period covered by the main body of arrêts, May 1548-March 1550, 37 death sentences were passed out of the 215 cases which record a final decision; that is 17%. Finally, Linda Taber states that death sentences were passed on 27 of the 124 cases which were definitively heard, that is to say some 25%. Baumgartner’s figures and analysis are the best and most accurate reflection of the situation.
40 For a fuller appraisal of this comparison, see Mentzer, Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc, p. 122.
41 It is my opinion that on occasions such as this one, when a secret church is discovered, the repression is much more fierce, as it offers the authorities an opportunity to make a very public example of those found guilty of a crime regarded more seriously than any other, that of setting up a illicit church.
42 Indeed, it has been shown that in the three years immediately following the dissolution of the Chambre ardente, only one person was executed by the Parlement for heresy, Monter, ‘Les exécutés pour hérésie’, 204. Weiss, however, argues that the figure should be higher than that presented in his figures as many of those
inherent in the creation of a new chamber to deal specifically with heresy. Its greater efficiency in seeking out and dealing with suspected heretics was bound to increase the number of those found guilty and executed.\(^43\)

Whatever the true levels of execution, other figures make it clear that the number of those executed was only part of the story of its operation. Nearly as many were released with a warning (31) as were executed (37) and even more (39) were acquitted. Although these figures of release rates for the Chambre ardente are slightly lower than for the whole period of the Parlement of Paris,\(^44\) it is still true to say that if one was called in front of the Chambre ardente, there was a one in three chance of finding oneself either acquitted or released with a warning, making release or acquittal twice as likely a fate as execution. Interestingly, exactly half of the accused faced these two extremes of release and execution. The other half of those found guilty were condemned to some other form of punishment.\(^45\) Of those condemned to a non-capital sentence, over one-third (67) were condemned to the least severe sentence, that of public recantation.\(^46\) This punishment could be twinned with a fine or with the public burning of books found in the condemned’s possession. The authorities knew the value of the highly visual nature of this penance. As David Nicholls has written:

Repentant heretics who publicly abjured their errors were more desirable than dead heretics. They could be displayed as people who had been tempted by heterodoxy but had seen the error of their ways once the truth had been explained to them, and therefore constituted better propaganda for the church than the unrepentant, whose willing embrace of martyrdom had to be explained as convincingly as possible as the result of stubbornness, madness or demonic possession.\(^47\)

More severe punishment was meted out in 20 cases, where the victim was forced to perform public penance and be whipped.\(^48\) A further 21 faced banishment and confiscation of their

\(^{43}\) Some inflation of figures notwithstanding, the level of executions carried out by the Chambre ardente are in line with the overall policy of the Parlement pursued in the two decades before the outbreak of the wars of religion. For the whole period 1540-1560, it has been argued that somewhere between 10% and 16% of those accused were condemned to death for heresy. Monier, 'Les exécutions pour hérésie', 197.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., 197.

\(^{45}\) This figure is higher than the 40% of those that left the courts of the Parlement of Paris between 1540 and 1560 with some form of punishment. Ibid., 197. On punishment, see Mentzer, Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc, pp. 112-129.

\(^{46}\) This would be for what Mentzer describes as ‘minor faults’, such as ‘indiscreet utterances, singing of scandalous songs, unknowing possession of censured books, or unwitting attendance at an assembly where heresy had been preached’, ibid., p. 113.


\(^{48}\) This could also include the public burning of books.
goods to the crown. The scale of this banishment could be either temporary or permanent; local or national. Banishment was always implemented in conjunction with public penance, and very often a public beating. Two were faced with the rare punishment of being sent to the King’s galleys.

Therefore, despite the Protestant propaganda of the time, it can be seen that the *Chambre ardente* was not part of a vindicative judicial process, but a pragmatic and targeted one. As Ray Mentzer has written:

> the tribunal desired punishments which corrected and amended the individual delinquency, provided reparation for his sins, and served to deter others from similar error. Though Inquisitorial justice was exacting at times, it was not retaliatory.\(^{49}\)

For the purposes of this study, the records collected by Weiss have two main purposes. First, they may prove useful verification of the accounts that appear in the *Histoire des vrais témoins*. Secondly, we may then legitimately broaden the question to ask what the combined evidence of the records of the *Chambre ardente* and Crespin’s *Histoire* can tell us about the nature of heresy in the period 1547-1550. Unfortunately, the records of the *Chambre ardente* and the collection compiled by Crespin do not dovetail very successfully. Of the 35 people executed by the *Chambre ardente* between May 1548 and January 1550, the *Histoire* only recounts the story of nine of the victims, and seven of those are in one incident.

This mass execution is the case of the evangelical cell at Langres.\(^{50}\) The group first came to the *Chambre ardente*’s attention on 2 August 1548, when the Provost of Langres, Hugues Legoux, requested the Court to gather information on a certain Jean Taffignon, his friends and family, who had been accused of heresy. The Court agreed, and decided to tax the accused 12 *livres parisis* to pay for the process.\(^{51}\) Their case came before the Court again one month later, on 3 September.\(^{52}\) The Court specified the accused as Jean Taffignon, and his wife Marguerite Séjournant; Simon Mareschal and his wife Jeanne Bailly; Jacques Boulerot and his wife Jeanne Coignet; Jacques Royer and his wife Claudine Baillot; Guillaume Michau, Aymée Genevoy, Catherine Cremer, and Anne Guillaume. Their crime, the Court states, was ‘heretical blasphemy, referring to types of idolatry, occult conventicles, censured and damned;

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\(^{49}\) Mentzer, *Heresy proceedings in Languedoc*, p. 70.

\(^{50}\) Four men from Langres were executed one month before this larger group. They were undoubtedly part of the same conventicle, as one of each of the groups: seem related. Their stories are not recounted in the *Histoire* of 1570, but do appear (briefly) in the *Recueil* of 1554. A full account appears in the *Histoire des martyrs of 1619*. See below, chapter 7, pp. 178.

\(^{51}\) Weiss, *La Chambre ardente*, no. 104.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., no. 119.
acting repugnant to the holy catholic faith and communal observance of our mother Holy church.\textsuperscript{53}

The Court's punishments are clearly specified. Taffignon, Mareschal, Boulerot, Michau, Royer, Séjournant, Cremer and Baillye were to be taken:

.... In tipcarts from the prisons of Langres up to the great market-place, to the place nearest and most convenient to the house of Taffignon,... and at this said place be lifted to those scaffolds that will be set up there for this, and around those will be set up a great fire, and in this the said Taffignon will be burnt alive, and his body converted and consumed into ashes, and the said Mareschal, Boulerot, Michau, Royer, Séjournant, Cremer and Baillye to be strangled in the said gallows, and afterwards their bodies, together with the books found in their possession, will be burnt. And it was declared that all and each of their goods be confiscated to the King.\textsuperscript{54}

For the others, their punishment was set out thus: they were all to attend a grand solemn Mass, which was to be said and celebrated the morning of the said day of this execution. They were then forced to be present at a sermon given by 'a good and notable person' at the main church in Langres. The sermon was to be directed at what the Court felt was the group's major crime:

conventicles and private assemblies, readings and interpretations by lay and uneducated people of books in French, censured and damned; dogmatizations and preachings which were done by the said lay people on the Holy Gospels.\textsuperscript{55}

After this, they were all to perform an Amende Honorable in front of the main door of the Church. The Court had one last order to complete the cleansing of heresy from the town of Langres. As their conventicles had taken place in Taffignon's house and in order to remove all traces of their activity; it was decreed that:

the said house of the said Jehan Taffignon,..., will be knocked down and razed entirely, and at the said place will be constructed a chapel, which will be dedicated in the honour of the Holy sacrament of the Altar. It will be paid for from the confiscated belongings of the prisoners.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p. 200.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 202.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p. 203.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 205. This arrêt is almost identical to that which condemned the fourteen of Meaux.
Such an auto-da-fé was a major event and is unsurprisingly included in the martyrology. Crespin's account, however, differs significantly. Unlike the very similar case of the church discovered at Meaux, Crespin clearly does not have access to records of the Court for this case, as he incorrectly lists those executed. He omits the deaths of Cremer and Royer, and includes someone called Jacques Bretenay, perhaps Royer under another name. According to Crespin, they were:

burnt for the confession of the doctrine of the Son of God, around the end of the month of September, 1547.... Their constancy and perserverance in the confession of the Christian faith.... was admirable and joyous to the faithful and aggravated their adversaries, who ground their teeth in astonishment.

He includes a moving tribute to the devotion of one of their members:

Jeanne Bailly, wife of the said Simon (Mareshal), was endowed with singular grace and virtue for her sex; for as they were all near their end, she exhorted the others, and principally her husband, to persevere. Among other propositions she said to him, “My friend, if we were joined by marriage in terms of our bodies, reckon that this was only like the promise of our engagement: but the Lord Jesus Christ married us on the day of our martyrdom.” Then, because she was younger than the rest, she was reserved to be burnt last. Her adversaries tried to divert her from this constancy, promising her many good things: but she and the others were attended with a supernatural force: and she stayed constant until the end.

The two other cases that appear in both the Histoire and the records of the Chambre ardente are those of Leonard Dupré and Sainctin Livet, or Nivet from Meaux. In the case of Dupré, the Chambre ardente reports that he was found guilty of ‘heretical blasphemies and scandalous and erroneous propositions spoken by him against the honour of God, the holy Sacrament of the Altar, constitutions and commandments of our holy mother Church.’ For these crimes he was to be burnt alive along with those censured books found on him. Before

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57 According to Weiss the arrêts support precisely what Crespin has written about this episode. Weiss, La Chambre ardente, p. lxxxii. This account first appears in the martyrology in 1554, pp. 637-8.

58 Crespin 1570, fol. 171. The courage of female martyrs was even more remarkable to readers of the Histoire and Crespin sought to emphasise it. For example, see the account of Anne Audebert, burnt in Orléans in 1550: "when bound with a rope in the usual way, she cried out. "Lord God! What a fine belt my betrothed has given me!"", Crespin 1570, fol. 179."
execution, he was to be tortured to find out if he had any accomplices. The account in Crespin reveals different information. The literary connection is confirmed, as Crespin relates that he was a man educated in letters, who was ‘imprisoned for the doctrine of the Gospel.’ According to Crespin, the righteousness of his dispute against his interrogators (who were local monks questioning him before he was sent to Paris) forced them to admit that he spoke the truth. Despite this he was still taken to Paris for execution.

The other case which appears in both collections is that of Sainctin Livet. The trial record is extremely brief:

Sainctin Lyvet, sacramentarian, condemned to be burnt in the place Maubert in Paris and in effigy “in the main market place of the said place (Meaux)”. Retentum: if he repents, he will be strangled, if not he will have his tongue cut out and will be burnt alive.

In contrast, the account in the martyrology tells us much more of his background. In the aftermath of the execution of the fourteen of Meaux in 1546, Nivet, a native of the town, was forced to flee to Montbéliard. Unhappy at leaving his duty behind, however, he returned to Meaux, unperturbed by the pleas of his minister and his wife. He was arrested whilst selling some small wares at the fair of St Martin. Despite the intimidations of the Judges, he held firm against them. The Lieutenant of Meaux, seeing the constancy of this man (he remarked that he was worth all of the fourteen put together), requested that he not be burnt in Meaux, where he might cause a disturbance, but be put to death in Paris.

Although these cases are the only death sentences passed by the Chambre ardente that appear in the martyrology, one other case which appears in the records of the Chambre ardente also appears in the martyrology. The case of Jean Bertrand illustrates very well the on-going nature of heresy prosecution. In the first instance, he is found to be the victim of a case of false accusation. On 4 October 1548, he was accused of the crime of ‘Lutheran and heretical blasphemies, and of disturbing the peace and tranquility of this very Christian realm’. The Court claimed that Mathurin and Medart les Belins, father and son, ‘had carried false testimony in the under-noted matter against the said Bertrand, following and at the instigation

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59 Weiss, La Chambre ardente, no. 142. The sentence added a retentum that if he continued to blaspheme his tongue would be cut out, but if he were to convert to the Catholic faith, he was to be strangled before being burnt.
60 The account of Dupré first appears in the Recueil of 1554. Crespin 1554, p. 637.
61 Crespin 1570, fol. 171r.
62 Weiss, La Chambre ardente, no. 184.
63 Crespin 1570, fol. 173v.
64 On the process involved in a false accusation or testimony, see Müntzer, Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc, p. 74.
of Pierre le Rat, provost of Lujignan.' The Court considered the case, and delivered its judgement:

the said Court absolves him of the said case and crime imputed to him, and in doing this orders him to be released, reserving for him the pursuit of damages and interest against his accusers, denouncers, and instigators and also against the undermentioned Belins, father and son.\(^\text{65}\)

This decision was seen to be ill-judged when Bertrand was again called in front of the *Chambre ardente* on 29 April 1549.\(^\text{66}\) This time Bertrand was accused of heresy and is to be subjected to ‘moderate’ torture. If he confessed, he was to be burnt; if he denied the charge, the sentence of death would be lifted. This, however, was not the end of the case. Although no more information can be gathered from the records of the *Chambre ardente*, according to Crespin he was recaptured on 5 February 1556. He was burnt alive on 11 May 1556.

The comparisons that can be made between these two sources are clearly very limited. They are two different types of record. The martyrology was produced to tell the heroic tale and aftermath of the execution, unlike the records of the chamber which were designed purely to express the court’s decision. The transcripts of the court detail the sentencing of the accused, whereas Crespin’s accounts tend to talk little of the trial preceding the execution, and focus more on the drama of the execution itself. One thing that is made clear by this however, is that Crespin quite often dates the account incorrectly. In both the accounts of the Langres cell and that of Leonard Dupré, Crespin places their execution one year earlier than was really the case.\(^\text{67}\) Apart from such errors of timing as these, little else of worth can be derived from any direct comparison. Crespin does omit one of the cell at Langres and probably refers to another by the wrong name, but factual errors are hardly surprising on cases written up six years after the executions and probably dependant on the recollections of someone now living in Geneva.

Yet what of those capital sentences passed by the *Chambre ardente* that do not appear in the *Histoire*? In many respects this is one of the more significant aspects of this investigation, something that tells us quite a lot about the ways Crespin gathered his information. Thirty of


\(^{66}\) Ibid., no. 294.

\(^{67}\) According to Crespin, Dupré's execution took place in August 1547, whereas it actually occurred on 3 October 1548; and he records the burning of the eight at Langres as September 1547 when it happened exactly one year later.
those who received capital sentences from the Chambre ardente or the Parlement of Paris at this time were not included in Crespin’s martyrology. Some reasons can be suggested for these lacunae. Two of these cases are not included most probably because they are both cases of pure blasphemy, as opposed to heresy. For the rest, it simply seems that he was particularly poorly-informed about Parisian martyrs of the 1540s.

These lacunae are partially compensated for by the cases that appear in the Histoire but not in the records of the Chambre ardente. It must be remembered that the records compiled in Weiss are not themselves complete. In all, twelve months are missing from the registers. Of the nine French martyrs mentioned by the Histoire for the duration of the Chambre ardente who do not appear in the records of that chamber, only one case falls outside the jurisdiction of the Parlement of Paris. The other eight French martyrs featured in Crespin’s narrative all fall under the jurisdiction of the Parlement of Paris, and clearly are executed during those months that are missing from the registers of the Chambre ardente. This means that Crespin in fact includes the histories of 17 people probably executed by the Chambre ardente, that is to say over one-third of those estimated to have been condemsted by the Parlement of Paris between October 1547 and January 1550.

The first of those cases which appear in the martyrology but not in the extant records of the Chambre ardente is the case of Jean Brugière, a tax collector, executed 3 March 1548. A ‘man of great zeal’, he was arrested twice and charged for being a ‘Lutheran.’ On the first occasion, he escaped from prison, only to break his leg during the escape. Upon reflection, he was filled with great regret that he had declined the vocation to which God had called him; and was determined that if captured a second time, he would give a prompt confession of faith. Taken to Paris, he was interrogated by Pierre Lizet, who found him to be determined to retract nothing. He was condemned to be returned to his home region and burnt in the town of Issoire. Upon returning there, Brugière was confronted with the Inquisitor General, Matthew

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68 These are the cases of Jacques Belon and Jean Morin. Weiss, La Chambre ardente, no. 118.
69 This conclusion is supported by Monter, who has argued that Crespin ignored 80% of the executions for heresy ordered by the Parlement of Paris between 1540 and 1548. Monter, ‘Les exécutions pour hérésie’, 199.
70 These are November 1547 to April 1548 and May to October 1549.
71 This is the story of Hubert Burce, a 19 year old martyred in Dijon in 1549, Crespin 1570, fol. 178. The 1619 edition includes the five martyrs of Angers who do not appear in the Histoire des vrais tesmoins of 1570, Crespin-Gouart 1885-9, vol. 1, pp. 526-7.
72 It is estimated that there were 46 executions for heresy by the Parlement of Paris between these dates, Monter, ‘Les exécutions pour hérésie’, 220-2.
73 The only testimony to Brugière’s existence is to be found Crespin’s martyrology. His story first appears in the Troisieme partie of 1556; Crespin 1556 (TP), pp. 22-35. The account in the 1570 edition amounts to around 3500 words, due largely to the inclusion of an extract of the registers of the Parlement, which also appear in the Troisieme partie. In between the stories of Poullet and Brugière is the account of Jean L’Anglois, burnt on 22 January 1547. The account is noteworthy only in its brevity, something for which Crespin apologizes to the reader ‘since we have nothing of the acts and judicial procedures against him.’ Crespin 1570, fol. 171.
74 Ibid., fol. 171. Lizet was one of the two presidents of the Chambre ardente.
Ory. The power and wisdom of Brugières’s answer was such that Ory turned to him and asked, ‘My friend, whilst in Paris, why did you not speak to President Lizet in this way?’ Indeed, so impressed was Lizet with Brugières’s answer that he recommended an easing of his sentence. Ory, however, was unwilling to go against the decision of the Court, which maintained the sentence of death. During Brugières’s last days, priests came to him to attempt to persuade him to acknowledge the efficacy of a wooden cross or invoke the Virgin Mary. They were, however, only met with stoic refusal: ‘I pray you to leave me in peace, and permit me to think a little of my God before I die.’ 75 The day of the execution was set for market day, and Brugières was taken to the gallows, where he prayed for his enemies. 76 When he was hung over the fire, without flinching nor crying, some of the crowd thought they had seen a miracle. Seeing this reaction of the crowd, Ory and his officers fled, leaving Brugières half-burnt and dying. 77

Other cases that appear solely in the Histoire include the story of Octavien Blondel, a gem-cutter from Tours. His story is designed to describe how greed drove his persecutors to seek his condemnation. 78 Three further cases are unique to the martyrology. 79 Florent Venot, Leonard Galimar and a character called ‘Le Cousturier’ were all executed as part of the triumphal entry of Henry II into Paris in the Summer of 1549. 80 The account of Venot, a priest, in the records of the Chambre ardente is a brief, preliminary hearing, only describing his case as un cas privilégié, and that he was imprisoned for the crime of heresy, and that these charges were to be investigated. 81 The account in the Histoire offers more information.

Crespin tells us that Venot was held prisoner for four years and nine months in Paris, six weeks of which were under torture, in a specially designed box, ‘a place where he could not lie down nor be standing except on tiptoes’. We are told that no-one had endured more than two weeks without dying or going mad in this contraption. Our hero, however, was not broken by this. At the end of the six weeks, he was brought in front of the Chambre ardente, and his ardour had not weakened. He declared:

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75 Ibid., fol. 173’. This phrase echoes many other examples, see chapter 2, p. 36.
76 On why particular days were set aside for public executions, see Nicholls, ‘Theatre of Martyrdom’, 52-3.
77 Crespin 1570, fol. 173’. The tale of the flight of Ory is most probably based on Proverbs 28:1: ‘The wicked man flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.’ Upon seeing the constancy of Brugières, the local priest attended to his body and ‘said clearly, within earshot of several others, “God give me the grace to die in the faith of Brugières.”’ On the concept of the conversion of the persecutors, see chapter 2, p. 36.
78 He died for the ‘knowledge of the truth of the Gospel’, Crespin 1570, fol. 174’.
79 Although the case of Florent Venot is to be found in both collections, his case only appears in the extant records of the Chambre ardente as a preliminary hearing. He was not actually executed until 9 July 1549, Weiss, La Chambre ardente, no. 110, Crespin 1570, fol. 179’. The account first appears in Crespin 1554, pp. 646-8.
80 Weiss, La Chambre ardente, pp. cxii ff.
81 As his appearance in the Histoire testifies, Venot was clearly found guilty of this capital offence.
You pretend by long torments to debilitate the strength of the spirit, or to make me die in prison: but you are wasting your time, for I hope that God will give me grace to persevere until the end, and to bless his holy name in my death.\textsuperscript{82}

During the public procession that followed after Henry II entered Paris, Venot was degraded of his priesthood, and forced to watch the burnings of the other heretics. He himself went to the stake having had his tongue removed, but ‘...by signs and looks to the sky, gave courage to one another: and fortified himself, seeing the grace that God gave to the others.’\textsuperscript{83} He was burnt alive on 9 July 1549. His constancy was so great that Crespin put him in the first rank of martyrs, in regard of the length of time he spent imprisoned and the torments he had endured.

Although much less gruesome, the account of Leonard Galimar, a priest like Venot, relates how Galimar had lived sometime in Geneva, and how on his way there he had been apprehended near Blois in May 1549.\textsuperscript{84} The story of Le Cousturier is well-known more for its anecdotal quality than for its likely reliability.\textsuperscript{85} This anonymous and impoverished tailor was imprisoned for the truth of the Gospel. He was brought in front of Henry II in order that the King could learn for himself what the ‘Lutherans’ believed.\textsuperscript{86} Le Cousturier maintained an invincible constancy during the interrogation. When Diane of Poitiers intervened, she was sharply rebuked by Le Cousturier:

\textit{Madam, are you not contented with having infected France without mixing your poison and filth with something as sacred as the true religion and the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ?}\textsuperscript{87}

The King was so angered by this that he was determined to see the execution of Le Cousturier for himself. Yet Le Cousturier’s fortitude at the stake was such that he stared at the King so resolutely that Henry was forced to retire from the window, so disturbed that he had nightmares about the execution later and vowed never to view one again.\textsuperscript{88}

Although the story of Le Cousturier plays an important role in the demonising of Henry II, Crespin offers no evidence as to the nature of his heresies. The mention of Geneva as a former place of residence for Galimar, however, is significant. This is augmented by three other

\textsuperscript{82} Crespin 1570, fol. 179'.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., fol. 179'.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., fol. 179'. The account first appears in Crespin 1554, p. 648. It trebled in length by 1570.
\textsuperscript{85} See Baumgartner, Henry II, pp. 127-8. Crespin 1570, fol. 178'-179'.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., fol. 178'. According to Crespin, Le Cousturier was chosen as he was a ‘man without letters’ and the Cardinal of Lorraine did not want the King overwhelmed by knowledge.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., fol. 178'.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., fol. 178'.
accounts that appear in the *Histoire* but have not survived in the records of the *Chambre ardente*. The three accounts of Estienne Peloquin, Anne Audebert and Claude Thierry are seemingly all inter-connected. Peloquin, originally from Blois, had left Geneva, whence he had fled, to return to Orléans and Blois to lead others of the faithful into exile. He was arrested along with Audebert and they were imprisoned at Châteaurenard. Both were burnt; Peloquin in Paris and Audebert in Orléans. Burnt alive in Orléans on the same day as Audebert, 28 September 1549 was Claude Thierry, a young apothecary captured coming into France from Geneva. Although not specified in the *Histoire*, it does seem that these three were all part of the same group attempting to flee France, with perhaps Peloquin and Thierry guiding them out of the country.

 Opposition to the new chamber came from both churchmen and magistrates. The clerics resented the secular monopoly of heresy jurisdiction, and the work of the *Chambre ardente* had greatly increased the workload of the other *Tourneelle*. In November 1549 Henry attempted to solve some of these problems by issuing a decree that gave ecclesiastical courts jurisdiction over simple heresy and matters of private belief. From now on, in matters of public sedition or scandal, a joint body of clerics and royal officials were to try the case. The Parlement were only left with appeal cases in matters of public heresy.

 The duration of the *Chambre ardente* was manifestly a period of heavy persecution. Moving away from a purely numerical analysis of its effects, what indication can be gauged as to the nature of the beliefs of the heretics during this time of crisis? The actual records of the Chamber are crucially unspecific in terms of the doctrine professed by those in front of them. Of those executed, six were described as ‘Sacramentarians’ and one as a ‘Lutheran’. Twenty-four were executed for ‘heresy and sacrilege’, two for ‘blasphemy’, and four on other

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89 In the account of Peloquin, it mentions that he was condemned by the ‘Councillors of the chamber in Paris that one calls ardente’. Crespin 1570, fol. 178. 
91 The exact date of Peloquin’s execution is unknown. 
92 Crespin does say that Audebert and Peloquin were in prison together. The link between them extends further than their unfortunate fate. Thierry’s profession was the same as Audebert’s late husband. The details of these martyrs surely come from the same source, perhaps one of the many Orléanais arriving in Geneva at around this time. I believe that despite the fact that the story of Peloquin does not appear in the martirology until 1564, this does not exclude his story being derived from the same source as the others. His imprisonment is mentioned in the 1554 account of Audebert, although with no details of his execution. When the account finally does appear independently in 1564, it actually provides very little in the way of information about Peloquin himself, except vague and unspecific statements, containing much more about the fact that he was the elder brother of the more celebrated martyr Denis Peloquin. 
93 As the new chamber had been staffed with existing members of the *Parlement*, its heavy workload meant a near log-jam for the other *Tourneelle*. ‘The famous *Chambre ardente* therefore represented a reduction in the number of Parisian judges available for the other criminal business’; Menter, ‘Les exécutés pour hérésie’, 203-4. 
94 This decision was conveyed to the court in January 1550., after which 62 prisoners were referred to the ecclesiastical courts. Taber, *Royal policy and Religious Dissent*, p. 15; Weiss, *La Chambre ardente*, pp. 376-80.
charges. Yet as has been shown earlier, such nomenclature is notoriously unreliable. Nonetheless, it is interesting that of all the arrêts extant of the Chambre ardente, both capital and non-capital, only two mention Geneva in any capacity. This is without doubt, a surprisingly low figure. It appears that the magistracy were not as aware as one might think of Geneva’s role in the spread of the new ideas. Indeed, there is a most extraordinary contrast between the almost obsessive preoccupation with Geneva in other contemporary official sources, such as the edicts and Indices of Forbidden books, and these trial records. This is something that demands careful thought.

Partly, of course, this divergence reflects the nature of the records. The records of the Chambre that survive are exclusively those that deal with sentencing and punishments. In none of these particular cases, regrettably, are the actual interrogations still extant. It would be here that the authorities would have probed most deeply the actual beliefs of the accused, their web of connections and possible links with heresy abroad. The records of the Chambre have an altogether different focus: to stipulate, often in minute detail, the exemplary ceremonial by which the convicted heretic would be either expelled or re-admitted to the community. But even allowing for this almost complete lack of overlap between the central preoccupation of the trial records and Crespin as martyrologist, the nature of the heresy with which the Chambre was faced still gives pause for thought. Put bluntly, one is struck by the primitive nature of the heresy of those brought in front of the Parlement of Paris. Of those condemned, 69 were arraigned as ‘blasphemers’ rather than heretics. Those in front of the Chambre ardente were incited for having evil books, holding secret conventicles, or insulting the Mass, the Virgin and the saints, but there is a lack of clear evidence that this dissent was Geneva-inspired. As Professor Galpern has remarked: ‘Those accused of such crimes were not necessarily Protestants, let alone Calvinists.’

Not surprisingly, the martyrology is rather more forthcoming in describing the beliefs of those convicted for heresy in these years. Given the inherent biases introduced by Crespin’s preoccupations and methods of collecting information it is hardly surprising that Geneva features much more prominently in his presentation of events. The important role Geneva played in the story of Galimar, Peloquin, Audebert and Thierry has already been indicated. In the case of Jean Brugiére, this emphasis is confirmed. The narrative of Brugiére was

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95 Baumgartner, Henry II, p. 265.
96 As Crespin himself recognised, noting that Lutheran is ‘the accusation which the enemies of the truth have drawn up against the children of God’, Crespin 1570, fol. 274v.
97 Pierre Cellier was found guilty of ‘haunting and conversing in the town Geneva with notorious and manifest heretics.’ Thibault Brosses was found guilty of the same crime. Both had to perform public penances, be whipped and were banished from their local areas for five years, Weiss, La Chambre ardente, nos. 130, 131.
augmented by Crespin with the inclusion of an extract of the Registers of the Parlement.\footnote{Crespin 1570, fols. 171*-172*.
} Apparently this tells us that Brugièrè was imprisoned for 'sacramentarian errors', and executed for 'scandalous propositions and errors .... against the honour of God and the holy Sacrament of the altar'.\footnote{Ibid., fol. 171*.
} More significantly, after Brugièrè's death the townspeople were expressly forbidden to hold doctrines 'especially against the holy sacrament of the Altar, and it was forbidded in Issoire for anyone 'to read any books in French or Latin containing erroneous and heretical doctrine, printed in Geneva or other suspects towns.'\footnote{Ibid., fol. 172*. This seems a mirroring of the edict of December 1547 which forbade the printing, selling or publishing of books concerning the holy Scripture, and especially those from Geneva, Germany and other foreign places; Higman, Censorship and the Sorbonne, p. 64. This would support the veracity of the extract, as Brugièrè was executed in March 1548, 3 months after the publication of the edict by the Parlement.}

In addition, the Articles of the Sorbonne, cited as 'preservers of the integrity of the Catholic church' were to be published every Sunday at all sermons in the parishes of the region of Auvergne, and that no-one should speak against these articles.\footnote{Crespin 1570, fol. 172*. Ray Mentzer has argued that the Parlement of Toulouse attempted to streamline the process of justice by centring many trials on offences mentioned in the Articles of the Sorbonne. This seems to be a similar attempt by the Parlement of Paris. Mentzer, Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc, pp. 135-7.}

Less authentic than the extracts of the Parlement's records, Crespin included statements of faith attributed to Brugièrè.\footnote{This is because the previous inclusion by Crespin of court records have proved to be reliable. For example, the court records of Meaux (see chapter 4 below).}

The Inquisitor, Matthew Ory, in a public sermon warned the people of Issoire to be on the guard against the tricks and fallacies of these Lutherans. After proclaiming the victim's sentence, Ory sought to dispute with him in public, so as

\begin{quote}
to divert him from his pure confession: and especially on the point of the Sacrament. And he insisted that he wanted to make him believe that the substance of the bread and the wine disappeared, and that in the place of this substance there was the true body and blood of our Lord.
\end{quote}

Brugièrè replied:

\begin{quote}
If our bodies could be fed by these bare qualities without their actual substance, your statement would have some validity; but as this is impossible, what link would there be between the signifier and the matter signified? This is necessary in all sacraments, for otherwise, it would be a pure fantasy, or even an idol, something which I detest.\footnote{Crespin 1570, fol. 173*.
}
\end{quote}
If this profession of faith is authentic and a reliable indication of the beliefs of Brugièrè, this statement marks an important departure in the portrayal of heresy in the *Histoire*. The missing registers of the *Chambre ardente* mean that there is no possibility of checking the veracity of Crespin’s claims. Yet the inclusion of court records suggest that Crespin’s source for this story is a good one and therefore it is plausible that information in it, including remarks attributed to Brugièrè, would be reliable. Nevertheless, even if the reliability of this testimony is in doubt, information actually taken from the extract of the *Parlement* is more dependable. For example, Brugièrè was imprisoned for ‘sacramental errors’, and executed for ‘scandalous propositions and errors .... against the honour of God and the holy Sacrament of the altar.’ Clearly, Brugièrè’s heresy was sacramental in nature, and the mention of Geneva as a centre of printing suggests the source of Brugièrè’s learning and heresy. Judging by the depth of his responses Brugièrè was greatly influenced by the outpouring of Genevan literature. The evidence presents a case in which there is convincing evidence of the Genevan-driven nature of Brugièrè’s heresy.

The period 1550-1555 was a period of mixed fortunes for the Protestant community in France. In certain areas, such as those under the jurisdiction of the *Parlement* of Paris, the intense persecution which had marked the previous decade could not be maintained. For the first three years of the decade the *Parlement* investigated only 26 people for heresy, of whom only one was executed. In other areas however, the persecution reached new heights. In Toulouse, for example, nearly three times as many people were accused of heresy and twice as many executed for it in the period 1550-1554 as had been in the previous five years.

The cases that appear in the *Histoire des vrais témouins* certainly indicate a heightened repression. In all, 17 incidences of martyrdom in France are recorded by Crespin for the period 1550-1555, featuring the execution of 22 people. Much interesting information can be derived from these stories. For example, it seems that at this time the practice of the

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105 Eleven in total were executed between 1550 and 1554 by the *Parlement* of Paris, Monter, 'Les exécutés pour hérésie', 205.


107 These are Jean Godieu and Gabriel Benadun, both executed in Chambéry in 1550; Claude Monier, executed in Lyon in 1551; Maurice Scenat, burnt in Nimes in 1551; Thomas de St Paul, executed in Paris in 1551; Jean Joery and his servant, executed in Toulouse in 1551; Nicholas Nal, executed in Paris in 1553; Antoine Magne, executed in Paris in 1553; Guillaume Nuel, burnt in Rouen in 1553; Simon Lalouet, executed in Dijon in 1553; Estienne Le Roy and Pierre Denocheau, both executed in Chartres in 1554; Pierre Serre, executed in Toulouse in 1553; Guillaume Dalemçon and a cloth-shearer, executed in Montpellier in 1553; Richard Le Pervre, executed in Lyon in 1554; Paris Pannier, executed in Dole in 1554; Julien Leveillé and Jean Fillieu, both executed in Paris in 1554; Denis Le Vayr, executed in Rouen in 1554; Pierre de la Vau executed in Nimes in 1554, and Guillaume Dongnan, executed in Limoges in 1555. This does not include the mass executions of those at Lyon, Villefranche and Chambéry, which are discussed below, in chapter 8.
authorities of removing the victim’s tongue prior to execution to prevent them from publicising their message, was dying out. In the account of Nicholas Nail and Guillaume Neel, both executed in 1553, the authorities employed a ball-like contraption to silence the condemned, a practice no less barbaric and not always successful.\footnote{108}

As has been mentioned earlier, the picture portrayed by the martyrology in the late 1540s was one where there was an increased emphasis on conventicles and secret gatherings. Judging by the information provided in the Histoire for this period, the authorities were aware of this and took steps against it. In the cases of seven of those condemned, Crespin specifically mentions that they were subjected to torture in order that they might disclose the names of their accomplices or acquaintances. Needless to say, the constancy of the martyrs was such that they refused to endanger their co-religionists. Pierre de la Vau executed in 1554, preferred to endure extraordinary torture, which fractured and mutilated his limbs, rather than place anyone in danger.\footnote{109} Men such as Thomas de St Paul, strengthened by God so that his interrogators did not get a word out of him; or Nicolas Nail who ‘remained constant without placing a single faithful in danger’, were typical.\footnote{110} Claude Monier, executed in October 1551, was willing to name two of his acquaintances, safe in the knowledge that they had already fled the persecution, one to England, and one to Geneva.\footnote{111}

The accounts which appear in the Histoire covering this period are noteworthy because of the far more detailed information provided by them. Without exception, even the briefest of accounts place more detail in the hands of the reader than typical accounts of the earlier periods. On many occasions, the name of either the prosecuting officer, or the chief interrogator is given by Crespin, or even a list of judges present. One further example of this improved detail is in the dating of accounts. In previously-cited accounts, Crespin quite commonly made the mistake of dating the execution incorrectly. The reports in the Histoire for executions that took place in the 1550s are much more reliable. Precise dates are given for the capture of the victim, or their condemnation, or even their execution.\footnote{112}

This more accurate and detailed portrayal of the procedure of the victims’ cases is mirrored by Crespin’s awareness of details of the judicial system and with it of a seemingly
new tactic employed by the condemned heretics in order to highlight their message. In the cases of both Jean Joery and Estienne Le Roy and Pierre Denocheau, they lodged an appeal to the respective Parlement.\textsuperscript{113} We are told by Crespin that Le Roy and Denocheau appealed to the Parlement of Paris ‘not to escape the judgement of death, but to magnify more amply and maintain in front of important men the doctrine of the Son of God.’\textsuperscript{114}

The reliability of these later accounts was sometimes reinforced by the inclusion of detailed confessions, transcripts of their interrogations or letters of the condemned. These inclusions range from quite modest transcriptions to massive incorporations of text. For example, the account of Jean Filleul and Julien Leveille amounts to nearly 2,000 words, of which two-thirds are contained in the transcript of their interrogation.\textsuperscript{115} The confession of Pierre Denocheau accounts for 90\% of the story’s 3,000 words, and the details of Claude Monier’s written confession and his letter of remonstrance to the Judges of Lyon amount to 97\% of the story’s total.\textsuperscript{116} These additions not only added authenticity to the account, but provided doctrinal guidance to its readers. In the case of the confessions, they touch on many points of doctrine, including the role of the Papacy, intercession of the saints, Purgatory, the Mass, the nature of the sacraments, clerical vows, pilgrimages, and the priesthood. Many of the martyrs who compiled detailed confessions were either priests or monks before turning to the Reformed faith and so these statements of belief are sophisticated and crammed with biblical citations and learned disputations.

All but one of the victims whose accounts contain confessions of faith or letters have some sort of connection with Geneva.\textsuperscript{117} The victims had either been resident in Geneva for some time, such as Pierre Denocheau, before returning to France, only to be captured, or were captured on the way to Geneva having sent their family ahead, as in the case of Filleul and Lesveillé, who were executed in December 1554.\textsuperscript{118} The emphasis on Geneva is even further marked in the other accounts, some of which do not contain detailed confessions or writings. In all, of the 17 instances of martyrdom in France identified by Crespin in this period, Geneva is mentioned in 12 of them, with one further case specifying an extensive correspondence with Calvin. For example, there is the story of Thomas de St Paul who fled to Geneva in 1549, only

\textsuperscript{113} Toulouse in the case of Joery, Paris in the case of Le Roy and Denocheau.
\textsuperscript{114} Crespin 1570, fol. 176\textsuperscript{v}.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., fols. 289\textsuperscript{r}-290\textsuperscript{v}.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., fols. 274\textsuperscript{v}-276\textsuperscript{v}, fols. 182\textsuperscript{v}-184\textsuperscript{v}. Similar figures arise with the other accounts. 92\% of the account of Guillaume Neel is taken up with his confession and his report on the progress of his appeal. In the case of Richard Le Pevre, 97\% of his massive entry is the verbatim reproduction of correspondence between him and Calvin, the authorities, and his confession of faith; ibid., fols. 269\textsuperscript{v}-274\textsuperscript{v} and 277\textsuperscript{r}-287\textsuperscript{v}.
\textsuperscript{117} The one exception is the case of Guillaume Neel from Normandy. It is possible that the source responsible for providing Crespin with the details of Denis Le Vayr was also responsible for furnishing Crespin with the details of Neel’s martyrdom.
\textsuperscript{118} Having been able to write down their confessions, copies of these and other writings could have been made available to Crespin by friends or family left behind in Geneva with whom they corresponded.
to return to France on business in 1551, where he was captured.\textsuperscript{119} Or the case of Jean Joery, who left Geneva for France in July 1551 to distribute books to the faithful, just as Nicholas Nail, two years later, took books to Paris that had been printed in Geneva.\textsuperscript{120} Similarly, Guillaume Dongnon bought books in French from Geneva, only to burn them for fear of being caught.\textsuperscript{121} Furthermore, the case of Simon Laloe, an optician, not only tells us how he left Geneva for France in 1553, only to be arrested in Dijon in September, but also how his executioner, after seeing the constancy of Laloe, retired from his grisly profession and headed for Geneva, 'in order to live according to the reformation of the Gospel.'\textsuperscript{122}

The extensive naming of Geneva in these accounts would seem to reinforce the point made earlier in this chapter about the increasingly predominant role played by the city in Crespin's portrayal of events at this time. Indeed, much has been made of the strong Genevan connection in Crespin's French accounts in the period 1540-61. Charles Parker feels that the consistent naming of Geneva in Crespin's accounts is evidence that 'Calvin exercised no small degree of theological influence over these martyrs.'\textsuperscript{123}

Yet surely this evidence found in the Martyrology is significantly contaminated in these cases. One of the main sources for the information presented by Crespin was the large refugee community that arrived in Geneva. They would arrive in the city either with tales of the condemned faithful they had left behind, or they would relay to Crespin their correspondence with the victims. However, this process of gathering information undoubtedly introduced an element of bias. Crespin's main concern was to be well-informed, and although these sources provided him with an extensive, impressive and probably reliable series of contacts, it did also mean that virtually all his inclusions had Geneva at the centre of their stories. Either the victims had lived in Geneva themselves, or their relatives did, or those who brought news of the suffering came to Geneva for refuge.

For example, in the case of Jean Filleul and Julien Leveille, their story almost certainly came from the other members of their family, whom they had sent ahead to Geneva when they fled Geneva. The family Leveille registered as habitants in April-May 1553.\textsuperscript{124} Although not knowing of their fate immediately, their subsequent correspondence with both the men could have been passed on to Crespin for publication.\textsuperscript{125} The close, almost familial nature of the French Protestant community is shown in the account of Claude Monier. He writes of his

\textsuperscript{119} Crespin 1570, fols. 185r–.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., fols. 185r–186r, 268v.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., fols. 319v–320r.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., fols. 274r–274v.
\textsuperscript{123} Parker, 'French Calvinists as the Children of Israel', 245.
\textsuperscript{125} It seems that Crespin did not receive the information in time to include it in his first edition of August 1554, but it does appear in his 	extit{Recueil} of 1556, Crespin 1556, pp. 72-9.
interrogation: ‘For me, my brothers, I was most angry when I was in front of them, and they asked about you. Eventually, they asked me if I knew the three Dimonet brothers at all.’\textsuperscript{126} Clearly, Crespin was able to produce a very detailed account for the case of Monier because of this correspondence Monier had with the Dimonet brothers.\textsuperscript{127} Matthew Dimonet was imprisoned in Lyon at the same time as the more celebrated five scholars of Lyon and corresponded with them regularly. They in turn had an extensive correspondence with Geneva.\textsuperscript{128} In addition, Crespin tells us that Claude Monier studied at Lausanne for some time, where he would surely have met the five scholars. Furthermore, a certain André Dymnanet of Lyon, the brother of Matthew, registered as a habitant in Geneva in October 1554.\textsuperscript{129} The inter-connections are even greater when one bears in mind that Richard Le Fevre was probably in prison in Lyon at the same time as the five students, and most likely, would have also known Monier. The account of Le Fevre is so long because of the publication of his correspondence with Calvin, so clearly he was in close contact with Calvin and Geneva, and had been able to pass on information about his inmates.\textsuperscript{130}

With sources such as these, the accounts produced in Crespin’s work are bound to over-emphasise the influence of Geneva, either as a place of refuge or a source of contraband literature. The nature of his process of information-gathering meant that the stories of many martyrs were not told, ones who had perhaps relied on other sources of inspiration or found England a nearer place of refuge than Geneva.\textsuperscript{131}

In some instances, Crespin was well-informed about the procedure of the case, or the details of the execution, but appears to know little about the nature of their beliefs, and lacks documentary evidence to back up his story. His source for these accounts was obviously oral, as he would always draw upon any letters or transcripts he could secure. In these cases, it is most likely that he has had to rely on the testimony of someone present at the execution, or involved in the judicial process. Ray Mentzer has shown how the arrival in Geneva in the autumn of 1553 of Antoine de Lautrec, a lay counsellor with the Parlement of Toulouse, provided Crespin with intricate details of the deaths of Pierre Serre and Jean Joery.\textsuperscript{132} Similarly, Crespin’s tale of Jacques Silvestre (Simon Laloë’s executioner) fleeing France and

\textsuperscript{126} Crespin 1570, fol. 182\textsuperscript{v}.

\textsuperscript{127} The account of Monier’s execution appears in the first edition of 1554; Crespin 1554, pp. 289-305.

\textsuperscript{128} See below, chapter 8.

\textsuperscript{129} Geisendorf, \textit{Livre des Habitants}, vol. I, p. 41.

\textsuperscript{130} Crespin 1570, fols. 277\textsuperscript{r}-287\textsuperscript{r}. The account appears in the first edition, Crespin 1554, pp. 666-687.

\textsuperscript{131} For the role of England as a place of refuge, see A. Pettigrew, \textit{Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London} (Oxford, 1986).

\textsuperscript{132} R. Mentzer, ‘Calvinist Propaganda and the Parlement of Toulouse’, 272-7. Although four other martyrs (Maurice Secenat, Guillaume Dalençon, a cloth shearer and Pierre de la Vau) from Languedoc appear in the \textit{Histoire} at this time, it seems unlikely that their inclusion was due to the same source as the other two as the four were included in the first edition of 1554, whereas the accounts of Serre and Joery did not appear in the martyrology until the Latin edition of 1560.
arriving in Geneva indicates the source of that account. Silvestre would have provided Crespin with detailed information about the execution, but near to nothing about his confession or his beliefs.\textsuperscript{133}

The inherent Genevan bias in so many of Crespin’s accounts is also reflected in the geographical distribution of his martyrs. By the same token, this body of accounts obviously does not give a full picture of the growth of Protestantism across France at this time. The reliance on refugees for information meant that some areas of France are clearly over-represented, whereas other provinces where Protestantism was beginning to put down roots find barely a mention in Crespin’s book. For instance, whereas regions such as the Auvergne, Normandy and most especially Languedoc are well-represented, the story of La Rochelle, barely figures in the Histoire. Largely dependant as he was on refugees for his information, Crespin was at the mercy of his sources. As we have seen, Crespin’s very full reporting of events in Languedoc in the early 1550s was due to the arrival of a well-informed source, Antoine de Lautrec. Furthermore, Crespin was also well-informed about events in Lyon and events in the jurisdiction of the Parlement of Chambéry.\textsuperscript{134}

The story of the development of heresy during the reign of Henry II is complex. The creation of a new jurisdiction the Chambre ardente, at the beginning of the reign set the tone both for contemporary perceptions of a rising tide of persecution, and for the judgement of later historians. Few go on to remark that the effective working life of the Chambre was of remarkably short duration, and that it was not noticeably more savage in its treatment of heresy than other more conventional tribunals. Furthermore, all the indications are that both the extent of heresy and the number of prosecutions rose after the Chambre had been wound up in 1550.

There is little doubt that the increasing royal preoccupation with Protestant dissent reflected the perception of the emergence of a new and more virulent strain of heresy, associated in their eyes with the emergence of Geneva as the leading force in French Protestantism. Books, men and organisational structures provided by the Genevan church gradually transformed the previously somewhat inchoate French evangelical movement. Yet the precise moment when this new force established a dominant role within France remains a matter of debate. On the basis of the analysis presented in this chapter it is not difficult to see why: as we have seen, different contemporary sources give totally conflicting signals. From

\textsuperscript{133} Interestingly, the account of Laloë in all its detail appears in the Recueil of August 1554, although Silvestre did not register as a habitant until 22 October 1554, giving his occupation as a weaver of cloth. Geissendorf, Livre des Habitants, vol. I, p. 41.

\textsuperscript{134} See chapter 2.
Francis Higman’s analysis of the titles of books censured by the Sorbonne one would be forgiven for thinking that Geneva had already established a dominant role in French evangelism from the mid-1540s; the records of the Chambre ardente tell a strikingly different story, and offer a useful corrective.

Any analysis of the development of evangelical dissent in France based on the fate of those condemned for heresy needs to take into account the particular and very different preoccupations of contemporary sources such as trial records and Crespin’s martyrology. Neither paints anything like a full picture, Crespin not least because of his clear geographical bias, and his particular emphasis with incidents which concerned fellow labourers in the book trade. Nevertheless, if we put these two sources together, one can offer several suggestive hypotheses about the nature of heresy under Henry II. First, the 1540s was clearly a period when Geneva was identified by the French authorities as the principal source of heresy. But the evidence of the trial records does not support the further inference that Calvinism did indeed take a grip on the French evangelical movement this early. The dichotomy between the authorities’ perception of the danger and the actual beliefs of heretics tried by the Chambre ardente is striking, suggesting that to some extent contemporaries were as mesmerised by the exile propaganda campaign and Calvin’s growing international profile as later historians have been. Paradoxically, it was in the first five years after the Chambre ardente was wound up that Geneva really seems to have taken a grip on the movement in France, deepening its contacts with several parts of the kingdom, such as Languedoc, which had previously been largely outside its orbit.

From this time on, Geneva drove the Protestant church into its period of greatest expansion with a ‘flood tide’ of men and books. In this Crespin’s martyrology played a double role, as both part of the growing propaganda literature of these years, and its first contemporary chronicle. It presented a vision which not only highlighted Geneva’s role in the transformation of French evangelism, but presented French events in their wider context as part of a buoyant European community of the faithful. It is to this international role which it is now necessary to turn.

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135 Kingdon, Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion, chapters 8 and 9.
Although this study has focused primarily on the portrayal of the evangelical movement in France prior to the establishment of the first Calvinist church in 1555, French martyrs form only a part of Crespin's collection. Indeed in the Histoire of 1570 French martyrs are in the minority, with over 60% of the collection being taken up with accounts of martyrs executed in nearly every western European country.¹ Crespin, in fact, was the most international of all the sixteenth-century Protestant martyrologists. This should surprise no-one. Although he was responsible for the official martyrology of the French Reformed church, Crespin himself was not a native-born Frenchman; as a native of Arras, he was a subject of the Emperor. Also, as a long-time resident in Geneva, a city unparalleled as a centre for refuge for sixteenth-century Protestants, Crespin could not fail to mix with and be influenced by its cosmopolitan population. Furthermore, his own eminence both before and after he had arrived in Geneva, ensured that he could count some of the most notable figures of European Protestantism as friends or acquaintances.² Indeed, his experience of martyrdom was quite direct; three of his friends were executed for their faith.³

A truly cosmopolitan character of his collection was apparent throughout nearly every edition. From his first edition, which encompassed persecution in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy, through to the Histoire which covered the persecution in all major Western European countries and even South America, Crespin's overriding concern was to give the greatest amount of publicity to the greatest number of martyrs, regardless of their nationality. The international community of suffering transcended national boundaries, and the appearance of his collection was an important articulation of this principle.

However, Crespin's coverage of European affairs was not uniform. His treatment of each country and each area differed widely. Different parts of the European movement received very different levels of attention. In purely statistical terms, Crespin includes accounts of 63% of those executed in France between 1523 and 1570; 70% of those executed in the

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¹ In terms of numbers of martyrs included, martyrs from France account for 37.5%, martyrs from the seventeen provinces of the Netherlands 25%, martyrs from Britain 29% and martyrs from other areas (Germany, Brazil, Spain and Portugal) 8.5%. Expressed in terms of amounts of words used, the totals are slightly different: French martyrs total 45%, Dutch 25%, British 18.5% and the others 11.5%. See Gilmont, 'Les centres d'intérêt du martyrologe de Jean Crespin', 358-369.

² For example, Theodorus Beza, Antoine Calvin, Laurent de Normandie, Charles de Joinville, Martin Bucer, Juan Diaz, the Enzinas brothers, Pierre Brully, Matthew Budé and so on. See chapter 1.

³ Pierre Brully in 1545, Juan Díaz in 1546 and Jaime de Enzinas in 1547.
Netherlands, over 80% of those put to death in Britain, only around 38% of those executed in Italy, and a mere 24% of Spanish victims of the Inquisition. These bare figures, interesting though they are, also mask considerable variations between successive editions of his book. For example, German martyrs take up 15% of Crespin's first edition of 1554, but less than a tenth of that figure in the Histoire of 1570. Obviously, the political and religious situation in the Holy Roman Empire created very few candidates for Crespin's collection after 1530. Consequently, the accumulation of information for martyrs of other countries that contributed to the growth of the martyrology meant that the proportion of German martyrs fell dramatically. In addition, the chronological nature of the Histoire leads the accounts of German martyrs to be concentrated at the beginning of the book. In fact, all 12 of the German martyrs included in the Histoire appear in the period 1524-28, covered within 18 pages of the collection.

In many respects, one would expect Crespin to be more poorly informed about this group of martyrs than any other. Notwithstanding the obvious truth that were all executed at least 25 years before Crespin conceived his first edition, it was an area with which Crespin shared no obvious affinity. Even though he was able to draw upon translators and collaborators, he himself was unable to speak German. Uniquely among the major European martyrological works, he did not exploit the martyrology of Ludwig Rabus to fill out his own collection. By and large he could not draw upon the memories and writings of those who had fled the persecution to Geneva, as he could for other nationalities. Nevertheless, the accounts of these early German martyrs include some of the most detailed of the early part of the book. Crespin was able to provide such lengthy accounts of these martyrs because, as some of the earliest Protestant heroes, the death of these characters had been fully documented in the pamphlet literature of the early Reformation. In total, no fewer than 19 separate books celebrating the deaths of these German martyrs were produced between 1523 and 1527, in a total of 72

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4 The comparison is between the number of martyrs per country in the Histoire as specified in Gilmont, 'Les centres d'intérêt du martyrologe de Jean Crespin' and the total number of Protestants executed in each particular country as calculated by W. Monter, 'Heresy Executions in Reformation Europe, 1520-1565', in O. P. Grell and B. Scribner (eds.) Tolerance and intolerance in the European Reformation (Cambridge, 1996), p. 49.

5 Only 1.4% of the martyrs in the 1570 edition were German; Gilmont, 'Les centres d'intérêt du martyrologe de Jean Crespin', 363-5.

6 See W. Monter, 'Heresy Executions in Reformation Europe'.

7 Crespin 1570, fols. 61'-70'.

8 Gilmont, Jean Crespin, p. 171.

9 The average number of words per martyr story for the whole collection is 1,310 words. For the German stories, it is 1,750 words. See Gilmont, 'Les centres d'intérêt du martyrologe de Jean Crespin', 362-3.

10 In effect, the years 1520-25 marked the summit of "the war of pamphlets", Gilmont, Les martyrologes protestants du XVIIe siècle, p. 7.
editions. These were sources that were unique to German literature, and Crespin could not rely on similar sources for his French collection.

Typical of these Flugschriften was the small book written by Luther, ‘The Burning of Brother Henry’. As mentioned in chapter two, this work provided Crespin with his account of the martyrdom of Henry of Zutphen. These pamphlets, of maybe four to eight pages in length, were made up of either eye-witness reports of the execution, acts of condemnation, or letters of consolation. However, judging by the contents of the other German accounts in the Histoire, Crespin was not so uniformly well-informed on other martyrdoms of the period. For example, the martyrdoms of George (Winkler) of Halle, Caspar Tauber, Leonard Kaiser and Adolf Clarebach were all subjects of contemporary Flugschriften, yet the detail and information provided by the Histoire’s accounts is quite bare and sketchy. Despite the fact that contemporary pamphlet literature existed in many cases, it appears that Crespin was either not able to obtain it, or that he chose to disregard some of the information, and only include what material he saw fit.

As well as producing a Flugschrift upon the death of Henry of Zutphen, Martin Luther wrote memorials for two other victims whose accounts both appear in the Histoire. The murder of George Winkler on the open road in April 1527 and the burning of Leonhard Kaiser in Bavaria in August of that year prompted Luther to take up his pen. In the case of Winkler, he wrote a letter of consolation to the Christians at Halle in the Autumn of 1527 which was published as a fourteen page pamphlet in Wittenberg by Hans Lufft in 1527 and reissued in five subsequent editions. Winkler, a friend of the Archbishop of Mainz, embraced evangelism and began to administer Communion in both kinds to the laity. Word soon spread of this indiscretion, and he was called before the Archbishop. Given a sympathetic hearing by his friend, Winkler was released. On his return home, however, he was lured along a lonely road by a would-be convert and murdered. In contrast to the detail of Luther’s pamphlet, the account in the Histoire is only an outline sketch, containing few details. Only 100 words long, the account reveals that Winkler preached at Halle, that he administered Communion in both

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12 The earliest equivalent in French literature was the publication of Trois Épîtres de Godefroy de Hamelle in 1552. Gilmont, Les martyrologes protestants du XVIe siècle, p. 43. This, of course, was an account of a martyr from the Low Countries. There were no pamphlets or broadsheets describing the burning of heretics printed in France in the whole of the sixteenth century; Nicholls, 'Theatre of Martyrom', 69. See J.-P. Seguin, L’information en France de Louis XII à Henri II (Geneva, 1961). Also, J.-P. Seguin, L’information en France avant le périodique: 517 canards imprimés entre 1529 et 1631 (Paris, 1964).

13 See chapter 2, pp. 18-19.

kinds, and that he was set upon and killed near Aschaffenburg by brigands and thieves who were put up to it by priests.\textsuperscript{15}

Crespin is similarly concise in the case of Leonard Kaiser. Kaiser, a former student at Wittenberg, was burnt for evangelical views on 16 August 1527. Crespin provides the reader with the barest outline, telling the reader that Kaiser had studied at Wittenberg and giving brief details of his testimony and beliefs.\textsuperscript{16} Crespin could have drawn this information from either of two pamphlets produced to celebrate Kaiser’s death. First, a brief account was written by Michael Stiefel. This included a letter of consolation of 20 May from Luther to Kaiser during the latter’s imprisonment.\textsuperscript{17} This publication inspired Luther to write at greater length on the event, and he produced a much longer pamphlet the following year.\textsuperscript{18} The fact that Crespin was aware of the details of Kaiser’s testimony does imply that he was provided with a good source of information, but the fact that the account was comparatively so short suggests that Crespin was selective as to which parts he utilised.

It is also possible however, that Crespin was not aware of either of the two publications telling the story of the execution of Kaiser, and that he was only able to compile his story from another source. That certainly appears to be the case in the the history of Adolf Clarebach and Pierre Flistede. Executed in Cologne on 28 September 1529, these two ‘learned men’ were imprisoned in Cologne in 1528 because ‘they did not agree with the Papists about the Holy Supper of the Lord and other points.’\textsuperscript{19} Crespin’s knowledge of this case is sufficient for him to be able to comment on the complicated judicial manoeuvrings that accompanied the case, for whereas the men had been imprisoned by the town council, a definitive judgement of either release or condemnation could only be issued by the Archbishop. Crespin claimed that sermons preached by the theologians incited the wrath of the authorities, and secured the execution of the two men, despite the regrets of the town council. According to the \textit{Histoire}, these sermons attributed many of the ills that were afflicting Germany at this time, such as the advance of Suleiman in the East and a new plague from England, to God’s anger against Protestants. Crespin’s account of these two was clearly derived from only the most basic

\textsuperscript{15} Crespin 1570, fol. 62\textsuperscript{a}.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., fols. 68\textsuperscript{a}-69\textsuperscript{a}. The account totalled only 400 words. The details of his testimony were that first, faith alone saves, and that works are the fruits of faith. Secondly, Mass is not an obligation or sacrifice. Finally, there are three types of confession: the first is of faith which is always necessary; the second is of charity which is necessary to reconcile arguments with one’s neighbour and the third is to ask counsel and consolation of the elders and ministers of the Church. Crespin 1570, fol. 69\textsuperscript{a}.
\textsuperscript{17} M. Stiefel, \textit{Histori oder das warhaftig geschicht, des leydens und sterbens Lienhart Keyers seligen...} (Nuremberg 1527). W4, 23, 443.
\textsuperscript{18} Martin Luther, \textit{Von Herrn Lenhart Kaiser zu Baiern um des Evangeliui willen verbrannt} (1527), WA, 23, 452-476. Although highly unlikely, Crespin could even have taken his information from a Catholic publication on the burning: Johann Eck, \textit{Warhaftige handlung we es mit Herr Lenhart Kaiser zu Schårding verbrent ergangen ist...} (Ingolstadt, 1528).
\textsuperscript{19} Crespin 1570, fol. 70\textsuperscript{a}. 138
information. This is despite the fact that the two works celebrating the death of Clarebach were produced in greater numbers than any other.\textsuperscript{20}

For other areas of the Empire, such as French-speaking Lorraine, however, Crespin is very well-informed. The accounts of Jean Castellan and Wolfgang Schuch are both of considerable length.\textsuperscript{21} Castellan, an Augustinian preacher originally from Tournai, was executed at Vic-sur-Seille in January 1525. Crespin’s account consists of an outline of his life, the document of his arrest, and the story of his imprisonment and death. The most important account of his execution was that by Nicolas Volcy, the official historian of the Duke of Lorraine, written soon after the execution, but only published in 1534.\textsuperscript{22} It was this treatise on which Crespin based his own history.\textsuperscript{23} The account of Schuch, the curé of Saint-Hippolyte, recounts how he was an adherent of the Reformed cause, and was also married. Arrested on the orders of the Duke of Lorraine, he was executed at Nancy, on 26 June 1525. The account in Crespin was augmented between 1554 and 1560 to include a copy of a publication of a letter of 1526 from Schuch to the Duke, justifying his position.\textsuperscript{24}

Judging by these examples, Crespin’s treatment of the German martyr stories was quite varied. For some French-speaking areas, such as Metz, he could be well-informed. In other instances, he was capable of being quite selective in his compilation. He chose, for example, not to use the letter of consolation of 20 May from Luther to Kaiser during the latter’s imprisonment. Bearing in mind that in other circumstances Crespin eagerly incorporated testimony such as this, this selectivity is probably quite deliberate. In much the same way that in his accounts of the accounts of early French martyrs, Crespin was keen to play down any association with Martin Luther, here too the effect of Crespin’s editorial interventions was to diminish the role of the German Reformer as an inspiration to the international community of the faithful martyrs, of which these German evangelicals formed a part.

The bald statistic that martyrs from the seventeen provinces of the Netherlands account for one-quarter of the total number of words and one-quarter of the total number of martyrs included in the Histoire is not surprising.\textsuperscript{25} Being the centre of the greatest persecution, this

\textsuperscript{20} These were \textit{Alle Acta Adolphi Clarebach...} (Cologne, Eucharius Hirtzhorn, 1529) and \textit{Ernstliche handleitung zwischen den hochgelerten Doctorn...} (Cologne, Hiero Punsch, 1529). See Gilmont, \textit{Les martyrloges protestants du XVIe siècle}, p.21.

\textsuperscript{21} That of Castellan is 2,200 words long, and that of Schuch is 4,800 words. Crespin 1570, fols. 62’-63’ and fols. 64’-67’. On Schuch, see A. Coquerel, ‘La vie et mort du martyr Wolfgang Schuch’, \textit{BSHPP}, 2 (1854), 632-648.

\textsuperscript{22} N. Volcy, \textit{Traité nouveau de la desecration et execution actuelle de Johan Castellan} (Paris, 1534).

\textsuperscript{23} Gilmont, ‘Certains récits du martyrologe de Crespin’, pp. 194-5.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., pp. 195-6.

\textsuperscript{25} In terms the number of words, Dutch martyrs are the second most numerous. In terms of actual numbers of martyrs, French martyrs (37.5%) and English martyrs (29%) are more numerous. Gilmont, ‘Les centres d’intérêt du martyrloge de Jean Crespin’, 363.
area provided Crespin with more than enough candidates for inclusion in his collection. Yet, an analysis of Crespin’s Netherlandish collection provides more than just a collection of names. A great many of the histories that appear in the Histoire are replete with unpublished documentation such as letters to and from the victims. A native of the region, he had himself fled the area in the aftermath of Pierre Brully’s execution in 1545. Crespin’s portrayal of the religious situation in this area was more immediate and familiar than any other.

Crespin was, in fact, a Walloon exile of truly European stature. Recognised in the 1560s as the ‘leading Genevan expert on religious questions relating to the Low Countries’, he was sent there as Beza’s deputy to represent Geneva in an advisory capacity at the outbreak of the revolt. This mission only heightened Crespin’s intimate knowledge of the Low Countries, and most importantly, his contacts within that area; both of which allowed his martyrology to become a source of constant and up-to-date information. This was a task made easier by Crespin’s impressive reputation which allowed him access to many of the leading figures of the Calvinist community in the Netherlands.

Of course, the Netherlands had a special status in almost all the major martyrologies for it was here that the first executions for heresy in Reformation Europe occurred. The deaths of Jan van der Eschen and Henrik Vos, two Augustinian monks of the Antwerp house executed in Brussels in 1523, was an event of European significance, and an immediate cause célèbre in Protestant circles. Their deaths were widely publicised, and brought the publication within days of one eye-witness account, which later went through more than twelve editions. Other works soon followed, amongst them the Historia de duobus augustinensibus. However, Crespin clearly did not have any of these pamphlets to hand when compiling his first edition. If he had done so, then the account in the first edition of 1554 would be more detailed. Totalling only 500 words, Crespin’s knowledge of these tumultuous events was so vague that he knew only the monks’ Christian names, and offered only a few words as to their courage and constancy. In contrast, the account that appears in the Histoire of 1570, details the heroic suffering endured by the monks during first their degradation, and then their execution. Crespin’s story is supplemented by the inclusion of three more sections offering further

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26 Monter, ‘Heresy Executions in Reformation Europe’, p. 49.
28 Crespin was seen as some sort of ‘sovereign counsellor’; Gilmont, Jean Crespin, pp. 224-5.
30 Crespin 1554, pp. 152-4.
testimony to their constancy, taken from letters, the articles of condemnation and a lament from another prisoner imprisoned in Brabant at this time.\textsuperscript{31}

The inclusion of these sections meant that the account in the \textit{Histoire} amounted to nearly 3,000 words. The accumulation of information for this narrative in the martyrology was a gradual process. By 1556, Crespin was able to add the surnames of the two monks, but little more additional information.\textsuperscript{32} By 1564, Crespin’s account had reached its definitive length.\textsuperscript{33} Clearly not satisfied with his original basic outline of the events, Crespin had continued to search for a source of fuller information, ideally one that perhaps offered original testimony or transcripts of letters. It is clear that he eventually obtained the information he sought between 1556 and 1564.

As has been seen, Crespin did exploit German pamphlet literature for his accounts of German martyrs, and those executed in the Empire. He was able to draw upon a more limited, and less celebrated Dutch tradition of martyr literature in the case of Jan van Woorden, executed in The Hague in July 1525.\textsuperscript{34} William Gnapheus, imprisoned at the same time as van Woorden, produced several re-editions of his account of van Woorden’s martyrdom. His work set a new precedent for this type of pamphlet literature. He constantly re-edited the work, and developed a more theological approach, moving away from a concentration on a basic account of events. The first edition, \textit{Een suverelieke ende seer schone disputacie}, concentrates overwhelmingly on the theological debates that brought about van Woorden’s end, and much less on the heroic fate of the martyr.\textsuperscript{35} The definitive work was written in Latin in 1529, although not published until 1546.\textsuperscript{36} Its emphasis is far different from that of the first edition. Set out in three parts, it contains the life of the martyr, a prayer where the author defended the subject’s theology, and an account of the discussions held in front of the interrogators. Crespin, however, chose not to base his account on the latest edition, and three-quarters of the account in the \textit{Histoire} is taken up with details of his theological debates.\textsuperscript{37} He explained to the reader why he chose to follow the earlier edition:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Crespin 1570, fols. 58^-60^\textdegree.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Crespin 1556, pp. 167-9.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Crespin 1564, fols. 87-96.
\item \textsuperscript{34} \textit{BMP}, vol. 1, pp. 269-304. He was also known as Jean Van Woorden, or Jan de Backer.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Published Antwerp c. 1526. See \textit{BMP}, vol. 1, pp. 271-80. Thirty-six of the forty pages were devoted to theological discussion, Gilmont, \textit{Les martyrologes protestants du XVIe siècle}, p. 26.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Willem Gnapheus, \textit{Ioannis Pistorii a Worden, Ob Evangelicae Doctrinac, assertionem, apud Hollandos primo omnium exasti, vita…} (Strasbourg, 1546); \textit{BMP}, vol. 1, p. 287-90.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Crespin 1570, fol. 60^\textdegree. Although published in the late-1530s, it appears that Crespin did not get hold of this pamphlet until much later, as it reproduced for the first time in the \textit{Histoire} of 1570. He did not, however, copy the pamphlet verbatim. The account in the martyrology is only 700 words long, whereas Gnapheus’ work amounted to 40 pages in 8^\textdegree. Gilmont, \textit{Les martyrologes protestants du XVIe siècle}, p. 26.
\end{itemize}
G. Gnaepheus, a learned man, wrote the life of Jean Pistorius de Worden, with an apologetic prayer, which he published in writing on the captivity of the former: concerning the celibacy of priests, but what we have succinctly inserted here, in particular concerning the martyrdom of the said Worden, has been taken from what was written about him in the Flemish language.  

Another account in which Crespin acknowledged his source was the story of Hoste van der Kathelyne, executed in Ghent in April 1555. The rising death-toll of Protestants in the Netherlands meant that, from 1555, Dutch printers were adding very considerably to the previously very limited number of martyr narratives. An example of this phenomenon was Martin Microen’s work on van der Kathelyne. This booklet provided the details of the account in the Histoire. As Crespin recalled:

M. Martin Micron who was previously mentioned as minister in Emden gave this memorable history in writing, from which we are able to gather that the truth of the Gospel, in the heart of the faithful, is an invincible fortress, carrying out daring acts that one will appreciate against the witnesses of falsehood.

Half of Microen’s published account was given over to van der Kathelyne’s life and death, to two theological documents written by him, and the pardon he gave to his persecutors. The rest of the pamphlet was taken up by Microen’s opinion of the Holy Supper. In contrast to this lengthy work, the history written for Crespin is far briefer and contains all the necessary ingredients for an authentic martyr narrative. It speaks of van der Kathelyne’s journey from England and his arrest for confronting a monk during a sermon, accusing him for being a false prophet, preaching ‘false and wicked doctrine’. His arrest, in April 1554, was followed by his interrogation, which Crespin reproduces. The authenticity of the account is confirmed by the inclusion of two of van der Kathelyne’s letters; one to his wife and another to Microen.

Finally, the story of the martyr’s heroic end is told.

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38 Crespin 1570, fol. 60. Judging by the accuracy of his description, it is evident that Crespin had an copy of the definitive account.
39 Crespin 1570, fols. 287-289.
42 A shortened version of this account first appears in the Troisième partie of 1557, Crespin 1557, pp. 61-72.
43 Haenstede was also provided with this account, Crespin 1885-9, vol. I, p. 61.
44 Crespin 1570, fol. 287.

See chapters 1 and 8. The account in the Histoire is approximately 2,750 words long.
It is obvious that a similar network was in place not only between Microen and van der Kathelyne, but also between Microen and the martyr's wife. Crespin depended on very similar relationships for his history of the martyrdoms of Pierre Brully, executed in Tournai in 1545 and Godefroid de Hamal, also executed in Tournai, in 1552.\footnote{Crespin 1570, fols. 186'-191'.} Crespin's association with Pierre Brully went back to sometime in September or October 1544. Visiting the Low Countries at the request of Calvin, he was arrested on 3 November 1544 and executed in February of the following year. During his three month imprisonment, he was urged by his family to comfort them in writing. His sister even moved to Tournai to comfort him personally whilst the trial proceeded. During the time, Brully was able to compose a lengthy letter to 'all the faithful who suffered persecution having heard the preaching of the gospel', and a confession of faith, as well as numerous letters to friends and family.\footnote{Moreau, \textit{Histoire du Protestantisme à Tournai}, pp. 92-118.}

The lengthy account in the \textit{Histoire} is extremely full and detailed. In it Crespin offers the story of his mission to the Low Countries, the Tournai town council's search for and arrest of the 'Preacher of Germany' (as they called him) and the fact that many others were imprisoned at the same time as him. The account in the martyrology goes on:

Brully consoled them with letters, and encouraged them to constancy and firmness, and whilst his case was being dealt with in prison, the theologians interrogated him in the presence of the Magistrate on several points of religion, and above all on the Mass, on consecration, on the adoration of the host and on Purgatory; the details of which Brully wrote to his wife under the name of his sister, and to other friends.\footnote{Crespin 1570, fols. 135'-137'.}

The 'letter to all faithful who have suffered persecution' follows, together with three more letters.\footnote{Ibid., fols. 137'-138'.} Two were written by Brully, one to his wife and one to his friends, after receiving his death sentence, and a final letter written a little before his death.\footnote{Ibid., fols. 138'-139'; fol. 139'.} Crespin's account contains transcripts of all the letters written by Brully during his imprisonment.\footnote{But Crespin is the sole author to give us in entirety the text of the letters of this martyr'; Moreau, 'Contribution à l'histoire du Livre des Martyrs', 187.} It is difficult to imagine a more complete martyr story.

A similar statement can be made about the history of Godefroid de Hamal.\footnote{Crespin 1570, fols. 186'-191'.} A disciple of Calvin, de Hamal was a vigorous proselytiser in the name of Geneva in Tournai. His intense activity brought him to the attention of the authorities, and he was arrested in March 1552 by
the Inquisitor, Pieter Titelmans. Despite endless interrogation and torture, de Hamal remained firm in his belief. He was condemned to be burnt alive on 22 June 1552.\(^{53}\) The account of de Hamal in the *Histoire* was also full of first-hand evidence. The narrative was made up of a letter to his sister detailing his interrogation, a letter to the judges at Tournai which contained his confession, and a final letter written to console his parents and friends.

These two accounts are similar in several respects. Both captives would have been aware of their duty to publicise their plight. Their prolific writings and letters show that the conditions of their imprisonment allowed them to do so. Both were committed followers of Calvin. Brully’s letters have shown him to be a disciple of Calvin, and de Hamal’s writings demonstrated ‘his perfect knowledge of the doctrine of Geneva.’\(^{54}\)

In the case of de Hamal, Crespin’s source would seem to be a friend of the martyr. Although the publication of de Hamal’s letters in 1552 would have provided Crespin with a potential source for his composition, it has been shown by Professor Moreau that Crespin did not rely on this published account of 1552.\(^{55}\) It appears that Crespin relied upon an independent, manuscript copy from which he reproduced the letters. For the events surrounding the martyrdom of Brully, Crespin’s source was almost certainly Guy de Brès, minister of the Reformed community in Tournai from 1559-1561. Since he did not arrive in Tournai until 1559, he would not have known Brully personally, but it is probable that he passed on to Crespin information that he had received from the Reformed community in the city.\(^{56}\) The fact that he was not active in compiling information on behalf of Crespin until 1559 makes the case for de Brès’ involvement even stronger. This is because Crespin’s account of Brully was updated between the *Acta Martyrum* of 1560 and the *Actes des Martyrs* of 1564.\(^{57}\)

De Brès would have had no shortage of his own informants in Tournai, eager to assist him. Numbered amongst those favourable to the Reformed in the 1540s was a large section of the judiciary. As Crespin himself notes, ‘a great many of those of the law of Tournai were favourable to those of the Gospel.’\(^{58}\) Men such as Pasquier de la Barre and Nicolas Taffin, both magistrates, would have been in an ideal position to furnish details and documents concerning Brully and other martyrs to de Brès who, in turn, would convey them to Crespin.\(^{59}\)

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\(^{54}\) For Brully, see Moreau, *Contribution à l’histoire du Livre des Martyrs*, 178; on de Hamal, ibid., 122-3.

\(^{55}\) Godefroid de Hamal, *Trois Épîtres de Godefroy De Hamaelle, Natif de nivele en Brabant...* (1552). *BMP*, vol. 1, pp. 153-9. Gilmont has shown that this publication was important, as it was one of the first examples of the story of a martyrdom told by the martyr. Gilmont, *Les martyriologes protestants du XVIe siècle*, p. 44.


\(^{57}\) Ibid., 191-2.

\(^{58}\) Crespin 1570, fol. 135°.

\(^{59}\) De la Barre was executed in 1568. Taffin had been condemned *in absentia* the previous year.
This was not the limit of de Brès’ activities. An inspection of the seventh book of the Actes des Martyrs of 1564, which deals with the period 1560-4, reveals that twelve of the fifteen martyrs included in this book are from the area of Tournai, Arras, Cambrai and Lille. Out of that dozen, all but two are very well-documented cases from Tournai. This is surely overwhelming evidence for the identification of de Brès as Crespin’s regular informant.60

De Brès arrived in Tournai as pastor in 1559. Once there, he helped found Reformed churches in Lille, Valenciennes and Cambrai. In 1561, he co-edited with three other pastors the Belgic Confession, which was adopted by Dutch Protestants at the Synod of Emden in 1571. He himself was arrested in March 1567 and executed two months later, on the last day of May.61 Crespin’s first meeting with Guy de Brès took place at the Frankfurt book fair, in September 1556.62 From this point on, de Brès became Crespin’s single most important contact with the Reformed community in the Netherlands. For the next eight years, de Brès provided Crespin with much precious and authentic information. In addition, de Brès continued to provide material for Crespin even after his death. Upon his return from the Low Countries in 1567, Crespin published a volume entitled Procedures tenues à l’endroit de ceux de la religion du pais Bas, which detailed the siege of Valenciennes, but was mainly taken up with an account of the martyrdoms of both de Brès and his fellow pastor, Pérégrin de La Grange, greatly enhanced by de Brès’ own correspondence.63 This volume was expanded and incorporated into the Histoire of 1570.64 Crespin’s information gathering in this region continued despite the pastor’s death. His visit to the area had enabled him to establish new contacts. Indeed, the quality of the information he continued to receive is indicated by the length of La Grange’s and de Brès’ own history.

Crespin’s portrayal of the Netherlandish martyrs was neither complete nor uniform. His system of contacts introduced an inherent bias into his collection. Crespin maintained the most efficient links with his native Artois and surrounding Walloon towns; contacts either made before or after his own exile. Yet, even within areas in which he was well provided for information, such as the Walloon towns, there are discrepancies in Crespin’s coverage. For example, for cases in Mons in particular, he did not seem to have sufficient intelligence, and from 1560 he was forced to depend on the work of van Haemstedte for his information.65 Only

60 Gilmont, Les martyrologes protestants du XVle siècle, p. 266-7.
61 For an account of his life, see E.M. Brackman, Guy de Brès. Premier partie: sa vie (Brussels, 1960).
62 Ibid., p. 111.
for the neighbouring region around Tournai, Arras and Valenciennes, was Crespin an impressively complete chronicler. Here he relied heavily on de Brès, but de Brès was only one of a network of informers. As Crespin makes clear in the account of Bertrand Le Blas in his *Troisième partie*, he constantly received information from that area.\(^66\)

An even starker contrast can be drawn between Crespin’s coverage of events either side of a north-south divide, following approximately the division of 1648. Whilst allowing for a certain differential in attention paid to areas in the south such as Flanders, Arras and Hainaut, it is true to say that they totally dominate the picture provided by Crespin. The northern provinces, however, such as Holland and Utrecht, are almost completely neglected.\(^{67}\) Bearing in mind that Holland executed more people before 1555 than any other region, his lack of information about the area considerably distorts the reality of the persecution.\(^{68}\)

Yet Crespin did not aspire to tell the whole history of the persecution in the Low Countries. His selectivity and geographical bias were no particular disadvantage; rather Crespin seized upon the extra opportunities provided by his close connections with what was, after all, his homeland. The Netherländish martyrs played an important role in his work at several levels. Most obviously, stories such as those of Vos and van der Eschen, the proto-martyrs of Protestantism, formed an essential part of Crespin’s presentation of the international church community. Other Netherländish martyr narratives were valuable because of the extent of the corroborative detail at his disposal. Often this was much greater than in the case of contemporary French martyrs. It is noticeable that in the case of these martyrs from the Low Countries, Crespin made much less use of the imaginative, stereotypical elements that fill out some of the less reliable French narratives.

In addition, the principal Netherländish narrative, that of Brully, is particularly valuable to Crespin because it provides such an early example of Genevan influence. Brully was a personal friend of Calvin, known to him from their time together in Strasbourg. The church that briefly flourished under Brully’s leadership has a much better claim to be first Calvinist church outside Geneva than French churches for which similar claims have been made, such as the community at Meaux.

The pan-European perspective of the Protestant movement and in turn, of the *Histoire*, is best illustrated by the small, but significant proportion of martyrs included in its pages from

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\(^{66}\) Crespin mentions that the story had appeared in his *Deuxième partie* of 1555 under the name N. Le Blanc, but now he was better-informed, and was able to update the entry. Crespin 1557, p. 90.

\(^{67}\) One struggles to locate these names in the index of the *Histoire*.

\(^{68}\) Holland executed nearly four times as many people as Flanders and six times as many people as the Walloon towns. See A. Duke, *The Netherlands*, p. 146. The fact that most of these victims were Anabaptists would have partially accounted for Crespin’s neglect.
southern Europe; specifically Italy and Spain. Indeed, the geographical remit of the *Histoire* is further extended by the inclusion in Crespin's work of an account of the establishment and then defeat of Fort Coligny in Brazil from 1555-60. The comparatively small number of martyrs from these countries meant that their representation in Crespin's collection cannot compare with those areas where most evangelicals were executed: France, England and the Netherlands. In addition, the timing of the persecution is significant. The first Protestant was not executed in Spain until 1542, and in Italy the Inquisition did not come into existence until that same year. But Crespin's exploitation of these materials as they came to hand certainly reflects his intention to illustrate in as comprehensive a manner as possible the international nature of the congregation of true believers.

In Crespin's first edition, there are no Spanish martyrs and only one Italian. Yet, by the *Histoire* of 1570, Spanish-Italian representation had significantly increased. Thirty-six martyrs from Spain and 19 martyrs from Italy meant that they now made up nearly 7% of the total. Crespin relied upon a variety of sources for this impressive coverage. In some instances, he plundered contemporary publications for his information; in others he drew upon his considerable network of personal contacts, both in Geneva and in the printing industry.

Although not able to rely upon an extensive network of personal contacts with Italian reformers, Crespin still managed to produce a detailed picture of the persecution in Italy. He was a man with close Italian exile connections. As a printer, Crespin produced five Italian titles between 1550 and 1555. These included the basic texts needed for a Reformed church: a New Testament and a publication which comprised a Psalter in verse, Calvin's Catechism and liturgical manuel. Also, not surprisingly given the position of the evangelical community in Italy at this time, Crespin edited a collection of pamphlets by Calvin against Nicodemism in Italian translation.

Crespin included Italian material in the first edition of his *Recueil*. Crespin's account of Fanino Panini is derived from a pamphlet by Giulio da Milano in 1552; at 2,500 words it is comprehensive and detailed. According to Crespin, this martyr benefited from Italian translations of Scripture, having had 'no knowledge of the doctrine of salvation in his youth.' Preaching the Gospel openly, he was arrested and condemned to be burnt. He was executed at Ferrara in August 1550.

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69 See McGrath, 'Polemics and History in French Brazil', 385-397.
70 Gilmont, 'Les centres d'intérêt du martyrologe du Jean Crespin', 363
72 Ibid., 53/4, pp. 36-7.
74 Crespin 1570, fol. 179r.
For other accounts, Crespin was not able to draw on such publications, but did profit from his strong links with the Italian exile community. For example, the story of Pomponio Algieri executed in Rome in 1555, was derived from unpublished documents Crespin obtained from his Italian contacts.\textsuperscript{75} Letters to his friends and co-religionists, extensive transcripts of his confessions and examinations were all obtained by Crespin and included in the account which runs to over twelve pages and 10,000 words.\textsuperscript{76} Likewise, Crespin was able to provide extensive documentation on the execution of fellow printer Gianluigi Paschale in Rome in September 1560 because after his death, his widow entrusted Crespin with all the correspondance sent by Paschale to Geneva after his arrest in Calabria. Letters to his friends in Geneva, outlining the interrogations he faced, letters of consolation and exhortation, all contributed to an account of around 22,000 words.\textsuperscript{77}

Crespin’s firm friendship and contact with the younger of the two Enzinas’ brothers, Jaime, enabled him to compile a brief account of his friend’s martyrdom in Rome in 1547.\textsuperscript{78} Jaime was a close friend of Crespin, one of his first contacts with the Reformed movement, whom he met with Diaz on his first trip to Paris, and together they attended the execution of Claude Le Paimstre in Paris in 1541. Despite these close contacts, Crespin had obviously no specific documentary source on which to base his narrative. This account provides very little detail and talks only in general terms about Enzinas. Having remained in Rome for a few years, only to placate his parents, he was arrested on his way to Germany to visit his brother, Francisco. After his arrest, he was brought before a great audience of the Roman people, amongst them Cardinals and Bishops. There Enzinas ‘maintained with great constancy and daring the true doctrine of the Gospel: and openly condemned the impieties and diabolical trickery of the great Roman Antichrist.’\textsuperscript{79} His defiance cost him his life.

Interestingly, although one of Crespin’s closest friends, the martyrlogy could not draw on any specific source for its information. The account of Enzinas was clearly only the essence of what he had heard about the fate of his friend. It is vague, general and in comparison with other Spanish accounts very short.\textsuperscript{80}

Crespin’s contacts with the Enzinas’ brothers provided him with the details for the account of another victim, Francisco de San Román. San Román, like the Enzinas a native of Burgos,

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., fols. 365º-371º. Gilmont, Jean Crespin, p. 134.
\textsuperscript{76} Crespin 1570, fols. 365º-371º.
\textsuperscript{77} Crespin 1570, fols. 544º-557º. The family seemed to have arrived in Geneva in August 1554, Geisendorf, Livre des Habitants, vol. 1, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{78} Crespin 1570, fols. 148º-149º. The account appears in Crespin’s first edition, Crespin 1554, p. 644. It was Jaime de Enzinas who converted Diaz to Protestantism some time between mid-1540 and the end of 1541, Gilmont, Jean Crespin, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{79} Crespin 1570, fol. 149º.
\textsuperscript{80} It amounts to only around 400 words.
was Spain’s first Protestant martyr. He was converted to Protestantism in Bremen, but taken
prisoner by the Emperor in Regensburg. From there he was dragged to Valladolid for trial and
burnt at the stake in 1542. The account in the Histoire details his conversion, the nature of
the books written by him, his interrogation and his doctrine. This information was taken
from a publication by Francisco de Enzinas, written in Wittenberg in Latin in 1545, and later
translated into French and published in Strasbourg in 1558.

Yet the Spanish martyrs in Crespin’s collection were not limited to personal
acquaintances. Other avenues proved profitable sources of information, amongst them his own
publishing ventures. Despite publishing only around ten Spanish publications, Crespin held a
privileged position within the Spanish community in Geneva. As virtually the only Genevan
printer to print in Spanish, Crespin was able to follow closely the progress of the Reformation
in Spain. Even though Crespin’s Spanish editions were outlawed by the Inquisition in 1559,
he still managed to keep his readers abreast of the Spanish persecution. For example, he
exploited a German Flugschrift for an account of the auto-da-fé at Valladolid in 1559. He
also printed Bienvenu’s French translation of Reginaldus Gonsalvius’ Histoire de l’inquisition
d’Espagne in 1568, from which he derived many of his accounts of the execution at Séville
from 1559-1562, which later appear in the Histoire.

Crespin’s collection of English martyrs has a unique place in his martyrology. Although
they make up nearly one-third of the total number of martyrs included in the Histoire of 1570,
absolutely none are included in Crespin’s first edition of 1554. Yet, Crespin’s coverage of
English events in his definitive edition is fuller than for any other nation. This owes much to
the work of John Foxe. The most celebrated of the martyrologies of the Reformed faith,
Foxe’s work had an undoubted influence on Crespin. Crespin may not have chosen to borrow
from Ludwig Rabus’ collection, and his plundering from van Haemstede’s De ghieschiedenisse

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81 Kinder, ‘Spain’, 230.
82 Crespin 1570, fols. 131r–143r. The account was around 4,000 words long.
83 F. Enzinas, Histoire de l’Estat du pais Bas et de la religion d’Espagne (Strasbourg, François Perrin, 1558) The
account first appears in the Quadrième partie; Crespin 1561, pp. 55-70. This history of Enzinas was also the
source for several other accounts in the Histoire, such as that of ‘Four martyrs executed at Louvain in Brabant’
and Gilles Tillman, Crespin 1570, fols. 95r-96r and fols. 102r-105r.
84 Gilmont, Jean Crespin, p. 134. On Crespin's Spanish printing, see two articles by G. Bonnart, ‘Note sur
quelques ouvrages en langue Espagnole imprimés à Genève par Jean Crespin (1557-1560)', BHR, 24 (1962),
50-7 and ‘Nouvelle note sur des imprimés Genevois en langue Espagnolo dus aux presses de Jean Crespin
(1557-1560)', BHR, 27 (1965), 318-21.
85 His source was Kurzer Bericht was sich für ein krieglich Schauspiel... (1559). Gilmont, Jean Crespin, p. 137.
86 Crespin 1570, fols. 536r-538r, fols. 540r-544r. Gilmont, Jean Crespin, p. 137. Gilmont, Bibliographie des
éditions de Jean Crespin, 68/5, pp. 206-7.
87 29% of the total number of martyrs included in the Histoire are English. Expressed as a percentage of the
number of words, it is only 18.5%. This disparity illustrates the brevity of many English accounts. Indeed, the
average length of an English account is only 800 words, significantly shorter than the average for the whole
ende den doodt der vromer Martelaren of 1559 may have only been slight, but Crespin’s use and exploitation of Foxe’s work was on a huge scale.

For example, within months of Foxe’s *Commentarii Rerum* of August 1554 appearing, Crespin had incorporated information from it. For his *Recueil* of 1555, Crespin embellished his own account of Jerome of Prague with details taken from Foxe, and included ten new pages covering the Englishman’s account of about ten martyrs of the previous century. He also included the story of John Wycliff. This inclusion created a contradiction between the title of his collection, *Recueil de plusieurs personnes qui ont constamment enduré la mort pour le nom de Nostre Seigneur* and its contents. Wycliff had not died the death of a martyr, yet found himself included. Crespin would not resolve this tension until his edition of 1564. Reading Foxe’s work, Crespin was persuaded that his martyrology should match Foxe’s collection in the scope of its coverage. He no longer felt the need to limit his martyrology to a collection of individual notices, but would attempt to follow the *Commentarii* in developing his text as a history of the Church where persecutions played a central role. This was the beginning of an effort to rethink his whole approach to the collection.88

The strong influence exerted by Foxe’s work on Crespin is undeniable. Yet having the luxury of being able to derive accounts from such a complete source as Foxe did not dampen Crespin’s ardour for collecting, on his own behalf, the most recent of accounts. In order to demonstrate this, it is necessary to look back to Crespin’s earlier editions, ones published before Foxe compiled his martyrology in 1559. A study of the English accounts that appear in the *Troisieme partie* of 1556 make it clear that Crespin’s location in Geneva, the centre of the English exile community for the period of Mary Tudor’s reign, and his connection with the printing industry allowed him to pre-empt Foxe in publishing the details - then for the first time - of some of the most noteworthy victims of the Marin persecution.

The *Troisieme partie* is the first occasion on which Crespin widens the remit of his work on the Reformation period to outside continental Europe. Beyond the inclusion of the forty or so martyrs of the Reformation in France, the *Low Countries and Empire*, Crespin also writes the accounts of the death of twelve martyrs of the English Reformation. Of these twelve entries, two are from the reign of Henry VIII: Robert Barnes and Anne Askew. Crespin derived both of these accounts from previously published pamphlet material. The account of Robert Barnes, the close personal friend of Luther executed in July 1540, was a very short one. It was taken from the preface of one of two editions of his confession of faith, published in

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88 Gilmont, *Jean Crespin*, pp. 171-2. This would be something that was only completed by Simon Goulart in 1582. See below, chapter 7.
Germany in 1540 and 1542 to celebrate his martyrdom. The execution of Anne Askew was equally well-known all over Europe. Executed in 1546, Askew compiled two accounts of her interrogations and these were quickly published on the initiative of the English scholar and writer, John Bale. It is likely that both of these were exploited to provide Crespin with his lengthy account.

 Whilst the inclusion of these two was due to their well-established reputations on the continent, the inclusion of the other ten histories demonstrates the impressive efficiency of Crespin's sources within the Genevan English community. Just over one quarter of the 592 pages that make up the Troisieme partie contain a great deal of near contemporary material on the Marian persecutions.

 Indeed, they are the first account to appear collectively in print of the fate of some of the most prominent victims of the first wave of the Marian persecution. At this point, in 1556, John Foxe had begun the work of collecting materials and testimonies relating to the present persecutions in England, materials that would later form the basis of his contemporary narratives in his Acts and Monuments. But at this point the only extant edition of Foxe's martyrology was his Commentarii Rerum of August 1554, a Latin prototype which deals only with the period until 1500. It is therefore true to say that the first English martyrology of the Reformation is not the work of Foxe, but of Jean Crespin. By examining the content of these accounts and their sources we are able to discover not only a great deal about Crespin as an author and patron of the martyrlogical tradition, but also the nature of the network of contacts linking the English Church in exile and their role in disseminating information to a wider European audience.

 This should perhaps come as no surprise, given Crespin's close connection with the recently founded English exile church. With the accession of the Catholic Queen Mary to the throne of England and the later break-up of the English community in Frankfurt, Geneva became the hub of English links with the continent. Indeed, within two and a half years of Mary's accession, an English church was formally established in the city, in November 1555. The church was in existence for four and a half years, being wound up in May 1560 after the accession of Elizabeth. Surprisingly, however, not until 1560 did the English Church have its

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80 Crespin 1557, p. 13. One of these was a preface by Luther, printed in Wittenberg in 1540, and the other a tribute by Johann Sastrovianus published in Lubeck in 1542. Gilmont, Les martyrologes protestants du XVIe siecle, pp. 29-30.

89 The first examination on Anne Askew... and The last examination on Anne Askew. These were published by John Bale in 1546 and 1547 respectively; STC 6331. 6332.

90 John Foxe, Commentarii Rerum in Ecclesia Gestorum. Libri primi (Strasbourg, W. Rihel, 1554).

91 The most detailed work on the English Church in Geneva remain C. Martin, Les Protestants Anglais refugies a Geneve au temps de Calvin 1555-1560 (Geneva, 1915). I would like to thank Tom Freeman, of Rutgers University, for his comments and help with an earlier draft of this section.
own printshop. Prior to that date, the church depended on local printers to provide its devotional literature. Amongst them was Crespin, the only printer to print material for the entire lifespan of the Church. His publications included the liturgy of the Church, composed in Frankfurt in the previous year by Knox, Whittingham, Gilby, Foxe and Cole.

The ten Marian martyrs Crespin chose to include in his Troisième partie are predictable enough, comprising the most prominent victims of the early stages of the persecution: the five bishops, Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper and Ferrar, and four prominent preachers, John Rogers, John Bradford, Rowland Taylor, and Bartholomew Green. The tenth, Lady Jane Grey, was not technically a victim of the campaign against heresy, but was sacrificed in the wake of Wyatt’s rebellion for her part in Northumberland’s treacherous attempt to divert the succession. In some cases Crespin’s account of their fate contains remarkably little information. For example, the preacher John Rogers, prebendary of St Pancras and first martyr of the persecution, merits only to the briefest of mentions. All that we are told about him is that he was a man of great erudition and unparalleled piety, that he had been imprisoned for his beliefs and then burnt alive in London, where he had faithfully taught the Word of God. For the good of the English nation, we are told, his writings and acts were gathered together with all fidelity and diligence for the consolation of the Church of the Lord; yet we are told no more of these writings. Likewise, the account of the Bishop of St David’s, Robert Ferrar, is even less informative, amounting to a little over fifty words.

Other accounts, such as that of John Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester and Worcester, contain more detail, but are still poorly served by primary sources. Crespin’s account of his martyrdom manages to be well-informed about the Bishop’s life without printing much of the actual details of his execution. It mentions that he was a man educated in Greek, Hebrew and Latin, and in order to stimulate others to the same zeal, he wrote on Christian doctrine. Specifically, he published ‘a book on Jesus Christ and his office: and another against the sophistries of the Devil.’ Further, Crespin makes mention of the fact that the second of the two books was a refutation of the errors of Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester. We are also told of the involvement of Hooper in the controversy regarding divorce in the early

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93 See Gilmont, Jean Crespin, p. 138.
94 Jean Poullain (5 titles 1556-1558), Conrad Badius (2 titles in 1557) and Jean Crespin (4 titles) all provided the necessary expertise.
95 The four titles printed by Crespin were: The forme of prayers used in the English congregation at Geneu (56/10); Ratio et forma publice ordini Deum in Anglicam Ecclesiam Genevam (56/14); Nicholas Ridley, De coena dominica assertio (56/15); Christopher Goodman, How superior powers ought to be obeyed (58/10). For bibliographical details, see Gilmont, Bibliographic des éditions de Jean Crespin, vol. 1, pp. 68-70, 72-4, 98-9.
96 Crespin 1557, p. 549.
97 Ibid., p. 549.
98 Ibid., pp. 542-3.
99 Ibid., p. 542.
1550s. However, when it comes to the matter of his trial and execution, Crespin is nebulous in the extreme, remarking only on his great integrity and admirable constancy. This reticence is noteworthy, because Hooper’s execution was a dramatic and ghoulishly memorable event, as poor weather conditions and bungling by the officials charged with Hooper’s death prolonged the victim’s suffering for many hours. In Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* the account of Hooper’s death would become a moving indictment of the Marian regime’s brutality. There is little doubt that Crespin did not have this information, for otherwise he would have made use of it.

It is clear, then, that the account of Hooper’s career and death is derived from the most basic of information. Indeed, in this case Crespin seems to have relied wholly on information about Hooper well known on the continent, or easily gathered from informants in Geneva. For instance, the two books mentioned in Crespin’s brief bibliography of Hooper were both local publications from the period of Hooper’s earlier exile: *An answer unto my lord of wynchesters booke* and *A declaracion of Christe and of his office compiled*, both published in 1547 by Andreas Fries of Zurich. Crespin’s knowledge that Hooper was interested in the thorny issue of divorce is also not surprising, considering Hooper’s prominent role in the early history of the stranger Churches in London, many of whose members had now found their way to the continent. Indeed, Hooper would have been a well-known figure on the continent, having spent time in the late 1540s in both Strasbourg and Zurich. In this case Crespin seems not to have had access to material emanating from England regarding Hooper’s imprisonment and trial. The material gathered by Foxe, including Hooper’s letter from prison of 21 January 1555, which forms a substantial part of Foxe’s treatment of Hooper, are passed over without reference by Crespin.

For the other Marian martyrs, Crespin’s stories are more descriptive. The reasons for this are straightforward enough: for one reason or another, Crespin was in possession of better primary source material on which to base his accounts. Much of this new material clearly came to him through the network of English exiles in Europe, and it is significant that a

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101 Crespin 1557, p. 543.
103 Crespin 1557, p. 542. *An answer unto my lord of wynchesters booke*, 4th ed. (Zurich, A. Fries, 1547), STC 13741; and *A declaracion of Christe and of his office compiled*, 8th ed. (Zurich, A. Fries, 1547), STC 13745.
106 These include 'The kinges letters or graunte for the consecration of John Hooper to the Bishopricke of Gloucester'; 'A letter of a certayne godly man concerning what was done the nyetene of Marche 1554 in the bishop of Winchesteres house, at the depretacion of John Hooper, bishoppe of Worcester' and 'A letter which Maister Hooper did write out of prison to certaine of his frieses'.
number of the English martyrs had much closer contacts with the English community abroad than was the case with Hooper or Ferrar. An example of this is Bartholomew Green’s inclusion in the martyrlogy. He had close links with Christopher Goodman, pastor of the English Church in Geneva from November 1555 until August 1559.\(^{107}\) Green had attended Oxford and there had been converted to Protestantism by the lectures of Peter Martyr. This is a detail that Crespin confirms to us, ‘Whilst he was at Oxford, he received knowledge of the Word of God, when the doctor Peter Martyr was professor of theology and Holy letters there.’\(^{108}\) During his studies there, Green became firm friends with Goodman and the two of them had taken Communion together before Goodman had fled abroad in 1555. Green’s subsequent arrest for treason that year arose from an intercepted letter from Green to Goodman. These charges were thrown out, but Green found himself reprimanded and then re-arrested on matters of religious controversy and was finally executed on 27 January 1556. From the biographical details of the account, and also the description of his arrest, it is clear that Crespin had a reliable source on which to base his story. In addition, Crespin’s account contains a letter written by Green the day before his execution: ‘on the night before he was executed, he wrote to a friend of his a letter full of sentences and great consolation.’\(^{109}\) There is little doubt that this letter was to Christopher Goodman who was now in Geneva; most likely Goodman himself would have made this letter available to Crespin. It has been mentioned previously the value and worth that Crespin placed in letters such as these written by the condemned awaiting their fate.

Interestingly, this letter does not appear in the account of Green in the first English edition of Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* of 1563. Nonetheless, the account of Green in this edition is, despite this omission, markedly more detailed than that of Crespin in the *Troisieme partie*. Not only does Foxe mention in greater detail Green’s time at Oxford and his subsequent legal career in London, but he also includes material that Crespin was obviously unable to obtain. Foxe’s account is made up of similar documentary material and letters, such as a letter written by Green to Philpot on the matter of his conferences with Archbishop Bonner. Also, Green’s Confession of Faith is inserted before his grisly end is recounted. The letter used by Crespin does appear in the 1570 edition of his martyrlogy, albeit in a slightly different form. This is a clear indication that Crespin was not Foxe’s source for this letter, and indeed, the likelihood is that Foxe never knew of Crespin’s use of it. The letter was not included in the Latin edition of Crespin’s martyrlogy in 1560, which forms the source for much of the material Foxe lifted.


\(^{108}\) Crespin 1557, p. 539.

\(^{109}\) Ibid., p. 540. The letter was dated 26 January 1556, and Green was executed the next day.
directly from the French martyrologist. It is unlikely that Foxe would have had direct access to the Troisieme partie since he apparently could not read French. The letter's appearance in Coverdale's Letters of the Martyrs of 1564 means that this may have been the source of Foxe's use of the letter in his 1570 edition; alternatively, Goodman himself may have made a copy of this letter and given it to Foxe upon his return to England in 1565.\footnote{Garrett, The Marian Exiles, pp. 162-4. I am grateful to Tom Freeman for clarity on this point.} 

It may be that the inclusion of the accounts of John Bradford and Roland Taylor in Crespin's narrative was also due to the travails of Christopher Goodman. In the case of Taylor, minister of the church at Hadleigh in Suffolk, Crespin had managed to obtain some unpublished material for his story.\footnote{Crespin 1557, p. 543-9.} One is told that this man of great erudition was examined on several occasions by Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester amongst others, and sections of these interrogations are included. Taylor is offered the chance of being saved, if he was willing to recant, before being pressed on the matter of his religion. In particular, he was quizzed on clerical marriage; perhaps because Taylor himself was secretly married in 1525 (despite it being outlawed by the Act of the Six Articles in 1539). In the face of pressure from his adversaries, Taylor remained constant to the truth, denying their machinations. He was finally condemned to be burnt, and met his fate in Hadleigh itself, on 9 February 1555.\footnote{For a biography of Roland Taylor, see W.J. Brown, The Life of Roland Taylor L.L.D. (London, 1959).} 

As one of the most prominent preachers of the Edward VI's reign, the martyrdom of Bradford was powerful publicity for the Reformed community all over Europe. Crespin includes, in some detail, the interrogation of Bradford.\footnote{Crespin 1557, pp. 550-9.} It contains in its entirety the examinations of Bradford before Stephen Gardiner and an ecclesiastical commission in January 1555. The examinations are eventually published in English in 1561 entitled 'All the examinacions of the martir J. Bradforde, wherunto or annexed his private talk and confides in prison.'\footnote{John Bradford, All the examinacions of the martir J. Bradforde, wherunto or annexed his private talk & conflicts in prison, W. Griffiths, (London, 1561). STC 3477.} Edmund Grindal did manage to send Bradford’s examinations to Foxe on 28 November 1557, but how Crespin was able to get hold of these transcripts so early is unclear. It seems that Crespin had managed to get his hands on Bradford and Taylor's own accounts of the proceedings against them, which must either have been rescued from the prison after the execution or somehow smuggled out. It seems likely that the manuscripts may have been secured through the endeavours of Latimer's confidant Augustine Bernher, who also acted as a messenger for Bradford as well as others, and possibly also Taylor.\footnote{D. Loades, The Oxford Martyrs (London, 1970). p.171.}
have an extensive correspondence with Bradford. These two seem the likeliest candidates for getting the manuscripts to Goodman before he left England, which may have been as late as May of that year, one month after the examination of Bradford and three months after the death of Taylor.

The source for Crespin’s narrative of Lady Jane Grey is much easier to identify. Her story begins with a brief biographical passage introducing Crespin’s readership to ‘Jane of Suffolk’. Crespin shrewdly portrays her as an unwilling queen, a victim of the political machinations of her father-in-law John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland. She was imprisoned due to Mary’s hatred of ‘the religion that she maintained with such firmness and constancy.’ Crespin included a letter that Jane had written whilst in prison, her discussions with Abbot Feckenham and an epistle to her sister. There can be little doubt from whence Crespin draws his material. The publication by John Day in 1554 of ‘An epistle of the ladye Jane to a learned man of late falne form the truth of God’s word...’ would have provided Crespin with virtually the entire narrative of his account. This is one of the books apparently published by Daye during his shadowy Marian career, when he continued to publish small evangelical works from a fugitive press either in England or on the continent. Although this clandestine operation proved to be of short duration, Daye’s works clearly circulated widely among the continental exile congregations, and it is no surprise that an example of his version of Jane Grey’s last speeches should have found its way to Crespin in Geneva.

The most substantial histories in Crespin’s collection are, not surprisingly, those of the three most prominent Marian martyrs, Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer and Thomas Cranmer. All merit substantial entries. All their accounts follow a similar pattern to others where Crespin has access to contemporary material. The account of Hugh Latimer includes a short biographical preface, which mentions his writings, but in no great detail. But Crespin does include a consolatory epistle sent by Latimer to those suffering similar persecution. Crespin’s account is clearly based here on a manuscript, since there is no evidence of contemporary publication of this letter.

Crespin’s use of this Latimer letter in fact illustrates one of the dangers inherent in his working method, for when the martyrologist incorporated such contemporary material there

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116 Ibid., pp. 175-6, p. 187.
118 Crespin 1557, p. 560.
119 Dudley, Jane. An epistle of the ladye Jane to a learned man of late falne form the truth of Gods word. Wherunto is added the communication that she had with master Feckenham. Also another epistle to her sister, with the words she spake upon the scaffold (London, J. Day. 1554). STC 7279.
121 Crespin 1557, pp. 506-14.
122 See John Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials (London, 1721), vol.6, no. 36, p.302-310.
was scarcely opportunity for very extensive checks on its authenticity. In fact, in this instance, the ‘Latimer’ letter was not by Latimer at all, but by John Bradford, and it was included as such in Coverdale’s *Letters of the Martyrs* of 1564 and in the 1570 (and subsequent) editions of the *Acts and Monuments*. Crespin can hardly be blamed for the error. Several manuscript copies of the letter survive, all attributed to Latimer. Clearly multiple copies of the letter cited Latimer as its author, and one of these copies reached Crespin, who followed the erroneous attribution in good faith. The survival of these multiple manuscripts is a revealing indication of the considerable effort expended by English Protestants in keeping alive the memory of their most notable martyrs. With such a quantity of material circulating among the English congregations, it was hardly surprising that one copy found its way to Geneva, and thence to Crespin, where the printer eagerly embraced it as an authentic work of one of the fathers of Edwardian Protestantism.

The pattern established by Crespin’s treatment of Latimer is duplicated in the account of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. The basis for Crespin’s account comes from the fifth book of Cranmer’s *An answer of... Thomas archebyschop of Canterbury, unto a crafty cavillation by S. Gardiner* (R. Wolfe, 1551). The content of the story is then put in the more recent context of Cranmer’s impending execution. As Crespin remarks:

> after having given here some taste and sample of the writing that this holy person has left in witness of this pure doctrine that he maintained against the enemies, we come to the acts and last fights that he sustained.

These ‘acts and last fights’ that Crespin mentions are lifted directly from the 1556 publication in London of *All the submyssyons and recantations of T. Cranmer, truely set forth both in Latin and English*. Interestingly, this is a hostile, Catholic account. Crespin is obviously prepared to accept the essential accuracy of the transcription, while presenting Cranmer’s statements in an entirely different apologetic context. No doubt works such as this officially sponsored attempt to diminish the martyred archbishop’s posthumous reputation circulated equally freely among the exile communities abroad, albeit that they could not have

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124 British Library, Lansdowne Ms 389, fols. 281r-284r, 299r-301r (two copies) Emmanuel College, Cambridge, Ms 262, fols. 175r-180r. I am grateful to Tom Freeman for this information and the references.
125 Crespin 1557, pp. 515 ff. and STC 5991.
126 Ibid., p. 531.
expected a particularly warm reception. Crespin’s more sympathetic presentation of Cranmer would have done something to redress the balance.

Nicolas Ridley’s account begins with a lament of the passing of the reign of Edward VI, a ‘pearl of kings’, and a tone of despair at such a turnaround in the fortunes of the evangelicals since his death. By the sole commandment of a woman, Crespin writes, more than eight hundred evangelicals were put to death. This is obviously an exaggeration. Although no absolutely definite figure can be given, a more accurate estimate would be in the region of two hundred and fifty to three hundred. Above all other enemies of the gospel, Crespin introduces his readers to Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester and tells of Ridley’s imprisonment, where he had correspondence with Hugh Latimer, Bishop of Winchester. Aspects of this correspondence form a large section of the account, and Crespin here borrows extensively from the publication in Emden, in 1556, of Certein godly, learned, and comfortable conferences, betwene N. Rydley and H. Latimer.

After the inclusion of large sections of this work, Crespin adds the protestations made by Ridley before the schools of Oxford in April 1555. There seems to have been no contemporary English printing of this disputation, but Crespin printed a Latin version almost contemporaneously with the publication of the Troisieme partie. It is difficult to ascertain with any certainty how Crespin managed to get his hands on this material. However, it is possible that the source is Edmund Grindal in Frankfurt. On 6 May 1555, he wrote to Ridley, telling him:

We also have here certain copies of your answers in the disputation; I Item, Antoniana objecta cum responsione: the treatise in English against transubstantiation, which in time shall be be translated into Latin.

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130 Crespin 1557, p. 458.
131 Ibid., p. 458.
133 Nicolas Ridley, Certein godly, learned, and comfortable conferences, betwene N. Rydley and H. Latimer (Emden, E. Van der Erve, 1556). STC 21047.7. Also printed in Strasbourg and Zurich in that year.
134 Crespin 1557, pp. 482ff. Crespin actually gets the date of this disputation wrong, citing it as 20th April, whereas it was actually 17th, although there has been much confusion as to the date. See N. Ridley, The Works of Nicholas Ridley, ed. H. Christmas, (Parker Society, 1851), p. 189.
The case for the identification of this source as the one referred to by Grindal is further reinforced by the fact that Grindal mentions that he only has Ridley’s answers in the disputation. This accurately describes the way in which Crespin presents this material in the Troisieme partie, for while Crespin derives his account verbatim from the answers of Ridley, he does, in fact, omit all the questions and opposing arguments put by the interrogators. Crespin’s access to this material possibly derives from his regular trips to Frankfurt, for the Frankfurt book fair. Here he met both John à Lasco and Jan Utenhove, superintendent and elder respectively of the former Stranger Churches in London, and possibly Grindal also.

In addition, the role of Pierre Alexandre, pastor of the French church in Strasbourg from August 1555 was crucial in establishing this link. Chaplain to Archbishop Cranmer until the end of Edward’s reign, he left England in May of that year. Then he was elected pastor of the French church in Strasbourg in August 1555. It is possible that Alexandre and Crespin knew each other as native Arrageois, most especially in the years 1543-1544, when Crespin was a member of a small group of lawyers drawn strongly together by a shared evangelism at the same time that Alexandre kept in contact with his convent in Arras, despite living mostly in Brussels. It is equally possible that their friendship stemmed from their mutual acquaintance with the Enzinas brothers, now in exile in the Netherlands. Alexandre knew Francisco and Crespin had been friends with Jaime since 1541. Once established in Geneva, Crespin published several of Alexandre’s works; including Alexandre’s consolatory epistle to the French Church of London in 1556, and his treatise on transubstantiation two years later. It was quite possibly through this friendship that Crespin first established good relations with the English community. Most importantly, this established a link between Crespin and Edmund Grindal, whom Alexandre knew well enough to have stayed with him in Strasbourg.

The edition that followed the Troisieme partie was the Latin Actiones et monimenta martyrum of 1560, in which none of the Troisieme partie’s Marian martyr accounts appear. It is likely that Crespin was by now aware of Foxe’s own plans for a substantial Latin account of the English martyrs, and decided not to duplicate this work. Nevertheless, the influence of Foxe’s work on the shape and content of Crespin’s martyrology continued, as it went through its successive editions. Crespin’s 1560 Latin edition showed the influence of Foxe’s 1559 Rerum by perfecting Foxe’s sub-divisions of eight books in chronological order. In addition,

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137 See above, chapter 1; Gilmont, Jean Crespin, pp. 140-2.
140 According to Tom Freeman, the account of Lady Jane Grey which appears in the Actiones et monimenta martyrum is taken from the Foxe’s Rerum, not Crespin’s Troisieme partie.
the accounts of John Frith and Andrew Hewet, executed in 1533 and 1534, were included, as was a version of Foxe’s account of the execution of William Gardiner in Portugal in 1552.\textsuperscript{141}

The pinnacle of Crespin’s dependance on Foxe came with the publication of his \textit{Quatrième partie} of 1561. In October 1559, Crespin applied to the Council in Geneva for permission to publish a translation of Foxe’s 1559 \textit{Rerum}. Although that permission was granted, a full translation never appeared. It seems that in place of a direct translation, Crespin’s \textit{Quatrième partie} was the first stage of the project which was never finished. In all, some 85% of its contents were taken directly from Foxe.\textsuperscript{142} In the editions after the \textit{Quatrième partie}, the portrayal of English history continued to play a central role in the Genevan martyrology. However, the adoption of a single volume history encompassing all previously gathered information from 1564 placed the Marian martyrs and other English victims into a wider European context. From 1564 on, this was not merely confined to accounts of individuals, as many \textit{récits d’histoire} taken from Foxe created a coherent history of the English persecution within the martyrology of Crespin.\textsuperscript{143}

Crespin’s period as ‘the English martyrologist’, was a short one, lasting only until Foxe’s publication of his \textit{Rerum} in 1559. Nonetheless, his compilation of the accounts of the Marian martyrs is very instructive. As these examples have made clear, the obvious borrowings between Crespin and Foxe should not disguise the fact that Crespin’s own contacts allowed him to compile information as fully and as efficiently as Foxe was able to.

These examples, drawn from all the non-French accounts included by Crespin, have illustrated the varied and diverse manner in which he collected the information for his martyrology. The few connections that Crespin had in the German Lutheran community are highlighted not only by his reliance on early \textit{Flugschriften}, but also by his comparatively poor coverage of the situation in Germany. In contrast, his status as a leading figure of Netherlandish Calvinism, enabled him, on the whole, to compile reports with unerring thoroughness and accuracy.

Perhaps the most interesting facet of these investigations is what they tell us about the efficiency of the international network of Calvinism, centred largely on foreign exile communities in Geneva. For his Italian and Spanish collections, as well as his Marian martyrs, Crespin was able to draw on an extensive network of contacts with the foreign exiles in

\textsuperscript{141} Gilmont, \textit{Les martyrologes protestants du XVie siècle}, p. 245-8.
\textsuperscript{142} Gilmont, \textit{Jean Crespin}, p. 177.
\textsuperscript{143} These included accounts such as a ‘History of the Law of the Six articles’ and a ‘History of occurrences in the Church of England, under Edward VI, a Christian King’, Crespin 1570, fols. 101*-102*, fols. 191*-193*.
Geneva, a further interesting manifestation of the international nature of the Reformed community. The circumstances regarding the composition of these tales tell us much about the closely-knit, suffering, but theologically increasingly united Reformed community in Europe. Even in the days of such poor communication, this small band of like-minded, committed individuals were able to keep in comparatively regular and close contact. Whether through the constant passage of those fleeing the hostile regimes to Geneva or other places of refuge, or through individuals who were free to smuggle this contraband literature, the sense of community, support and fellow suffering is evident. As has been illustrated with Crespin’s Marian martyrs in the Troisieme partie, these contacts could provide plentiful source material in a very short space of time.

In turn, this leads to the question of why Crespin put such store in his non-French collections. It is indisputable that Crespin’s collection was the most international of all the sixteenth-century Protestant martyrologies. Why did he expend so much effort in collecting the accounts of heresy executions all over western Europe? It was clear to Crespin that he was part of a wider community of believers, drawn together by a shared experience of persecution. Indeed, his close relations with many prominent European Protestants provided him with first-hand experience that the nationality of the martyr was of little importance. His Spanish friends Diaz and Enzinias had been executed in Germany and Italy respectively, and he himself had to flee to a foreign city to escape the gallows. His attitude is clear when he sets out the ‘Layout and arguments of the VIII books of this History’ at the beginning of the edition of 1570, the main theme of which is undoubtedly the ‘diversity of nations’ that were afflicted by persecution.144

A closer look at some of the accounts included by Crespin illustrate that the edifying qualities of these martyr’s tales were almost independent of the victims’ national origins. These martyrs were cited to demonstrate the attitude of the Church under persecution; a salutary warning to the Reformed community as a whole that whilst God may have chosen the Reformed as the elect people, hardship and persecution would have to be endured in the best biblical tradition, with dignity and peaceful protest, before they could be restored to their rightful place. For example, the consolatory epistle attributed, erroneously as it turns out, to Hugh Latimer, is full of scriptural citation, and vivid imagery.145 It would have proved an equal comfort for those suffering in France, as for the original English audience. The author writes that they must endure their present hardships with fortitude, for they are not alone:

144 Crespin 1570, preface, sig. c7r-81r.
Though the weather may be stormy and unpleasant, venture on apace, for you do not travel alone, as many other of your brothers and sisters pass by the same route.

They are reassured that Christ is aware of their suffering, for his journey was worse:

You have your Master and Captain, Jesus Christ, the only begotten and beloved Son of God, in whom was all a Father’s joy; you have him to go on before you. The road on which he came to his celestial Jerusalem was no easier nor more pleasant than yours.\(^\text{146}\)

Similarly, the invincible constancy of San Román when threatened with fire and death by the monks that were interrogating him would have clearly demonstrated to all persecuted evangelicals the dignity and humility of the man:

I do not fear death for the cause of my Lord; for he will not scorn me. I even believe this will bring me glory, for I will be able to seal with my own blood the holy doctrine for which his blood was spilt for me.\(^\text{147}\)

Crespin saw that such fortitude had a quality and value which transcended its national context. The courage shown by Bartholomew Green in his account illustrated to the faithful that one should not fear death, but that one should welcome the opportunity for a more joyful place than earth. Like a good Protestant, Scripture is the basis for his strength. Ecclesiastes, Job and Revelations are offered for consolation:

The day of death is worth more than the day of birth. Man born of woman is short-lived and filled with disquiet: but most fortunate are those who die for the Lord. Man is born of woman in sadness, and lives in misery and finishes the course of his days in calamity.\(^\text{148}\)

By making other communities aware of their suffering, the accounts of the victims in the Histoire not only gave succour to others, but also to themselves. They were not alone in the struggle, and they could take comfort in that the evangelical message was being kept alive elsewhere. Furthermore, Crespin saw not merely the supra-national utility in examples of

\(^{146}\) Crespin 1570, fols. 383\(^\text{v}\)-384\(^\text{v}\).

\(^{147}\) Ibid., fol. 132\(^\text{v}\).

\(^{148}\) Ibid., fol. 424\(^\text{v}\). These citations are drawn from Ecclesiastes 7:1, Job 14:1 and Revelations 14:13.
martyrs' courage and resolve, but also the profit in publicising martyrs' beliefs as pedagogic tools.

The incorporation of the writings and letters of some of European Protestantism's leading theologians would have permitted Crespin to be able to express in a more authoritative and detailed manner than he himself would have managed, key tenets of Protestant doctrine. It would have also gone some way towards educating his readership in the central doctrinal propositions of Reformed Protestantism. In France, this was the time of the most explosive growth of the nascent Calvinist movement, and with so many Churches being established in such a short time, this edition of the martyrology would have proved a useful tool in guiding the beliefs of the adherents to these new congregations. The reprint of the Troisieme partie in 16th in 1557 indicated Crespin's intention that this collection should find its audience in the illicit churches and conventicles in France at this time; smuggled in as contraband literature.

As will be seen, the best of these writings offer doctrinal guidance on key issues of controversy, expressed with the clarity of expression of a learned theologian, as well as a pungent refutation of those tenets of faith held most closely by Catholicism. Ridley's condemnation of the Mass in Certein godly, learned, and comfortable conferences... for example, would provide guidance and ready-made answers to those under questioning themselves.149 Although the Conferences are largely the work of Ridley, Latimer's important contribution greatly enhanced the value of them for the layman, offering as they did a summary of Protestant belief on the principal points of doctrine. Moreover, the first conference (which is the only one Crespin includes) in the words of David Loades 'went point by point through the canon of the mass, providing a battery of straightforward scriptural argument.'150 Likewise, inclusions such as Pierre Brully's letter to his sister which detailed his interrogation would have played a similarly useful role in educating his readership. Brully told his sister, and in turn Crespin's readership, his opinion of purgatory:

Next, I was questioned on the matter of Purgatory: whether I believed at all that there was a place where souls fell from this life, in order to endure punishment for their sins. I replied that I did not believe in or look for any other Purgatory than the blood of Christ.151

All of this makes clear that the accounts of non-French martyrs played a particularly important role in Crespin's scheme. Some of them were the articulate mouthpieces for key

149 Crespin 1557, p. 461: 'The causes that move me to abstenine from the Masse, be these. It is done in a strange tongue, which the people dothe not understande, contrarie to the doctrine of the Apostle, 1. Cor. 14.'
151 Crespin 1570, fol. 135°.
aspects of Reformed teaching, but above all, the international community of suffering was emphasised. Accounts such as these showed fellow sufferers the way, not only in terms of doctrine, but also in terms of suggesting suitable behaviour for a Christian martyr. It would be clear to the reader that the persecution would be no respecter of nationalities or social distinction. This was something inherent in Crespin’s creation of a martyrology, one of his driving ambitions. He himself was a multi-national figure, and he wished his martyrology to be the same. For Crespin, like many Protestants, persecution was a sign of divine favour. By including so many victims of the executions from across Europe, he wanted to show that they were all members of the same true church. The martyrology was a manifestation of that communal sense of togetherness. The mutual borrowings that sustained the collections of Foxe, Rabus, Crespin and van Haemstede all arose from this common sense of identity, forged on the anvil of persecution. Conversely, it is also true that these volumes helped further develop this idea of a community of suffering. And no martyrology better expressed or was more symptomatic of this than the *Histoire des vrais témoins* of Jean Crespin.
Crespin’s death from the plague in 1572 did not signal the end of the publication of the martyrology. Crespin left his publishing house as a going concern to his son-in-law, Eustache Vignon. Vignon had met Crespin for the first time at the Frankfurt book fair in September 1555. A fellow Arrageois, Vignon subsequently left his homeland to work for Crespin, and in 1559 he married Crespin’s daughter, Marguerite. Following Crespin’s death, Vignon was left the business, after a quarrelsome settlement with Crespin’s son by his second marriage. Vignon himself died in 1588, but not before he had followed in Crespin’s steps and instigated a reprinting of the martyrology in 1582.

In all, four full editions of the Histoire were produced in French after Crespin’s death. The urgency of publication of Crespin’s early years may have died down, but there still existed a need to publicise the deaths and sufferings of thousands of those faithful still in France, victims of the ravages of religious war. The martyrology needed bringing up to date. The new editions were produced in 1582, 1597, 1608 and 1619. This chapter will detail the major revisions undergone by the book in general during the period 1570-1619 and more specifically the account of the martyrs of the early Reformation. Of the four editions produced during these years, it is the edition of 1619 that is most accessible to historians due to a reprint in the years 1885-89. Almost without exception, historians have reached for this version as the basis of their own researches. Although perhaps aware of the changing nature of the martyrology during Crespin’s lifetime, few seem aware of the fundamental revisions undertaken in Crespin’s name by Simon Goulart, pastor, historian and future President of the Company of Pastors. Many of the revisions and additions to Crespin’s work were minor ones. Yet taken together, the body of evidence calls for the Histoire des martyrs of 1619 to be treated with even more care as a historical source than any of the previous editions.

This should be of no surprise. The collection, like all literature, was not written in isolation from the events of its time. It was a product of its author, but also its own era. Crespin had witnessed many changes in the period from the date of his first edition until his death, and these had, on occasion, affected the composition of his book. The period between

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1 See Bremme, Buchdrucker und Buchhändler, pp. 238-9.
2 Gilmont, Jean Crespin, p. 89.
3 See chapter 2.
Crespin’s death and the final edition of 1619 saw a catalogue of equally momentous events, the most seismic of which was undoubtedly the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre of 1572. The atrocity affected the whole mind-set of the Huguenot movement, both nationally and internationally. The end of the first civil war may have broken the momentum of the spread of the movement, but the comparatively favourable peace treaties of 1563, 1568 and 1570 had at least promised an equitable future. But the massacres of the autumn of 1572 changed their attitudes for good:

They ended for good their hopes of winning all of France to their cause.... It was obvious to all that Protestantism in France was an endangered minority without the resources to win for itself security within the kingdom.⁴

The atmosphere in which the martyrology was produced could not have been more different under Goulart’s editorship than in the heady days of Crespin’s first editions. The Huguenot movement in France had now entered a period of consolidation and introspection. Philip Benedict has shown how the local Huguenot population in Rouen were in retreat even prior to the massacres, and Penny Roberts has confirmed a steady decline in Huguenot numbers in Troyes between 1562-72.⁵ The period after the massacres was also a difficult and changing time. The constantly fluctuating situation and fortunes of the Huguenots would have affected Goulart’s perception as he revised the Histoire des martyrs. For example, Huguenot authors had to try and explain why God had seemed to abandon them to the fury of the King. The first reactions were outpourings of monarchach and anti-royalist literature.⁶ Yet this attitude had to change when the death of Duke of Anjou in 1584 made Henry of Navarre heir to the throne. Just as militant Catholics reacted by forming an alliance between the League and Spain, so Huguenot writers had to rein in their venom and adapt their theories of government to the new situation.

Despite these changing situations, historians have tended to overlook the importance of the editorship of Goulart. For example, is it not crucial that Goulart himself was a man of a later generation of Reformers than Crespin? To put this in context, is it not consequential that Crespin himself was brought up a Catholic, whereas Goulart did not arrive in Geneva until a year before the outbreak of the second religious war? Goulart was the product of a more

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confessional age, and this must have had a bearing on his editorial work. Yet some historians seem unaware of the differences between editions of the martyrology and between its authors. For example, Charles Parker has written of the Old Testament self-consciousness in Crespin’s *Histoire des martyrs* before the Wars of Religion; yet he bases his findings on the edition of 1619, completed twenty-one years after the end of the Wars.\(^7\) Similar inaccuracy allows Parker to be both right and wrong in one sentence:

Yet Crespin never attempted to make the *Histoire des martyrs* part of a more general religious history nor a chronicle of the Reformation of the scope of the *Acts*; the *Histoire des martyrs* remained almost exclusively a martyrology.\(^8\)

It is true that Crespin did not attempt to create a more general history or chronicle of the Reformation. But the edition of 1619 to which Parker is referring was not compiled by Crespin, but Goulart. In addition, as we shall see, that edition was indeed created to be a general religious history of the scope of the *Acts*, and did not remain exclusively a martyrology, as Parker claims.

Such work as there has been on the alterations completed by Goulart, is mostly in relation to specific events or accounts. In many respects, the most obvious material introduced by Goulart concerned events which had taken place since Crespin’s death. First and foremost was an account of the St Bartholomew’s Day, 1572. Goulart himself was in France at the time of the massacres on family business. Heading for Paris on 24 August, he and a companion came within two leagues of the city when they got wind of what was happening, and fled back to Senlis. From there, Goulart was only able to return to Geneva by a dangerous and circuitous route.\(^9\) His own close escape helped shape his historical perception. As Professor Kingdon writes, ‘This experience no doubt helps explain the personal sense of outrage that pervades his *Mesmoires*’, Goulart’s collection of contemporary pamphlets relating to the massacre.\(^10\)

Despite his personal proximity to events, Goulart’s account of the massacre in Paris was heavily indebted to other contemporary published sources. Goulart made particulary extensive use of Ernestus Varamundus Frisus’ Latin work, *De furoribus Gallicis horrenda et indigna Admiralli Castellionei, nobilium atque illustrium virorum caede... Vera et simplex narratio* (1573), and two works by distinguished Genevan contemporaries, *Le Réveille-Matin des François et leurs voisins, composé par Eusèbe Philadelphe cosmopolite, en forme de dialogues*.

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\(^7\) C.H. Parker, ‘French Calvinists as the Children of Israel,’ 227-248.
\(^8\) Ibid., 241-2.
\(^10\) Kingdon, *Myths about the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacres*, p. 4.
(Strasbourg, 1574) and François Hotman’s *Gasparis Colinii Castellonii, magni quondam Franciae amirallii vita* (1575). Goulart also drew heavily on the materials he had already collected for his first major historical publication, the *Mesmoires de l’Estat de France sous Charles neufiesme* of 1578.

The nature of the changes introduced to the Genevan martyrology from 1582 by Goulart are of considerable significance. First, the scope and ambition of the book was extended. No longer was it merely a collection of the pious and holy deeds of martyrs, confirmed in their righteousness by their heroic suffering. It was now a chronicle of a persecuted and therefore true, Church. This was achieved by altering the structure and order of the book with the introduction of sections which placed the martyrs of the sixteenth century in their proper religious and historical context. Moreover, the mood and atmosphere of the book was indirectly altered by the manipulation of some of Crespin’s existing accounts to reflect the new preoccupations of Protestant history-writing.

One of the most significant stylistic differences under Goulart’s editorship was the far greater prevalence of miraculous occurrences with which he embroidered the martyr narratives, and specifically the many instances he cited of divine judgement being visited upon the persecutors. Crespin’s work did contain some examples of a speedy retribution visited upon those who judged and persecuted the faithful. In a previous chapter it has been shown how he warned those responsible for the persecution that they would not escape divine judgement. Yet such examples are comparatively rare. Crespin wanted his martyrology to be a truthful work and not a ‘collection of legends’. He felt the reader should not let himself be distracted by miracles, but concentrate on the true doctrine that the victim was defending. Although he did not maintain such standards throughout his work, the vast majority of his accounts do not contain episodes of miraculous judgements brought upon the persecutors. A far higher proportion of Goulart’s additions and insertions did contain such manifestations of divine fury, taken either wholesale from the sources, or apparently invented by himself. This literary device was one often used by Goulart not only in his re-editions of the martyrology, but especially in his other works.

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12 Ibid., p. 19.
13 See chapter 2, pp. 15, also pp. 36-38.
14 Crespin 1570, Preface, sig. α4”.
Goulart was born in Senlis in October 1543, and he converted to the Reformed faith whilst preparing for a career in the law in Paris.\textsuperscript{16} His commitment to his faith drove him to leave France, and by March 1566 he was resident in Geneva. By the end of that year he had been appointed a minister and placed in the parish of Chancy and Cartigny. It appears that he quickly assumed a privileged position within the Genevan church hierarchy, as his marriage in 1570 was blessed by no less a figure than Theodore Beza. His progression up the clerical hierarchy in Geneva continued and by 1604, he was elected Beza's successor as President of the Company of Pastors. Yet, Goulart is most famous not for his leadership of the Genevan church, but for the successful writing career which ran parallel to his life as a clergyman. His writing career was so successful, that by the time of his death in February 1628, he was responsible for over 75 titles.\textsuperscript{17}

Goulart's background as a theologian and humanist drew him to the fields of religious and political history. Indeed, his \textit{oeuvre} was dominated by historical and political works, his publications being so successful that he became the preeminent author in the genre of history-writing that now dominated the Genevan book trade in the second half of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{18} Unlike Crespin, Goulart was a skilled linguist and his career as a historian and propagandist took off through the works of others that he was able to translate. Included in his translations were the works of ancient writers such as Plutarch and Church fathers including Theodoret of Syria.\textsuperscript{19} In addition, he produced a translation of Hotman's \textit{Franco-Gallia} in 1574 and a translation of of Simler's \textit{République des Suisses}.\textsuperscript{20} He was also not averse to publicising in French Lutheran works of historiography; in 1579-80 he published Carion's \textit{Chronica} of 1532, the popular Lutheran work covering six thousand years of history, heavily revised by Melanchthon and Peucer.\textsuperscript{21}

Yet, it was the authorship of two works in particular that thrust Goulart into the forefront of the writing of the history of the sixteenth century. Between 1576 and 1577, he produced the first edition of his three volume work, \textit{Mesnoires de l'Estat de France sous Charles neufiesme}.\textsuperscript{22} Substantially re-edited twice in 1578, this collection has been called 'the most complete single source of our knowledge of the multifaceted reactions to the St Bartholomew's

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\textsuperscript{16} Much of the paragraph that follows is taken from Jones, \textit{Simon Goulart} which remains the most scholarly work on Goulart's life and writings.

\textsuperscript{17} Moreau, 'La Saint-Barthélemy, Le Martyrologe de Jean Crespin et Simon Goulart', p. 11.

\textsuperscript{18} See the introduction of \textit{Kingdon, Myths about St Bartholomew's Day Massacres}. Also P. Chaix, A. Dufour and G. Moeckli, \textit{Les Livres imprimés à Genève, 1550-1600} (Geneva, 1966).


\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 557, no.5; pp. 564-6, no.12. pp. 480-7.


\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., pp. 560-3, no. 10.
7. The Editorship of Simon Goulart

It gathered together complete and unabridged texts of previously published pamphlets and treatises, selected extracts from earlier writings and many manuscript sources, such as letters and poems, translated from English, Latin, German or Italian. Bound together in historical order by passages of his own narrative, Goulart’s collection covered the four years from the Edict of St Germain in 1570 until the death of Charles IX in 1574, concentrating not surprisingly on the tragic events of St Bartholomew’s Day, 1572. There is little doubt of the considerable impact these Mesmoires had in spreading the news of massacres both at home and abroad.24

Secondly, Goulart was heavily involved in the publication in 1580 of the Histoire ecclésiastique des Eglises réformées au royaume de France, (1521-1563). Under the guidance of Theodore Beza, Goulart played a considerable role in compiling this official history of the Reformed church in France.25 He was invited to undertake this task due to his extensive literary experience, and also because of his close friendship with Beza.

By 1580, then, Goulart was one of the Reformed faith’s most esteemed propagandists. The compilation of these two works, along with his completion of the Mesmoires de la Ligue in 1587, meant that Goulart was an excellent candidate for the job of bringing the Histoire des vrayes tesmoins up to date. As a man of the cloth, his theological propriety and integrity could not be doubted. As a eminent historian, he had the expertise and knowledge to publicise the sufferings of the faithful who had been persecuted since the appearance of the most recent edition of the Histoire in 1570.

Perhaps most significant of all, however, was his friendship and association with Eustache Vignon. The two were undoubtedly close, as Vignon acted as godfather to Goulart’s son Simon in 1575. Goulart’s association with the Histoire dated back to before Crespin’s death in 1572. Crespin had called upon Goulart’s abilities as a linguist to translate a poem by Jean Tagaut from Latin into French for his martyrology of 1570. Entitled ‘Voeu pour les Martyrs à Dieu tout bon et tout puissant’, it was actually Goulart’s first publication.26 Following this work, the friendship between Vignon and Goulart developed and was of mutual benefit professionally. It seems that Vignon was the lead printer on at least the first edition of Goulart’s Mesmoires, and possibly involved in some way or other in all of the later editions.27 In addition, not counting Crespin’s martyrology, Vignon and his successors printed at least four other works of Goulart’s.28 It was through this connection that Goulart was given the

23 Kingdon, Myths about St Bartholomew’s Day Massacres, p. 2.
24 Ibid.
25 Jones, Simon Goulart, pp. 569-70
28 Jones, Simon Goulart, p. 592, no. 25; p. 593, no. 26; p. 611, no. 38; p. 614, no. 41.
opportunity to take over the work of Crespin. When searching for an appropriate editor to re-edit the martyrology, Vignon needed to look no further than his friend Gouart:

One of my friends, desirous to advance the glory of God, has communicated to me his plan, and I am most encouraged to proceed with it.  

Their joint venture gave birth to a new edition of the *Histoire des martyrs* in 1582. The preface made it clear that Gouart would not be content merely to re-issue Crespin’s last edition. The collection had been reviewed and enlarged by a third. The extent of his previous historical scholarship and his expertise allowed him to approach the project with the attitude and ambition of a historian, rather than a mere compiler. This had a considerable effect on the extent of the changes brought about by Gouart. The most substantial of these changes were outlined by Vignon in his note from ‘the printer to the Christian reader’:

In place of eight books, he has made ten, the first and last being newly added, and the others enriched with martyrs, confessions, letters and excellent doctrines, enlarged with collections, treatises and notable features...

Arguably the most significant change introduced by Gouart was the addition of a new first book, which included:

The most remarkable things that have happened to the Church of the Son of God, since the persecution of the Christians under the Empire of Nero, thirty years after the ascension of Christ into the heavens, until the time of John Wycliff.

The significance of this first book was not its historical content. Its brevity meant that the history it contained was of little importance. This first book was a significant addition because of what it meant for the theological plan and intention of the collection. It was now no longer merely a collection of martyr stories, but a history of the Christian church under persecution. By writing this history of the earliest days of Christianity as a chronicle of the

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31 Ibid., p. 153.
true church persecuted, and incorporating it into his compendium of martyrs, Goulart had altered the whole complexion of the book. Goulart had learnt from other contemporary martyrologies. Reading either Haemstede’s Historien oft gheschiedenissen der vrome Martelaren of 1579 or his Geschiedenisse of 1559, Goulart was made aware of the historical plan set out by Haemstede, which offered ‘a complete view of Christian persecutions, from the first biblical martyrs, Stephen, Paul and Simon Peter, through the early church to the victims of the medieval papacy.’\(^{35}\) Thus, following on from the example set by Haemstede, Goulart redirected the emphasis of the Histoire des martyrs.\(^ {36}\) From now on, the collection would include many more general accounts of the persecution of the faithful, in contrast with Crespín’s emphasis on specific martyr stories. Among the new materials incorporated by Goulart were accounts of Huguenots in Maine, in ‘several parts of France’ and in Orange.\(^ {37}\) In addition, the eleventh book was made up of extended sections detailing the ‘State of the Churches of the Lord in diverse parts of Europe since 1572’ and a transcription of John Jewel’s Apologie of the Church of England of 1563.\(^ {38}\) None of these would traditionally have found a place in a martyrology.

It is true that Crespín had attempted to illustrate the conformity of persecutions past with persecutions present in his extended preface to the Histoire of 1570 which ‘showed a conformity of persecutions and martyrs from this recent time to those of the first church.’\(^ {39}\) In this he had been influenced by Foxe’s shaping of his Acts and Monuments. But this was not a concerted attempt to write a history of the church, as Goulart was attempting; a history where pride of place went to those who had faced persecution. In his compilation of the Actes des martyrs of 1564, Crespín aspired to write a more complete history than previously, with the inclusion of various recits d’histoire. Subsequently, Crespín’s Actes des martyrs of 1564 had become the Histoire des vrays tesmoins of 1570. Yet it appears that he was not enough of a historian to complete the task.\(^ {40}\) Goulart was offering something more than just Crespín’s collection of documents; he was creating a coherent historical narrative. It was Goulart who realised Crespín’s ambition of writing a history of the church under persecution by beginning his Histoire des martyrs with an account of the martyr Stephen.

Intertwined with this change was Goulart’s adoption of a new title for the collection. The title Histoire des martyrs gave the work its definitive and most enduring epithet. This was the solution to a problem that had dogged Crespin since the inception of his work in 1554.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., pp. 735-53
\(^{39}\) Crespin 1570, sig. c3’. See above, chapter 2.
\(^{40}\) Gilmont, Les martyrologes protestants du XVIIe siècle, p. 293.
Crespin’s reservations about the use of the word ‘martyr’ for those that had not been individually tried and executed were put aside and Crespin’s slightly ambiguous Histoire des vrays tesmoins de la verité de l’Evangile, qui de leur sang l’ont signée, was re-titled the Histoire des martyrs persecuez et mis à mort pour la verité de l’Evangile.\textsuperscript{41} This development was not merely due to the changed priorities of the new editor. It is also the case that contemporary events had altered the criteria for inclusion. With the horrific news of the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre and other localised instances of Catholics defying the edicts of toleration reaching Geneva, Gouart could not ignore those co-religionists murdered around France merely because they had not been brought to trial or that their murders were motivated by factors other than religion.\textsuperscript{42}

Gouart’s textual alterations were not merely limited to a first book outlining the earliest centuries of Christendom. As promised to Vignon, he enriched other accounts with supplementary information. By drawing upon his own Mesmoires de l’Estat de France, he was able to restructure the ninth book and add a tenth. The ninth book covered events outside France in the period 1563-1574, and the tenth, additional book in the collection covered events in France from 1562-1572.\textsuperscript{43} In this process, he abandoned the chronological approach adopted by Crespin in exchange for a division along geographical lines. Furthermore, Gouart reinforced the orthodoxy of the book with an ‘Index containing the principal points of true and false religion amply treated, sustained or refuted’.\textsuperscript{44} Providing an arsenal of theological argument, its readers would have been suitably guided.

The immediacy of Crespin’s work was one of its most important features. His collection has already been described as having the hallmarks of a journalist, rather than a historian.\textsuperscript{45} For Gouart the reverse was true. The urgency and need for the Reformed to publicise the heroic end of their martyrs had gone. For example, in the Actes des Martyrs of 1564, Crespin managed to include the case of Jean Mutonis, executed as recently as February of that year. Likewise, in the Histoire of 1570 the last account is that of Jean Sorres, executed in October 1569. Gouart, however made no attempt to carry events up to the eve of publication. Although published in 1582, the Histoire des martyrs ended its coverage in 1574. Gouart merely contented himself with covering events that he had already dealt with in his Mesmoires de l’Estat. This meant that he viewed events with a greater measure of hindsight than Crespin had attempted. For example, in his conclusion to the Histoire des martyrs of 1582, Gouart

\textsuperscript{41} Gilmont, Jean Crespin, pp. 169-70. Also, see chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p. 157-8.
\textsuperscript{45} See chapter 1.
was able to reflect on the period 1570-1574. It may have seemed a bleaker time than ever before for the Reformed faith in France, but Goulart was able to comfort his readers that God’s favour was still on their side:

after the death of him (Charles IX), many changes have taken place of such a type, that despite Satan, the Antichrist, and their supporters, God has shown excellent witnesses in various places around Europe his favour towards his own, and his judgements against their enemies. 46

The *Histoire des martyrs* was not issued again until 1597. 47 A 15 year time-span between editions would have been unthinkable when the publication was first conceived. Crespin’s first three years as a martyrologist had seen the publication of five editions of his collection. 48 It is possible that the death of Crespin had signalled the end of his extensive network of contacts, and providers of information. Goulart would be content with lifting large sections from his other publications. More subtly though, this was something dictated by the era of its publication. As has been mentioned, gone was the urgency for immediate and swift publication of martyr accounts. A corpus of victims had been established, and the traditions of the Reformed movement confirmed. Now was the time for consolidation. Thus, it is the case that the compilation of the martyrology mirrored the progress of the Reformed movement. Whilst the 1550s had been the decade of the most rapid expansion of Protestant churches within France, the last decades of the religious war were a period of consolidation and retrenchment. The martyrology, inevitably reflected this change of mood.

As was the case with the edition of 1582, the *Histoire des martyrs* of 1597 did not cover the most recent of events. Its coverage ended in 1589 with the death of Henry III, despite the title claiming that it was a history ‘from the time of the Apostles until the year 1597.’ The collection was further enlarged and expanded with the addition of two further books, making a total of twelve. 49 The parts added by Goulart did not follow a chronological pattern. The eleventh book was a ‘supplement to the History of Martyrs’ and was made up of two chapters; a *recit d’histoire* of the period 1545-1559 mostly centred on Scotland, and Jewel’s ‘Apology of the Church of England.’ The twelfth book covered ‘the state of the churches of the Lord in various places’ in the period 1574-1589. 50

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48 See chapter 1.
50 Ibid., p. 162.
The changes introduced into the early seventeenth-century editions of the *Histoire des martyrs* were minimal; so minimal indeed that it is probable that they were not the work of Goulart, who had previously shown such an appetite for a re-working of the collection. The modest additions to the edition of 1608 were helpfully summarised in a six-page appendix. In the collection of 1619, this appendix grew to just over twenty pages. For our purposes, the changes in these two editions (in fact, the last before the nineteenth century) are hardly significant.

Taken all together, the changes introduced by Goulart amount to a significant re-working of the martyrology. The title *Histoire de martyrs persécutez et mis à mort pour la vérité de l’Évangile...* underlined the direction that the book had taken since the death of Crespin. As Professor Gilmont has stated:

>The collection of acts of martyrs executed individually according to the process of heresy had become a chronicle of persecutions and massacres of the wars of religion.

This change in the nature of the collection was not a betrayal of the ideals of Crespin. Such a progression would not have been totally alien to him. He had, himself, seen the need for an extension to the criteria for inclusion into the annals of the martyrology. In his conclusion to the *Histoire* of 1570, he had justified such a development by condemning what he saw as a:

>...marvellous ruse of the devil; because he cannot extinguish this great light which is present in the constancy of the martyrs executed by the sentences and decisions of the judges, he had tried to obscure it, murdering them by the fury of war, under the pretext of sedition and rebellion, of which they have been and remain falsely accused. But these victims are worthy of being placed with those already mentioned who have suffered death by the unjust condemnations of judges. For if we are to call those executed one by one by the hand of justice martyrs, as one does; what will we call those so many thousands of excellent people who have been martyred just like that when instead of one executioner, there had been an infinite number, and that the swords of the soldiers and people were the

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51 Professor Gilmont suggests that the changes were the work of the printer, Pierre Aubert. *Gilmont, Les martyrologies protestants du XVle siècle*, p. 295.

52 For example, Professor Moreau has pointed to a more detailed description of the victims of the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacres in Paris Moreau, ‘La Saint-Barthélémy, Le Martyrologe de Jean Crespin et Simon Goulart’, pp. 11-12.

law, the judge and the executioner of the strangest cruelties which had ever been exercised against the Church?\textsuperscript{54}

Yet Crespin had not gone as far as his advocacy had suggested. By the time of the 1582 and 1597 editions, the situation had changed and Goulart was neither able nor willing to exclude the victims of the massacres and persecutions that had been taking place all over France. With less of a jurist's scruples than Crespin, he had assimilated both victims of heresy trials and victims of wars under the name of martyrs.

It has already been seen how Goulart relied on some of his own previously published material and that of others to compile the details of his continuation of Crespin's work. Seeking to write a more general history of the church, Goulart drew upon six other works to fill out the compendium of martyr stories left to him by Crespin. The first of these was the \textit{Histoire Universelle} of his friend, Jacques Auguste de Thou.\textsuperscript{55} Goulart also included additional notices taken from the Dutch martyrology of Adriaan van Haemstede (the \textit{Historien} of 1579). The publication of George Buchanan's \textit{Rerum Scoticarum historia} in 1582 allowed Goulart to augment his information on the progress of the Reformed faith in Scotland. Finally, he used three of his own works that covered the history of France in the sixteenth century; the \textit{Mesmoires de l'Estat de France sous Charles neufiesme}, the \textit{Mesmoires de la Ligue} and the \textit{Histoire ecclésiastique des Eglises réformées au royaume de France}. As will be shown by the following examples, the use of all these works had consequences for the substance and nature of the narrative provided by Goulart in the \textit{Histoire des martyrs}.

Details taken from the Dutch martyrology included Netherlandish victims and some of the first German martyrs of the Reformation.\textsuperscript{56} These additions allowed Goulart to expand and mould his history of the Netherlandish church. The accounts of the German martyrs made good some of the lacunae in Crespin's work. The 1582 edition contains a marked improvement in the coverage given to German accounts.\textsuperscript{57} These all came from the \textit{Historien} of 1579. The more generous coverage accorded to German events may also be a sign of the different eras in which Goulart and Crespin worked. During Crespin's early years, he was

\textsuperscript{54} Crespin 1570, fol. 709.\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{9}}


\textsuperscript{57} Five accounts of German martyrs ignored by Crespin are included. These are Matthias Weibel, Jean Heuglin, Wendelmut, George Schaser and Guillaume de Schwolto.
very much in the centre of the disputation between Lutheran and Calvinist churches, which divided and weakened the opposition to Catholicism.\textsuperscript{58} By the time Goulart became the editor of the martyrology, Lutheranism was no longer a perceivable threat or rival to the spread of Calvinist ideas; far more important was the threat posed by Catholicism. Within this schema, Goulart had no compunction in including early Lutheran martyrs, themselves victims of Catholic brutality.

Amongst the characteristics of the 1619 edition was the expanded and improved material it provided regarding the Reformation in Scotland. This was entirely due to the use Goulart made of Buchanan’s \textit{Rerum Scoticarum historia} of 1582 for the 1597 edition of the \textit{Histoire des martyrs}. An example of this extended coverage is with the account of the ‘Five martyrs burnt in Scotland’. The details provided by Crespin tell how, seven years after the death of Patrick Hamilton in 1537, five people were burnt together at Edinburgh Castle. They were two Dominicans, a Priest, a gentleman and a Canon. The names of their inquisitors are also given. Goulart’s addition goes on:

George Buchanan, in the fourth book of his history of Scotland, says that several were wanted for the cause of the Religion in the year 1539, that there had been five burnt at the end of February, and several had been banished. Even Buchanan, having been held prisoner, saved himself by a window in his bedroom, whilst the guards slept and escaped a long time since. That happened seven or eight months after the confirmation of the marriage between the King James V and Marie of Guise, widow of the Duke de Longueville.\textsuperscript{59}

Goulart’s use of Buchanan’s history was not merely limited to supplementing the accounts written by Crespin. Goulart also included the stories of those previously not mentioned by Crespin. For example, the account of George Sphecard (Wishart), executed in St Andrews in 1546, is added by Goulart from Buchanan’s \textit{Rerum} in 1597.\textsuperscript{60}

The three most important sources used by Goulart all concerned events in France. Goulart used the \textit{Mesmoires de l’Estat} and the \textit{Mesmoires de la Ligue} in order to inform himself of the events that had taken place since the last edition of the martyrology in 1570. Goulart’s intention by utilising the \textit{Histoire ecclésiastique}, however, was to supplement the accounts of martyrs provided by Crespin with additional information and to expand Crespin’s commentary.

\textsuperscript{58} See chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., pp. 488-92. Crespin 1597, fol. 168.
of the 40 years or so before the outbreak of war. For example, there is the account of the 'Five martyrs executed in Paris' which first appears in the Recueil of 1554. In Crespin's first edition a short account of their execution is added to the end of the account of the auto-da-fé at Langres in 1547:

For the same cause and at around the same time, the following were burnt in Paris: Michel Mareschal, & Jean Camus, natives of Langres, Grand-Jean Camus of Dijon & Jean Seraphin, native of Tours in Touraine, who also constantly endured martyrdom for having maintained the same cause.

This, however, is the first and last time that their names appear in the martyrology of Crespin. Uniquely, their names are dropped from subsequent editions of the martyrology. That is until 1582, when Gouart inserts his own account, taken almost verbatim from the Histoire ecclésiastique. Gouart recounts how at this time Langres was a town enlightened by the Gospel, until Satan's henchmen worked to disrupt it. Seraphin and four unnamed others were taken to Paris and burnt. During the execution, Seraphin was exhorted to patience by François Picard, a Sorboniste. Seraphin rebuffed him 'so loudly that he was easily heard.'

It is also the case that Gouart was able to draw upon his expertise to add additional names to the list of martyrs that had already been included in the Histoire des vrays tesmoins and earlier editions. An example of this was the account of Estienne Renier, a monk executed in Languedoc in 1528. Perhaps it was because Renier's successor, Estienne Machoplois, had such strong links with Martin Luther that Crespin excluded this account from his collection. It is also possible that Renier did not feature in any of Crespin's editions because Crespin was not aware of him. Whatever the reason for the original exclusion, Gouart took the entire account word for word from the Histoire ecclésiastique and included it in the Histoire des martyrs for the first time in 1597.

These assorted examples indicate the lengths to which Gouart went to assemble as complete a picture as he was able of the persecution, and this did have an effect on the character of the martyrology. As has been said, Gouart's intention was to compile a history of the church, a project that went beyond Crespin's more limited objectives. By drawing on the

61 Crespin 1554, p. 637.
62 Ibid., p. 637.
65 Histoire ecclésiastique, pp. 16-17. Crespin 1597, fol. 96.
Histoire ecclésiastique, Goulart transposed the ambitions and structures of that collection onto Crespin’s martyrlogy. The concentration of the Histoire ecclésiastique on the vitality of dissent within individual towns and local congregations meant that in some cases, martyr accounts in the Histoire des martyrs were developed along the same lines. The accounts of two martyrs already mentioned, Jean Caturce and Claude Monier, were altered so that they became more than just martyr accounts but actually accounts of the state of the Protestant churches in the town or area in which the execution took place. The account of Caturce is expanded with a brief outline of the suspected heretical preaching in Toulouse done by two monks, de Nuptiis and Melchior Falvin.66 The faithful’s appetite for the word of God was satisfied a few years later by the ‘marvellous’ preaching of a Franciscan called Marcii.67 Similarly, the account of Monier in the Histoire des vrayes tesmoins of 1570 is complemented with the following paragraph taken straight from the Histoire ecclésiastique when it appears in the edition of 1619:

In this same year, Pierre d’Estrades, Juge criminel of Agen, acted against his own conscience and whipped a man of the Religion, on the day that those in the Roman Church call All Saints Day, and then burnt another who died with constancy.68

Goulart’s wholesale borrowing from other histories affected the Histoire des martyrs in other significant ways. In particular those stories borrowed or expanded from the Histoire ecclésiastique were particularly liable to be embellished with episodes of divine judgement visited on those who persecuted the church. Although Crespin himself was not averse to using these literary devices, his use of them was nothing like as frequent as Goulart’s. Furthermore, on at least two occasions, Goulart’s embellishments are not the result of a reliance on other sources, but appear to be inventions of his own.

Several examples of this process can be offered. In the account of Patrick Hamilton, executed in St Andrews in 1528, Goulart provided important supplementary details. With information taken from Buchanan’s Rerum, Goulart continues the story of Hamilton’s execution with the tale of the subsequent death of Alexander Campbell, the prior of the St Andrews Dominicans. According to Goulart, Hamilton had conferred with Campbell on matters of Scripture in private and had persuaded the Friar to admit to the falsehoods of the

68 Ibid., p. 557.
Papacy. However, Campbell was 'more a friend of the present life than the celestial truth' and once Hamilton had been condemned, he denied he had ever agreed with the accused on these matters. An enraged Hamilton turned to Campbell and prophesised that the Friar would appear before God for judgement. It seems that the ferocity of Hamilton's attack drove Campbell out of his senses, and having been deranged for a few days, he died in a miserable state.\textsuperscript{69}

It appears that Campbell did indeed pass away quite soon after the execution of Hamilton. Such a timely death was taken by Protestants to be a sign of divine favour; a judgement of the righteousness of Hamilton's cause. Understandably, this part of the story became established and was included in other histories such as Foxe's \textit{Acts and Monuments} and Knox's \textit{History}. It is entirely understandable that so much was made of Campbell's death; yet by including the tale in the \textit{Histoire des martyrs}, Goulart was condoning such myth-making on the part of Buchanan, and this was something Crespin had determined not to do.\textsuperscript{70}

The story of the death of Campbell was not an isolated example. An almost identical embellishment is found in the account of a bookseller, executed in Bourges around 1550. This story did not appear in any of the editions of the martyrology edited by Crespin, and was taken verbatim by Goulart from the \textit{Histoire ecclésiastique}.\textsuperscript{71} Betrayed by a letter he himself delivered to François Vaise, a Councillor in the town, the bookseller remained faithful to his confession and was burnt alive. Having heard that the execution had been carried out, Vaise 'touched by the hand of God, went to bed, and even though he was in the prime of his life and had no illness that anyone could see, except melancholy, died in a few days, with great regret and exclamations.'\textsuperscript{72}

Similarly, famine and bad weather appeared to be blamed by Goulart on the iniquitous execution of Louis de Berquin in 1529.\textsuperscript{73} The account in the \textit{Histoire} of 1570 is reproduced word for word in later editions with the addition of the following passage:

The night following the execution (which was the eve of St Martin, in the month of November), the grain in France froze, which was followed by famine and pest in several areas.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., p. 278. Another version of this clearly quite common anecdote is given in John Knox's \textit{History}, whereby an out of control fire at the execution burnt the friar so badly that he was driven mad and later died in a frenzy. In John Foxe's account of the same incident, Hamilton predicted Campbell's death would happen by a certain date. See J. Dawson, 'The Scottish Reformation and the Theatre of Martyrdom', p. 264.

\textsuperscript{70} Although he did include several instances of divine judgement in his narrative. See chapter 2, pp. 36-38.

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Histoire ecclésiastique}, p. 102.

\textsuperscript{72} Crespin-Goulart 1885-9, vol. I, p. 548.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., pp. 273-276. See chapter 3, pp. 50ff.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p. 276. Nicholls is incorrect that this anecdote came from Crespin. Nicholls, 'Theatre of Martyrdom', 66-7.
Although the date of Berquin’s execution is inaccurate (he was burnt on 17 April 1529) there is no doubt that the period 1529-30 was indeed a period of famine and climatic change in France. Cold winters along with wet summers and unseasonable frosts around this time destroyed many crops and brought famine in the countryside. Yet Goullart is not merely reporting this hardship. By including this tale at the end of Berquin’s account, Goullart was representing it as a divine judgement on the people of France.

A slightly different, although no less fantastic, addition is made with the inclusion of the account of execution of Paul Musnier. Musnier had fled France for England in 1550, but had returned to France on the death of Edward VI. Whilst in Dieppe on the way to Geneva, Musnier’s wife fell ill. He took his three children to Paris and placed them in the care of a hotelier. Whilst Musnier was away tending his wife, the hotelier attempted to take the children to Mass, but they refused. The woman consequently put the children into an orphanage and when Musnier returned, he was charged with teaching them not to go to Mass and condemned to be burnt. His torture, however, proved to be too great and he passed away, and his corpse thrown into a river. His three children were whipped to be persuaded to go to Mass. The two eldest eventually gave in, but Isaac, the youngest of the three aged only five years, remained steadfast. The torture continued and his legs were passed through fire, being so badly damaged that he could not walk for a year and a half. The small boy, however, still refused to go. Deciding that he was too young to be burnt alive, his persecutors decided on another punishment. They decided to attach a dog’s tail to Isaac, which they soldered on with a hot iron. The tail remained attached for around thirty months and was visible under the child’s coat. Eventually healed, the child lived until 1595, ‘recounting this notable story to those who placed it in writing’.

Many aspects of this story owe more to popular stereotypes and literary conventions than reality. Goullart makes much of the archetypal wicked female inn-keeper, the incorruptible innocence of the youngest child, the extreme cruelty of the persecutors. The fact that it was the youngest child who resisted the torture was crucial in setting this story in popular mythology. In discussing the case of the martyr cult of ‘Little William’ in Medieval Norwich, Miri Rubin writes, ‘This is popular martyr-making at its very best: like so many martyrs of old, the boy martyr was a virgin, beset by cruel and scheming enemies’.

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77 By attaching a (forked) tail, it was a clear attempt to identify the boy as in a pact with the devil.
78 Crespin-Goullart 1885-9, vol. II, p. 36. As this account does not appear in the Histoire ecclésiastique, it seems likely that the story was recounted to Goullart personally.
unbelievable, story of the attached tail falls into that category. By inserting incredible tales, Goulart moved further away from the project’s first intentions, and raised further doubts as to the reliability of the reports provided by him. For example, in attempting to judge the veracity of Crespin’s martyrology, Professor Mentzer calls attention to the case of François d’Augi.80 Recalling the practice of strangulation prior to execution, he writes:

The custom, howsoever limited, does raise questions concerning the courageous sufferings publicised by the sixteenth-century martyrologies. Jean Crespin’s *Histoire des martyrs* reports that in 1545 the Parlement of Toulouse sentenced François d’Augi to burn for heresy. At the moment of execution, d’Augi,... “was heard crying in a loud voice from the midst of the flames: ‘Courage, my brothers; I see the opened heavens and the Son of God who prepares to receive me.’”

Mentzer goes on to say that his investigation of the archives has shown the account to be unreliable in two ways. First, the execution took place 31 July 1552, seven years after the date given in the *Histoire des martyrs*. Secondly, as Mentzer continues, ‘A notation at the conclusion of the decree clearly states that d’Augi was to be strangled prior to burning, rendering impossible his heroic words.’ Mentzer offers three hypotheses as to how this may have come about:

Did the Parlement subsequently change its mind about strangulation? Was the executioner lax in observing the court’s command? Perhaps the martyrologist Crespin embellished a good story? Or was he simply misinformed?81

In order to try and answer that question, it is crucial to note that this account does not appear in any of the editions edited by Crespin. It appears for the first time in 1582, taken by Goulart from an account in the *Histoire ecclésiastique*.82 Although the evidence is far from conclusive, judging by the examples already offered, it is difficult to believe that Goulart did not invent d’Augi’s courageous and defiant words.

The accuracy of Goulart’s insertions is further undermined by Mentzer’s investigation of the Protestant group arrested at Beaucaire in 1543, which Mentzer correctly assumes to be an addition of Goulart’s. Although the *Histoire des martyrs* mentions seven individuals burnt at

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81 Mentzer, *Heresy proceedings in Languedoc*, p. 121.
Toulouse, Mentzer shows that this figure is incorrect and that only four persons were brought to trial and of those only two were burnt. It is undeniable that Crespin made similar errors concerning the number of those executed in a particular case, or the date of publication; but when added to the growing list of inaccuracies and probable invention on Goulart’s behalf, one does begin to doubt the trustworthiness of accounts presented by Goulart particularly where he is introducing extra material into the narrative.

Although it is true that in these examples the basic facts of the story remain unaffected, their integrity is undeniably brought into question. At times, this raises doubts about some crucial issues. For example, the account of ‘Several Martyrs in France’, which tells the story of three martyrs: Denis Brion, André Berthelin and Jerome Vindocin, who were executed in various parts of France in 1534, is taken from the annals of the Histoire ecclésiastique. Vindocin was arrested in Gascony, having returned from a trip to Geneva. Having been found guilty, this member of the priesthood was degraded before being burnt. A little after his death, Goulart reports that the Inquisitor Rochette, along with his deputy Richardi, who had both played a considerable role in the downfall of Vindocin, were ‘imprisoned in Toulouse for the crime of sodomy; and burnt eight hours after one another.’ That Rochette was executed is in no doubt. However, Professor Mentzer demonstrates the inaccuracy of Goulart’s report. An investigation of the archives confirms that Richardi was indeed found guilty on the joint charge of heresy and sodomy, yet ‘there is no firm evidence, however, that Rochette was condemned for homosexual activity.’ Why, then, does Goulart claim that Rochette was found guilty of sodomy? Mentzer argues that a Goulart made a mistake and that the traditional coupling of the two crimes may have confused him.

This, indeed, may be correct, but the misinformation may be more deliberate. Given the character of Goulart’s editorship already discussed, it is equally plausible that Goulart wished to discredit Rochette, and disown him as a fellow sufferer of religious persecution. First, as Inquisitor of the faith in Toulouse, Rochette had played an important role in the death of Vindocin. Secondly, in constructing a history of the persecuted church, it was not enough for Goulart to convince his co-religionists that their suffering was sufficient mandate for their righteousness; he needed to show his readers that although things may have looked bleak, somehow the persecutors would face the judgement of God. This is the point that is entwined through all these examples. It was not plausible or sufficient for Goulart to claim that

84 Crespin-Goulart 1885-9, pp. 341-2, Histoire ecclésiastique, p. 34.
86 Mentzer, Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc, p. 32.
87 Ibid., p. 32.
Rochette had been a victim of the same persecution as Vindocin and the others. Also, Goulart could not plausibly hide the fact that Rochette had been executed for a specific crime. Consequently, Goulart altered the nature of the accusation against him. Sodomy was a particularly disgusting crime in sixteenth-century eyes, and Goulart’s last sentence leaves the reader in no doubt what he thought of Rochette: ‘There into such hands falls the cause of the children of God.’

That Goulart introduced such changes into the Histoire des martyrs is hardly surprising. As has been said, he saw himself, quite rightly, as a historian who was in a position to supplement and fill out the accounts provided by Crespin. In addition, his adoption of more fantastic elements was following a well-established oral and literal tradition, albeit one that Crespin had hoped to avoid. However, Goulart himself was especially drawn to these tales of the miraculous and bizarre. His Histoires admirables et memorables de nostre temps was largely a collection of instances of divine judgement and unbelievable episodes. A recognition of Goulart’s greater penchant for the miraculous is crucial is appreciating the effect his editorship had on the reliability and veracity of the Histoire. This is even more significant when one bears in mind the extent to which historians of the period have relied on the edition of 1619 as source material, an edition which manifests all of Goulart’s literary techniques and devices.

Importantly, the nature of the changes introduced by Goulart brought the Genevan martyrology into line with the two other great martyrological canons of the Reformation, those of Haemstede and Foxe. In creating a more coherent picture of the church, Goulart was mirroring the structure not only of Haemstede’s Historien, but also Foxe’s Acts and Monuments. Haemstede was the first, with his Geschiedenisse of 1559, to ‘present the modern persecutions as part of a complex scheme of church history extending back to the beginnings of the Christian church.’ Foxe followed soon after, modelling his work on Eusebius’ History of the Church. His Acts and Monuments of 1563 went back to the year 1000, and his edition of 1570 introduced additional sections on the Early Church. Goulart’s willingness to include acts of divine judgement in the Histoire des martyrs also found a parallel in the collections of Foxe and Haemstede. Foxe included ‘sundry extraordinary ‘providences’ and other acts of divine judgement visited upon those responsible for the deaths of the martyrs... Haemstede also took part in this myth-making, including many acts of miraculous retribution inflicted on

the persecutors. By incorporating these acts of providence, the Reformers were able to validate claims of divine favour visited upon them, the chosen people.

Thus, even after its creator’s death, the martyrology continued to develop; not only in order to keep up to date with events, but also to adjust any incumbent stories with additional information. Taken together, they signify a crucial stage in the development of the book. In many respects, Goulart was following many of the changes introduced by Crespin in his later editions. These were not changes of which Crespin would have strongly disapproved, but he would have felt uncomfortable at the inclusion of elements that came perilously close to mirroring Golden Legends and Catholic lives of saints.

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93 See chapter 2.
CONCLUSION: THE FIVE STUDENTS OF LYON

Crespin’s own experience of martyrdom was personal and immediate. Several of his friends were executed for their beliefs, and he himself had attended the execution of Claude Le Painctre in 1541.1 Yet it was neither of these experiences that inspired him to compile his Livre des Martyrs in 1554. It was the arrest, imprisonment, trial and execution of the five students of Lyon in the period 1552-53.2 During their long incarceration, the case of the five students had generated unprecedented publicity. The letters and other writings that they had been able to compose whilst in prison, particularly their correspondence with Calvin, had been widely circulated. Their case soon became a cause célèbre and an international incident, attracting support from various Swiss governments and even appeals for their release to Henry II. The pleas for clemency were in vain, however, and on 16 May 1553, the five students went to their deaths singing Psalms and praising the Lord.

The story of the five students began just over a year previously, in April 1552, when the five, Martial Alba, Pierre Navières, Pierre Escrivain, Bernard Seguin and Charles Favre, decided not to take their monastic vows, but instead to return to France from Lausanne where they could use their training to further the glory of God.3 Having spent some time in Geneva en route, they continued on their way to Lyon, near where they met a stranger, who introduced himself as a fellow traveller. Once they had arrived in the city, they parted company with their new-found companion, having promised him they would visit him at his home in Ainay. As promised, they returned to the stranger’s home on 1 May, only to be arrested during dinner by the Provost, his lieutenant and his sergeants. They were imprisoned in Lyon, interrogated, and charged with heresy.

Questioned as to the nature of their faith, they ‘gave glory to God, by confessing his holy name in front of those who did not want to hear’.4 The content of their confessions was sufficient for them to be condemned to death. The five appealed to the Parlement of Paris in February 1553, whilst the Bernese authorities campaigned for their release.5 Their appeal,

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1 For example, Pierre Brully in 1545, Juan Diaz in 1546 and Jaime de Enzinas in 1547.
2 Crespin 1564, fol. 72r: ‘Of the five scholars from school in Lausanne, burnt in Lyon; with good reason I am able to say that they gave me the first occasion to apply myself to gather the writings of those who died constantly for the Lord.’
3 This account is taken from what remains the most substantial study of these martyrs: G. Truc, ‘Calvin et les cinq prisonniers de Lyon’, Revue des études historiques, 86 (1920), pp. 43-54.
4 Crespin 1570, fol. 197v.
5 The prisoners argued that they were not subject to the jurisdiction of the French crown. Crespin 1570, fol. 234v.
however, was denied, and the five were handed over to the secular arm for execution. 

Unusually, it was the Senéchaussée of Lyon which was to carry out their sentence, which it did on 16 May 1553.⁶ This reflected, in fact, a serious divergence from normal judicial procedure, for it was quite unknown for the Parlement of Paris to decide an appeal without hearing it in person, as they did in this case. There is little doubt that the Judges in Paris took this highly unusual step because they feared an attempt at rescue as the prisoners made the long journey to Paris and back to Lyon for execution. But this abuse of normal procedure, together with the savagery of the sentence, certainly added to the notoriety of the case.

News of the students’ arrest had reached Geneva as early as the beginning of May 1552, and their plight attracted the sympathy and correspondence of many fellow Protestants. It appears that during their year-long imprisonment, they had quite free access to writing materials, which they had been given to write down one copy of their confessions for submission to the Judge. This allowed the five men to correspond freely with the outside world, and the power of the letters and confessions of the condemned only increased the clamour for their release.

Their most vociferous supporter was a German merchant called John Liner who petitioned the Bernese authorities to intervene, as well as visiting and consoling the five men.⁷ They also conducted an extended correspondence with both Calvin and Viret. Calvin’s letter of 10 June 1552 was the first item in a long line of a widely-publicised correspondence which attracted interest from all over Europe.⁸ It was no doubt Calvin who made this correspondence available to Crespin along with the copies of the confessions of faith that the students had composed in their prison cells. Crespin immediately saw the literary potential of their writings. If he had already gathered some of the materials for his martyrology, this wealth of new documentation provided the cornerstone around which to build his narrative. In fact, the records of the five students dominated Crespin’s first edition. Forty percent of the total number of pages in the Livre des Martyrs were devoted to the five students and their fellow prisoners.⁹

The case of the five students not only inspired Crespin to compile his martyrology; it also provided a benchmark of quality for other materials. His initial intention had been to propose

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⁶ Monter has shown that in this case the Parlement of Paris relinquished its duties by not seeing the five men, but condemning them in absentia and therefore giving the power of execution to the court of the Senéchaussée. Monter, Les exécutés pour hérésie, 214-15.
⁷ The efforts of the Bernese authorities to secure the release of the men are mentioned in the Histoire, Crespin 1570, fols. 235v-
⁸ Letters of John Calvin. Selected from the Bonnet Edition with an introductory biographical sketch (Edinburgh, 1980), no. 32, pp. 134-38. In prison at the same time as the five students were six other men, in whose cases Calvin also took a great interest. They were Denis Peloquin, Pierre Berger, Matthew Dimonet, Louis de Marsac and his cousin and Jean Chambon.
⁹ Gilmont, Jean Crespin, p. 168.
8. Conclusion: The Five Students of Lyon

a ‘pattern and example’ of a martyrology, and within that schema he sought to gather together detailed notices, illustrated with first-hand documents such as epistles, confessions of faith and records of the case which provided direct contact with the martyr.10 As Crespin wrote:

We have included one after another their confessions and acts worthy of perpetual memory, with their letters taken from those to whom they wrote and those between fellow prisoners, and also those written to Churches and their friends.11

Examples of such material resound all through Crespin’s narrative of the five students. In many respects the make-up of these accounts was exactly how Crespin envisaged an ideal martyr story. There was a surfeit of documentation to attest to the authenticity of the accounts and the righteousness of their cause. The narratives were impressively complete. Their confessions and their letters to family, friends, fellow prisoners and outsiders were all faithfully included. Furthermore, these accounts provide examples of almost all the exemplary features that we have noted in different parts of the collection.

First, the nobility of the students’ behaviour was clearly in the best traditions of Christian martyrdom. Their heroism and constancy in the face of death was both moving and inspiring. Martial Alba in his letter to the faithful of Bordeaux admonishes them to continue to read scripture where the rewards for honouring God were to be found.12 Similarly, in a letter to his cousins, Pierre Navihères instructed them how to behave in a proper Christian manner, and Pierre Escrivain, on behalf of the other four students wrote a letter which acted as ‘a trumpet to all faithful to incite them to have courage to fight bravely and sustain the cause of the truth until the time of victory’.13 They were certainly aware of what behaviour was expected of them, and their noble words, carefully constructed, provided a heroic dimension to the narrative of their case.

In addition to the students’ correspondence, Crespin also printed their confessions of faith and the students’ accounts of their own interrogations. Such material was exceptionally rare for early French evangelicals, but as we have seen in previous chapters, Crespin was extremely keen to include it, even when the best available examples came from other countries.14 In the case of the five students, their high level of education and their clear allegiance to the Genevan tradition of Reform made these writings the perfect pedagogical tool. The pages of their

10 Ibid., p. 167.
11 Crespin 1570, fol. 198\textsuperscript{v}.
12 Ibid., 198\textsuperscript{v}.
13 Ibid., 232\textsuperscript{r}-233\textsuperscript{v}; fols. 202\textsuperscript{r}-207\textsuperscript{v}. In a similar vein, Denis Peloquin begged his family to embrace the Gospel in memory of his brother, Estienne Peloquin, martyred in 1549. Crespin 1570, fol. 245\textsuperscript{v}.
14 For example the accounts of Ridley, Latimer and Cranmer, see chapter 6, pp. 156ff.
writings were self-contained conduct books for aspiring martyrs. The prisoners not only consoled and instructed each other, but also guided future victims. For example, Pierre Navihères managed:

...in the middle of wolves and roaring lions not only to discover all the points of the Holy Scripture; but also to put into writing his responses, after having constantly and softly maintained them in front of the judges, in order to serve in the future as instructions to those who suffered equal travails.\footnote{Crespin 1570, fol. 219\textsuperscript{r}.}

Navihères’ letters also ‘contained replies to all objections and reproaches that his adversaries were accustomed to using’.\footnote{Crespin 1570, fols. 222\textsuperscript{s}-223\textsuperscript{r}.} Similarly, the replies under interrogation of Louis de Marsac, one of the five students’ fellow prisoners, were notable for he sustained ‘the authority and majesty of the Holy Scripture against the impiety and execrable blasphemies of the Lieutenant, the Inquisitor and other officials of Lyon....’\footnote{Crespin 1570, fols. 258\textsuperscript{s}-259\textsuperscript{r}.}

However, even with such fully-documented accounts as these, several issues arise which highlight once again why the use of Crespin’s martyrology as a source is so problematic. Even for so well-educated and erudite young men as the five students, the formulation of their beliefs as presented in the martyrology is almost suspiciously well-ordered. True, theirs was a very open prison regime, one which permitted them visitors and which kept them all together, allowing them to exchange and discuss information.\footnote{The students were kept together so as not to infect any other prisoners. Crespin 1570, fol. 234\textsuperscript{r}.} Nevertheless, one cannot rule out the possibility that at least in the cases of the confessions of faith, the documentation was subjected to judicious editing. Other commentators too have remarked on the suspicious fluency of the students’ confessions and the similarities between them.\footnote{See Piaget and Berthoud, Notes sur le Livre des Martyrs, pp. 36-8.}

Like many other accounts in the Histoire, that of the five students contained several of the literary tropes and devices frequently associated with martyr stories. For example, their capture and imprisonment were due to the betrayal of the travelling stranger. Also, many of their parents were brought before them to try and persuade them to recant, but with no success.\footnote{For example, Pierre Navihères resisted the attempts of his parents to persuade him to abjure, as did Martial Alba and Matthew Dimonci. Crespin 1570, fols. 219\textsuperscript{s}, 221\textsuperscript{r}, 254\textsuperscript{r}.} Other similar features included Pierre Escrivain’s enemies being rendered ‘confused’ by his confession, and Pierre Berger turning his back on an old Italian priest who
heckled him on the way to the gallows. The most significant rhetorical device used in the accounts was the conversion of the highwayman, Jean Chambon, by the students. His conversion was an episode of great joy for the students and the example of Chambon’s death in January 1553 fortified Pelouquin in the last moments of his own life.

In this case, it was not necessarily Crespin who was responsible for the insertion of these elements to the stories. The students' training in church history would have made them sensitive to biblical and Early Church prototypes. They were educated enough to mould their own behaviour into a traditional martyr story. Moreover, it is also true that the students and the other prisoners relied heavily on Calvin’s letters to instruct and guide them. There is little doubt that this correspondence itself would have had an important formative influence. For example, in Calvin’s first letter to the students of 10 June 1552, he provides a ‘solution to some questions and requests about certain points of the Christian religion’, as sought by Bernard Seguin. Amongst these solutions are Calvin’s advice on monastic vows:

Hence you may conclude, that the monks, in committing themselves never to marry, attempt without faith to promise what is not theirs to give. As for their poverty, it is quite the opposite of which the Lord directed for his followers.

He also gave his learned advice on ‘the nature of a glorified body’, citing from the third chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, the fifth chapter of the book of Revelation and extensively from the works of St Augustine. Whilst Calvin offered guidance on specific points, he refused to provide the prisoners with a full confession, arguing that God will ‘make effectual that which He puts into your mouth, as well to confirm His own, as to confound the adversaries’.

In all, Calvin wrote six letters to the students and their fellow prisoners. They provided pastoral and psychological support for the prisoners, as well as doctrinal guidance. Most crucially, they also placed Calvin at the centre of Protestantism’s most compelling episode, an image communicated to thousands of others by Crespin’s martyrlogy. Calvin became the prisoners’ priest, theologian and father figure.

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21 Crespin 1570, fols. 202r, 239r.
22 See chapter 2, pp. 24-25.
23 Crespin 1570, fols. 228r-229r.
24 Ibid., fol. 228r.
25 Ibid., fol. 228r-229r.
26 Ibid., fol. 261r.
27 Ibid., fols. 228r-229r, fols. 229r, fols. 251r-252r, fols. 254r-255r, fols. 255r, fols. 261r-262r.
28 It is true Viret also wrote to the prisoners, but his correspondence was not nearly so central to the story as was Calvin’s: ‘Epistle of M. Pierre Viret to Pierre Navilières and others’, Crespin 1570, fols. 229r-232r. Also ‘Epistle of M. Pierre Viret to the prisoners held for the truth of the Lord’, Crespin 1570, fols. 255r-258r.
The story’s inclusion in the martyrology would have created a picture for contemporaries of a community of persecuted brethren led by and centred upon Calvin and Geneva. In addition, the account’s dominant presence in the first edition can only have reinforced the pre-eminent role of Geneva. This Geneva-centricity has continued even down to present-day studies based on Crespin’s narrative. Just as the sheer length of the accounts of the five students has a distorting impact on the shape of Crespin’s first edition, so the over-concentration on this material can be equally misleading. For example, Charles Parker has argued that a pronounced Old Testament self-understanding on the part of French martyrs before the Wars of Religion can be attributed to a high level of Genevan influence on the French Reformation.29 However, a quarter of his list of Reformers who used Old Testament imagery was made up of the five students and three of their fellow prisoners: Estienne Peloquin, Matthew Dimonet and Louis de Marsac.

The story of the five students of Lyon was in many respects Crespin’s ideal martyr narrative. In this instance he possessed a greater wealth of authentic detail than for any other individual case. But that is not to say that the account that is presented in his first martyrology is entirely unproblematic as a historical narrative. As we have seen, notwithstanding the immediacy and quality of Crespin’s sources of information in this case, the narrative still presents many of the problematic features that characterise the whole of Crespin’s presentation of the early French Reformation. Even with the close connections between the students and Geneva (perhaps even because of them), suspicions regarding the authenticity of the documentation are not fully allayed; and we still see plentiful instances of the literary shaping which greatly enhances the martyrology’s status as literature, but somewhat undermines its historical credibility.

Most of all, the case of the five students highlights most starkly the whole issue of the extent to which Crespin’s martyrology may lead us to overvalue the Genevan contribution to the early Reformation in France. There is no doubt that by the early 1550s Geneva’s role as a nursery for French Protestantism was securely established. Indeed, the five students’ close association with Geneva, once known to the authorities, was probably one of the reasons why they were dealt with so harshly. But in France as a whole, evangelism was very far from being wholly formed in Geneva’s image. Even after the organisation of a network of churches in France later in the decade, heresy would continue to take a variety of forms which defied all the efforts of the Genevan hierarchy to channel it into an obedient uniformity.

29 Parker, ‘French Calvinists as the Children of Israel’, 244–48.
To the extent that Geneva did succeed in shaping French evangelism, its near monopoly of vernacular Protestant printing in the years before the French wars of religion played a vital role. And Crespin’s martyrology played its part, both as an aspect of the contemporary literary assault, and, as we have seen, in shaping later historical perceptions. It has been the argument of this study that a proper appreciation of Crespin’s work demands a full understanding of this context. But that is not to say that Crespin’s work is rendered unusable, or valueless.

In approaching a more measured appreciation of the value of Crespin’s work it must first be recognised that in the composition of his martyrology Crespin never aspired to completeness. In this respect it is all too easy to allow the much better known case of John Foxe to distort our perceptions of the martyrologist’s purpose. Foxe did attempt to compile a full, and fully documented, register of all those who had given their lives for the truth of the gospel in England. But this was never a goal to which Crespin could or did aspire: it always has to be remembered that his work as a martyrologist was but one task alongside the vastly greater duties of running a busy printing shop. Consequently Crespin’s martyrs, though extremely numerous and taken from many different parts of both France and Europe, were never more than a proportion of the total, even of French martyrs; and that would not have distressed him unduly.

Although Crespin’s other occupational preoccupations invariably reduced the time he had for working on the martyrology, they also provided him with certain opportunities. His role as one of Geneva’s leading printers provided him with valuable connections with the communities of foreign nationals exiled in Geneva, and through them many additional sources of information. The international character of the collection, one of its most striking features, undoubtedly owes much to Crespin’s connections in the publishing industry. One can assume too that to some extent Crespin’s occupational interests were reflected in his treatment of the early French martyrs. His presentation of the early French martyrs certainly highlights cases of those with connections with the Genevan book trade: arrested colporteurs, or those apprehended when they were found to be in possession of forbidden books. Here, again, location played its part. The fate of a colporteur sent out from Geneva, and apprehended in France, would be far more likely to be known to Crespin than the fate of other evangelicals with no connection with the city. This introduces one inevitable bias into the collection; another arises from the fact that Crespin, though not necessarily close to Calvin in personal terms, was obviously a loyal supporter of the Genevan Reform. This is perhaps most evident in the way in which he follows Calvin’s lead in distancing himself from the mid-1550s onwards from German Lutheranism, despite the fact that until this point Crespin had been an enthusiastic publisher of French translations of Luther’s works. It would also, as we have
seen, on occasions lead him to shape his accounts of the first French martyrs to bring their beliefs into some measure of conformity with the later Genevan church.

For all that, Crespin remains an invaluable witness of the events he so movingly describes. His careful documentation of the experience of French evangelicals through every stage of the early French Reformation offers indispensable evidence of the persistence and tenacity of dissent in a violent and extremely hostile environment. Reading Crespin's martyrology one is left in no doubt that, for all the importance of Geneva as a point of reference and inspiration for French Protestantism, the evangelical movement also owed a considerable debt to those who chose to remain in France, and often paid the ultimate price.
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