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Censorship, Executions, and Sacrilege: The First Twenty Years of Protestant History in France

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In November 1533, John Calvin (1509-1564) and his friend, Nicolas Cop (ca. 1505-1540), fled Paris. Cop gave an audacious Lutheran speech as the new rector of the University of Paris on All Saints' Day. It was reasonable that they absconded: to espouse Martin Luther's beliefs, let alone to quote him publicly, was illegal in France.[1] However, the contumacious speech did not change France's religious topography; it did not start a revolution. Rather, the famous event sparked Calvin's itinerant years that eventually led him to Geneva. Calvin's Parisian escape frames this paper. The question that this study hopes to answer is, "What was the larger socio-political environment that Calvin ran away from?"

The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of the official persecution of the crown against the Protestants by mainly discussing royal decrees. This paper is not about emigration rather it sets the tone for why French Protestants and Christian humanists moved: to avoid persecution. We will focus on the first twenty years of the Reformation in order to understand the strong impetus for Protestants to relocate into safer territories.[2] The French monarchy and other attached ruling bodies persecuted the Protestant community openly first with edicts that suppressed Lutheran books followed by decrees that punished evangelicals by execution. Thus the second part of this paper will briefly

1. François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 39-42.

2. To read about Protestant immigrant communities, see Andrew Pettegree, *Emdem and the Dutch Revolt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) and *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Michael Springer, *Restoring Christ's Church: John a Lasco and the Forma ac ratio* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007). For those who scattered to America, see Frank Lestrigant, "Geneva and America in the Renaissance: The Dream of the Huguenot Refuge 1555-1600," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 285-295.

discuss various martyrs condemned as Protestant heretics in Catholic France.[3] The last section of this essay will provide an overview on the Protestant response in the 1530s and the counter measurements taken by the crown to suppress them.

Censorship

Francis I (1494-1547) had been the king of France for slightly over two years when Martin Luther (1483-1546) posted his "Ninety-five Theses" at the University of Wittenberg. He reigned over a kingdom of the "purest" Catholic faith in all of Europe, at least according to Erasmus (1469-1536).[4] The renowned humanist spoke too soon because it was a matter of time, about ten years later, before he would find himself charged with heresy in France's relentless pursuit to remain purely Catholic.[5] The Catholic Church's grip on Western Europe's religious unity would soon loosen. The French state and Church authorities, in an attempt to close a wound in their Catholic kingdom, began to issue decrees to extirpate the Protestants and arguably, their predecessors and co-conspirators, the Christian humanists.

3. Finally, regarding the names of religious groups, early royal decrees called Protestants Lutherans for several reasons. Firstly, the term Protestant was not used until 1529 when German princes protested against the Catholic emperor. Secondly, John Calvin (1509-1564) had yet to establish his Geneva during this time period. Calvinism certainly did not exist until after the publication of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536. Thirdly, the name, Huguenot, which means a French Protestant, and they were usually Calvinists, also debuted later after Protestant groups began to define and distinguish each other. Therefore, Protestants in the first two decades of the Reformation were indistinguishably called Lutherans by the French monarchy. In contrast, the word, evangelical, was used during this time period. Therefore, I will use the terms Protestants, Lutherans and evangelicals interchangeably in this paper. A further note, Protestants during this time referred to three mainstream groups: Lutherans and the future Anglicans and Reformed (Presbyterians). Anabaptists, for the most part, were marginalized by these groups. Secondly, evangelicals also refer to Protestants and thus again, they refer to the three aforementioned denominations. For more information about the short history of these terms see Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), xx.

4. Erasmus complimented France's religious faith in 1517. R.J. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron: The Reign of Francis I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 156. Margaret Mann, *Érasme et les débuts de la réforme française*, 1517-1536 (Paris: H. Champion, 1934), 23. Harvard's library catalog, HOLLIS, states that the publication date of Mann's doctoral thesis was 1933.

5. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 261.

Luther's fame spread to France quickly and by 1518, his arguments created a sensation at the University of Paris, France's defender of orthodox theology. His books were international hits; they were printed and published throughout France.[6] Important humanists and future leading Protestants immediately corresponded with Luther. His ideas were extensions of their mantra *ad fontes*; Luther's call for the church to return to its roots beginning with the original texts of Scripture was irresistible.[7] However, Luther hit a sore spot on academic traditionalists. Diarmond MacCulloch points out, "[Luther] simply claimed the right to pronounce on doctrine, like a one-man version of the Sorbonne, the theological faculty of the University of Paris, which for centuries had seen itself as having a peculiar privilege in this regard."[8] Whether the members of the Faculty of Theology actually saw Luther as a rival against their group is debatable although he was clearly infringing on their domain. Thus, when the papal bull, *Exsurge Domine*, was issued on June 15, 1520 followed by the full excommunication of Luther in *Decet Romanum Potificem* on January 3, 1521, the University of Paris sided with Rome. The Faculty of Theology rejected Luther and his beliefs, reiterating the traditional practices and dogma of the Catholic Church.

In response to Luther's vulgar publications - Luther wrote in German and in simple Latin to reach a wide audience - the Faculty of Theology published their own book, *Determinatio theologice facultatis Parisien super doctrina Lutheriana: hacetenus per eam visa,* where they officialy condemned Luther's works on April 15, 1521. With full support of the Parlement of Paris, the highest judicial court in France, the many French theologians outlined punishments for heretics who followed the one German theologian: owners of Lutheran books would be fined a hundred *livres* and imprisoned.[9] The *Determinatio* was printed faithfully in proper ecclesiastical Latin by Josse Badius in Paris.

The official and natural reaction to any heresy by a governing body was to suppress it publicly with prohibitions against the doctrines followed by the executions of the unrepentant. However, as historians

6. Jonathan Reid, "France," in *The Reformation World*, ed. Andrew Pettegree (London: Routledge, 2000), 212. Ludovic Lalanne, ed., *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris sous le règne de François premier, 1515-1536* (Paris: J. Renouard, 1854), 94.

7. MacCulloch, *The Reformation*, 132.

8. MacCulloch, *The Reformation,* 132.

9. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 157. Faculty of Theology, University of Paris, *Determinatio theologice Facultatis Parisien super Doctrina Lutheriana hactenus per eam visa* (Paris: Josse Badius, ca. 1521). Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France: NUMM-52643. An online version can be found at the BnF's website: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k52643d.r=Determinatio.langEN (accessed July 24, 2010).

have noted, there was a difference with Luther and the Protestant Reformation; circumstances were different and favorable to the seceding minority. Luther's virulent attacks against the pope and the Catholic church were both electrifying and horrifying. His iconic presence as a German national hero adumbrated Germany's future as a nation. However, unlike John Wycliff (ca. 1330-1384) and Jan Huss (ca. 1370-1415) before him, the staying power of Luther's popularity is often attributed to the massive and quick production of his books by the printing press. Luther's writings were omnipresent, and they undermined official programs to eliminate heresy in the French kingdom (and elsewhere in Europe). Medieval French methods were not sufficient to impair the propagation of Luther's message for Christians in the vernacular and simple Latin.

On May 25, 1521, the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V (1500-1558), officially denounced Luther as a heretic and declared him a wanted man in the German provinces in the famous Edict of Worms. Interestingly, one of the earliest known documents, if not the earliest, printed against the Lutherans in the French vernacular was a foreign document. The same Imperial Edict of Worms was published in the same year of its pronouncement, 1521. A French translation was printed by Pierre Gromors in Paris.[10] Another translated copy was printed anonymously. Bibliographers identified the anonymous publication as the work of Nicolas de Grave from Antwerp.[11] These copies were not likely to have been issued by any branch of the French government. The crown and judicial bodies would have issued and printed a national decree over a foreign one.[12] Instead, it was likely for profitable reasons that the edict was translated in French; Luther, whether the author or subject, sold more books in the vernacular.[13]

10. Charles V, *Edict et mandement ordonne et fait a la journee imperiale celebree en la cite de Wormes l'an de grace 1521* (Paris: Pierre Gromors, 1521). Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneiève: 8o C 548 inv. 113 (4) Rés.

11. Charles V, *Edict et mandement ordonne et fait a la journee imperiale celebree en la cite de Wormes l'an de grace 1521* (Antwerp: Nicolas de Grave, 1521). Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: Arm 64 t 17 f 159-168. These publications were not likely printed at the behest of any government branch.

12. The crown very rarely was involved in printing any royal, let alone imperial, decree. See Lauren J. Kim, "French Royal Acts Printed Before 1601: A Bibliographical Study," (doctoral thesis, University of St. Andrews, 2008), 1: 174.

13. Clearly, early modern publishers understood how to sell a newsworthy product in France: print in the vernacular. See Kim, "French Royal Acts," 1: 92-96.

Luther wrote and printed for most of the literate world, and the Sorbonne published in Latin as tradition dictated. The French monarchy issued decrees in the vernacular but failed to print them. In some ways, it was not necessary. Local town criers publicized royal acts on major streets and busy intersections on the king's behalf. They read the king's edicts to the illiterate masses and on rare occasions for two or more days.[14] Unfortunately, serious steps to incorporate the printing press into judicial business did not come until later during the 1560s. Thus, the king's decrees and proclamations were not printed in the vernacular unless explicitly noted otherwise.

The Faculty of Theology convinced the king that Luther's anti-Catholic beliefs were perverse to the Catholic faith. From the onset, Francis I supported the idea that books should require the Sorbonne's seal of approval. He sent a letter to the Parlement of Paris as early as March 18, 1521 before the publication of the *Determinatio*; he ordered the Parlement to summon the Parisian printers before the high court and promise that they will not print books without the approval of the university.[15] So immediately, as R.J. Knecht states, "Francis was ready to act against Lutheranism, at least in respect of the censorship of books."[16] The crown issued another edict on August 3, 1521. It officially supported and reiterated the *Determinatio* defining the king's stance against Lutherans.[17] The act repeated that no one was to possess any book of Luther, those who do must hand over the books to the Parlement in eight days on the pain of a hundred *livres* and be imprisoned. The decree was publicized on the streets of Paris.[18]

While the king supported the legal decrees to censor books, he did not support the Sorbonne's determination to try humanists and condemn them. The king and the University of Paris had two different ideas. The "Faculty was anxious to silence the voice of Christian humanism," while the king felt that humanists were not all heretics.[19] He especially wanted to protect the people who were supported by his own sister, Marguerite of Angoulême (1492-1549), queen of Navarre.

14. Kim, "French Royal Acts,"1: 39-46.

15. Académie des sciences morales et politiques, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France: catalogue des actes de François Ier* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1894), 1: 245, no. 1341.

16. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 161.

17. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 159.

18. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois*, 411.

19. Humanists were important to the king who had a strong interest in nurturing the arts. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 157-164. Arthur Tilly, "Humanism under Francis I," *The English Historical Review* 15, no. 59 (July 1900): 456-478.

Thus, the clashes between king against the university and the Parlement of Paris were also recorded as royal acts. This tension is probably best demonstrated in the trials of Louis Berquin.

Heresy Trials

Louis Berquin, Part I

Louis Berquin (ca. 1490-1529) was a Christian humanist who followed Erasmus; he wanted reform without breaking from Rome. He was introduced to the king through Marguerite of Navarre, the king's sister. Marguerite was well-educated and a patroness of the arts and humanities. She enjoyed the company of Christian humanists, especially the group called the Circle of Meaux. Although she died a Catholic, she was known as a benefactress and protector of Protestants. Berquin was part of her coterie of intellectuals.

When officials inspected personal libraries in Paris, they found prohibited books in Berquin's home. There was a treasure trove of evangelical and humanist works written by Luther, Philp Melancthon, and French translations of other texts some of which he personally translated. He was declared a heretic by the Sorbonne on May 13, 1523 and imprisoned by the Parlement of Paris three months later. With his sister's pleas, the king terminated Berquin's investigation on August 5, 1523 by invoking the special *Grand Conseil,* the personal judicial court of the king, who only intervened with the normal judicial process at the king's request; it was the only governing body besides the king himself who overturned the judgments of the Parlement of Paris.[20] Berquin was set free by the king's command three days later. In lieu of an execution, his books were set ablaze.[21]

Christian humanists always consisted of both Catholics and Protestants. Chronologically, one could argue that at the beginning, they were all Catholics. Then after Luther, many humanists converted individually over a period of time and they either formed their own understanding of Protestant Christianity or joined a Protestant group. In the 1520s, the lines that differentiated the groups were blurry.[22] In the king's mind, they were two different groups, which he consistently maintained, while the Faculty of Theology defined the groups synonymously as heretics. Thus, arguably, if the monarchy's seemingly inconsistent policy against

20. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France,* 1: 349, no. 1879.

21. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois,* 170. Then in October, the king prevented the Faculty of Theology's condemnation of Erasmus. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 162.

22. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 164.

the Protestants should start somewhere, it may as well start with Berquin's trial. To others, the king's interference in heretical trials demonstrated that he too either favored heresy or was a heretic himself. Berquin's fate included two more trials, both of which began during the king's absence away from Paris, and the last one executed him. He will reappear in this paper later.

Blasphemers

The crown at this time began to issue royal acts against blasphemers. On September 24, 1523, an ordinance against adventurers, looters, and other "bad men" was issued from Lyon and registered in the Parlement of Paris on October 19, 1523. The ordinance addressed blasphemers whose punishment included having their throats opened with a hot iron and their tongues cut before they were hung and strangled.[23]

The first French royal act against blasphemers may have been published around 1524 by Jérôme Jacobi in Saint-Nicolas-de-Port. Unfortunately, this single copy became lost over time therefore its contents cannot be confirmed.[24] There is some archival evidence that this may be an ordinance that was issued by the regent, Louise of Savoy, the king's mother, on February 14, 1524 from her residence in Saint-Just-sur-Lyon. The ordinance reinforced former edicts against blasphemers, and published an older edict issued by the previous king, Louis XII, dated March 9, 1510 from Blois.[25] There is no other archival evidence that a decree of this nature was given by the king who was at this time either at war outside France or in Habsburg captivity.

The regent also issued decrees that supported the papal bull of Pope Clement VII against the Lutherans. The first royal letters were sent to the Parlement of Paris to register; the pope ordered the search and eradication of the Lutherans on May 17, 1525.[26] The next month, on June 10, 1525, the regent ordered the execution of the papal bull in France.[27]

Yet, the term, blasphemers, was broad. It did not strictly apply to Lutherans. In September 1529, a draper was arrested for blaspheming against God and the Virgin Mary after gambling. It was said that after

23. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France,* 1: 357, no. 1007.

24. Francis I, *Mandement de non blasphémer le nom de dieu, maulgréer ne aultres enormes juremens* (Saint-Nicolas-du Port: Jérôme Jacobi, ca. 1524). The publication is lost and its existence was recorded in *Répertoire bibliographie des livres imprimés en France au seizième siècle* (Baden-Baden: Koerner, 1968-1980), 7, no. 50.

25. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France,* 1: 398, no. 2120.

26. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France,* 1: 405, no. 2154.

27. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France,* 1: 408, no. 2170.

his cursing words, he lit his clothes.[28] He burned at the stake at the Place de Grève. The judgment against him may have been too harsh because shortly afterwards, another edict against blasphemers was issued on September 23, 1529. Anyone who blasphemes grumbles or renounces the name of God will be punished. First time offenders will be fined sixty *sols*; second time offenders will have their lips split; third time offenders will have their tongues pierced. Finally, if they are caught a fourth time, the blasphemers will be hanged and strangled.[29] The 1530s continued to see the French crown address blasphemers. An edict was issued in October 1535 that elaborated on how the police should deal with them.[30]

Louis Berquin, Part II

In 1525, Francis I was defeated by Charles V at Pavia and was captured by imperial troops. He was treated extremely well by the emperor who allowed him to receive and write letters frequently especially to his mother and sister. During his absence, the king's sister kept the king apprised of malicious steps taken by Catholics against her humanist circle. The Parlement of Paris was clearly using the king's absence and captivity to prosecute as many people as they deemed fit, and reversing a few of the king's policies against the humanists.[31] Thus, from Madrid, on November 12, 1525, the king intruded on the judicial process when the Parlement of Paris charged a few humanist theologians (some of whom became Protestants later) at the University of Paris with heresy: Jacques Fabri, Pierre Caroli and Girard Ruffi.[32] Then in January 1526, Berquin was arrested again and condemned as a heretic.[33] Marguerite of Navarre pleaded for her brother's intervention and protection.

Nevertheless, the Parlement of Paris continued to make arrests with the blessings of the Faculty of Theology.[34] They issued decrees that forbade printers to publish Luther's books on the pain of confiscation of both body and goods. No one could translate the Vulgate especially the letters of Paul or speak against the church and its traditions. The local laws were cried on the streets of Paris on February 5, 1526.[35]

28. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois*, 403.
29. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois*, 402-403.
30. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 3: 150, no. 8177.
31. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 260-261.
32. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France,* 5: 736, no. 18505.
33. Jonathan Reid, *King's Sister – Queen of Dissent: Marguerite of Navarre (1492-1549) and her Evangelical Network* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 1: 339-341.
34. George V Jourdan, *The Movement Towards Catholic Reform in the Early XVI Century*, reprint (Charleston: Bibliolife, 2009), 287.
35. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois*, 276.

After his release, Francis I reprimanded the Parlement of Paris for their disobedience, and reiterated his support of the humanists. Berquin was released later in November 1526. The king, in an attempt to reassert his power, stripped the Parlement of Paris of the right to try heresy cases in 1527.[36]

Although the Parlementaires relented, their collaborators in the Sorbonne continued to ban books written by Europe's greatest humanists: Erasmus' *Colloquies*, Noël Béda's *Annotationes*, and books written by Jacques Léfevre. The theologians did not stop there; they threatened to depose the king on heresy charges if he continued to protect the Lutherans and humanists.[37] Despite their obstinacy, the king allowed ecclesiastical judges to continue to try heresy cases.[38] Then, on July 9, 1527, the University of Paris won. The crown officially deferred to the Sorbonne on their charges against Béda, Erasmus and Lefévre.[39] By December, Francis I assured the Faculty of Theology that he would be more active in the elimination of Lutheranism.[40]

On March 18, 1528, the king issued a new publication of ancient decrees against blasphemers. That same month, the proceedings against Berquin renewed. The Faculty of Theology and representatives from the pope declared him a Lutheran. He was sentenced to life imprisonment. The humanist appealed to the Parlement of Paris who with the support of the ecclesiastical judges sentenced him to death as a relapsed heretic. During the king's absence, they shuttled him to the Place de Grève on April 17, 1529, and burned him before the king could intervene.[41] The king acquiesced to their pronouncement later.[42]

Executions in the 1520s

Berquin's case was special in that the king intervened to save his life on two accounts because of his relationship with the royal family. Without royal connection, ordinary people were executed without any interference. Outside Paris, Luther's followers began to join the ranks of

36. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 260-261.
37. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 261.
38. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 261.
39. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France,* 1: 512, no. 2702.
40. However, this assurance is questionable especially in light of the 1.3 million *livres* the king was about to receive from the church to help pay for the ransom of his sons who were held in captivity by Charles V.Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 263, 282.
41. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 283.
42. Nancy Roelker, *One King, One Faith: The Parlement of Paris and the Religious Reformations of the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 203.

criminals in their executions. One of the first persons, if not the first, who was executed as a heretic, was a hermit in his late thirties from Normandy. He was burned in 1523 near Paris at the Marché aux Pourceaux (Swine Market).[43] In Grenoble, in February 1525, a Franciscan monk is reported to have been burned as a follower of Luther.[44] Similarly, in the Lorraine region, two people of German descent were burned: one in Metz, the capital, and the other in Nancy.[45] The fear of the rapid growth of heresy gripped Catholic Lorraine. Around this time, the duke asked the regent for support to combat and suppress 40,000 Lutherans, who were all of German or Swiss descent. The regent was said to have sent 12,000 men and two hundred spears into the area.[46]

In Paris, a lawyer named Guillaume Joubert was tortured and executed on February 17, 1525 for holding Lutheran doctrines.[47] The following year in April, a wool draper was said to never take holy water or revere images so he was tortured, poked by fire but in the end was not executed in a fire.[48] Lucas Doullon, a native from Anjou, died at the age of 36. He was burned at the Grève on March 4, 1527 as a blasphemer of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary.[49] A native of Poitou was burned near Paris at the Pourceaux after he was beaten with sticks and had his tongue cut. It was surmised that his Lutheran heresy came from his time abroad in Scotland.[50] The following year on December 15, 1528, a boatman of the Seine River and a Meaux native, was burned in Paris at the Grève because he was an iconoclast. He stated that images and the Virgin Mary did not have powers.[51]

The edicts against the Lutherans applied to all ages. A young school girl was said to have been burned as a Lutheran heretic in the Place de Grève; she said that the Virgin Mary, and any other saint, did not have power.[52] Meanwhile, in Meaux, the same day before Christmas in 1526,

43. The Swine Market held executions for specific crimes including heresy. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois,* 144. For a Protestant French perspective, and more information on the hermit (along with a transcription of the Parlement record), see Regard: Bibliothèque chrétienne online, "Promenades à travers le Paris des martyers, 1523-1559," Regard: Bibliothèque chrétienne online, http://www.regard.eu.org/Livres.10/Promenade_a_travers_Paris/01.html (accessed September 10, 2010).
44. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois,* 227.
45. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois,* 244.
46. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois,* 244.
47. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois,* 251.
48. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois,* 285.
49. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois*, 317.
50. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois*, 327.
51. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois*, 375.
52. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois,* 291.

several young men were tortured with hot wax and then burned with Lutheran books and vernacular translations of the Bible.[53]

The 1530s: The Protestants Strike Back

Iconoclasm in Paris

The 1530s was a different decade, a watershed in French Protestant history. Protestantism did not subside in the kingdom of France but rather the opposite: it continued to spread. In short, this was the decade in which Calvin fled from Paris to Geneva, published his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), and between that time, the Affairs of the Placards changed the face of the French Reformation. The crown now perceived Protestants as a seditious menace and a master of propaganda. In response, the crown's position also moved to a stricter form of persecution from a wavering selective suppression against Luther's adherents to lurid persecution.[54]

On May 21, 1530, a Saturday, iconoclasts struck the streets of Paris. Images of Mary and the infant Jesus were mutilated with their eyes punctured and the hearts of saints were pierced with knives. Their destructive presence was especially felt on the corner of rue Aubry-le-Boucher and rue Saint-Martin where images were painted and placed flat on the ground.[55] The following Wednesday, the day before the Day of Ascension, a local decree was issued: people who blaspheme against the Lord will have the tongue pierced as punishment as their first offense. If they are caught again, they will be strangled.[56] This was followed by another announcement by the Parlement of Paris a week after the initial incident: whoever harbors secret Lutherans must expose them otherwise they too will be burned.[57] The dissidents did not waver in their sacrilege against icons. The iconoclasts defaced the images of Mary up to ten feet tall and covered them in plaster that same Saturday.[58]

The king soon certified local decrees with national ones. In June1530, the monarchy reiterated the Parlement's decree: anyone who knew Lutherans-in-hiding should report to them to the Parlement. Informants would receive twenty gold coins. In contrast, whoever con-

53. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois*, 277.
54. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 319.
55. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois*, 416
56. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois*, 411
57. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois*, 411. The order of which occurred first the decree or the acts of iconoclasm is difficult to say because the entry's description is vague.
58. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois*, 411.

ceals them will be burned.[59] In December, Francis I ordered the judicial branches of the government to aid the inquisitors in the suppression of the Lutherans.[60] Another lost royal letter was published that year. It was written to a *monseigneur* and his curates in Lyon on how to apprehend the Lutherans.[61]

On July 17, 1531, king continued his hunt against the Lutherans and sent an enquiry to the town of Aix. The local authorities complied and found instead the Vaudois (Waldenses), in the region of Provence. The Vaudois worshipped like Catholics during the day but at night they had peripatetic preachers who visited their homes and preached to them. Several attempts were made to suppress this group both by popes and kings since the Middle Ages. This time, local leaders were mobilized and they captured the Vaudois. Several of them were executed by fire.[62]

The Affair of the Placards (1534)

On October 18, 1534, a Sunday morning, the French king noticed a handbill displayed on his bedroom door.[63] The paper had a slightly rectangular shape, and a diagonal length of 17.5 inches.[64] The title said it all, "True articles on the horrible, great and encumbering abuse of the Papal Mass: invented directly against the holy Last Supper of Jesus Christ."[65] The articles therein attacked the Roman Catholic Mass and alternatively promoted the Zwinglian view of the sacraments; the Lord's Supper was not a sacrifice but a commemoration of Christ's death.[66] To

59. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois*, 411.

60. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France,* 6: 240, no. 26120.

61. Francis I, *Lettres envoyez par le roi notre sire à monseigneur et à ses vicaires pour apprehender les Lutheriens* (Rouen: Louis Bouvet, ca. 1530). The publication is lost and its existence was recorded in *Répertoire bibliographie,* 70, no. 4.

62. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 324-325.

63. The story that Francis I woke up to find the invective placard on his door is traditionally repeated. Contemporaneous documents have conflicting accounts to how and where the king learned of the event. See Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 313-321. Fliers on the streets of Paris were not new. In 1518, the king commissioned the Parlement of Paris to inquire about placards which were displayed throughout the town using the name of the University of Paris. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France,* 1: 140, no. 805.

64. It was about 37 by 25 centimeters in size. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 315.

65. A picture of the "Articles veritables sur les horibles, grandz & importables abuz de la Messe papalle: inuentee directement contre la saincte Cene de Jesus Christ," can be seen in Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 314.

66. The author of the placard was Antoine Marcourt and was printed in Neuchâtel by Pierre de Vingle. Zwingli, Luther or Calvin did not have anything to do with the affair.

a Catholic king, whose very day will consist of celebrating the Mass, the document and its posted locations were more than an affront to his religion. It was personal, and he would soon find out that the effrontery was not limited to his chateau in Amboise. Overnight, copies of the same placard covered the streets in several French towns including Paris, Rouen, Orléans, Tours and Blois.[67] It was obviously a coordinated affair, and the entire kingdom was shocked by the omnipresence of the flyers.[68]

Local authorities policed the streets and they issued decrees. Soon prisons began to fill with both French citizens and foreigners.[69] By November 10, 1534, the first convictions were given. Seven people were condemned including a cobbler, printer, draper and his wife. Their goods and property were given to the king and the heretics were executed over the course of the month.[70] Capital punishment against Lutherans continued into the following year.

The French judicial system was not equipped to handle the number of suspects at hand. The king in response issued letters to the Parlement of Paris to try the *placardeurs* under a special commission that judged matters of heresy; they were issued on December 21, 1534 in Saint-Germain-en-Laye.[71] On the same day, another set of royal letters delegated Denis Poillot, the *président* at Berquin's trial, and François de Saint-André to instruct officers of the Parlement and others on heresy cases.[72]

The truculent sacramentarians struck again on January 13, 1535, nearly three months after the Affair of the Placards. This newer published work by Antoine Marcourt was scattered throughout Paris. More popularly known as *Petit traité*, it reiterated his previous October placard in further detail. Again, the publication is attributed to the printer

67. Janine Garrison, *A History of Sixteenth-Century France, 1483-1598*, trans. Richard Rex (Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1995), 98-100.

68. Seeing scattered anonymous fliers was not new to France. As early as April 4, 1518, the king addressed the issue of posted bills in Paris to the Parlement of Paris. See Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 1: 140, no. 805.

69. The French Book Project database does not have any record of printed documents from local authorities regarding heresy during this time.

70. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois*, 444-445.

71. The commission composed of eleven members : Densis Poillot, président, François de Saint-André, conseiller, président des enquêtes, Louis Rouillart, Martin Fumée, Jean Tronson, Jean Hennequin, Jean Ruzé, Charles de La Mothe, Pons Brandon, Pierre Tournebulle, and François Arault, conseillers. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France,* 6: 378, no. 20841.

72. When Denis Poillot died, Guillaume Poyet, replaced him according to royal letters dated January 6, 1535. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 6: 380, no. 20842 and 20847.

Pierre Vingle in Neuchâtel. If the Affair of the Placards did not seal the fate of the Protestants, this second offence should have hit the nail in the coffin. A royal moratorium on printing was created on the same day followed by more arrests.[73] On January 25, 1535, seventy-three Lutherans were declared to have left Paris. In their absence, their goods were confiscated and the people were condemned to be burned.[74] Those who were arrested and condemned were burned with Luther's books. The crown issued more letters concerning the special commission created to try Protestants with the use of the criminal chamber.[75] Finally, on January 29, 1535, the king while in Paris issued a new set of royal acts against the heretics and those who harbored them.[76] They were registered in the Parlement of Paris four days later.[77] The new acts not only reinforced previous punishments to heretics and their sympathizers but informants would now receive a quarter of the confiscated property.[78]

On February 4, 1535, Parisian printer Jean André received permission and privilege from the Parlement to publish the Edict of Paris. It was entitled, "New ordinances recently made by the king against the imitators of the Lutheran sect and those who harbored them."[79] The sole right to publish the decree lasted for one year. Two of André's editions survive today.[80] This was the first definitive time authorities used the printing press to mass produce laws that helped them curb Protestantism in France.

The royal response to the Protestant movement was dilatory in print despite the fact that France had the second and third largest printing centers in Europe: Paris and Lyon after Venice. This is important to

73. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 3: 9, no. 7461. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 316.

74. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois*, 445.

75. Lalanne, *Journal d'un bourgeois*, 446-447.

76. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 6: 385, nos. 20861-20863.

77. Francis I, *Ordonnances nouvelles nagueres faictes par le roy* (Paris: Jean André, 1534/5), A3r-v. Chantilly, Musée Condé: IV E 60.

78. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 3: 8, no. 7486. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 316.

79. Francis I, *Ordonnances nouvelles nagueres faictes par le roy* (Paris: Jean André, 1534/5), A1r. Chantilly, Musée Condé: IV E 60.

80. The second edition: Francis I, *Ordonnances nouvelles nagueres faictes par le roy contre* (Paris: Jean André, 1534/5). Rouen, Bibliothèque Muncipale: Leber 3906 (1). Although they were entitled ordinances in their publication, they would have appeared like edicts in their size; the pamphlets were four pages in length. Edicts were usually specific laws created by kings. Ordinances were a set of laws; they can address several different aspects of the kingdom. Kim, "French Royal Acts," 1: 62.

note because while the Protestants used the book trade and the printing press as mediums to spread their messages, French royal authorities failed to respond in kind. Instead, the monarchy employed traditional methods and resources to control the populace. Without integrating the same technology as part of their verbal weaponry, royal messages that supported the Catholic public order became lost; they lacked the long-term impact that church and state required to properly extinguish the Protestant cause.[81]

Thus, again, the crown attempted to control the printing industry. Francis I addressed the printing industry on February 23, 1534 to augment the interdiction from the previous month. The crown commissioned the Parlement of Paris to nominate twenty-four conservative and quality printers of which twelve will be selected to print in Paris approved and necessary books published for the good of the public. Everyone else was prohibited to print temporarily and forbidden to print new titles.[82] The royal act was registered three days later in the Parlement of Paris.

A royal decree against the Lutherans and *placadeurs* was published in Lyon. It assured the public that informers would be protected. These letters were publicized on May 21, 1535.[83] The French monarchy continuously attacked Protestantism in the public sphere using royal proclamations to officially suppress the evangelical faith.

The Edict of Coucy (1535)

The Edict of Paris of 1535 should have been the last word against the Protestants since the Affair of the Placards. However, according to R.J. Knecht, the issue was raised later by imperial representatives who questioned the king's treatment of foreigners in the name of religion.[84] He believes that this was why the crown readdressed the matter of heretics in the Parlement of Paris in June and then again in the Edict of Coucy on July 16, 1535 where he released the religious prisoners based on the belief that heresy was eradicated in France. In contrast to Knecht, Nancy Roelker's posthumous work states that Pope Paul III (1468-r. 1534-1549) wrote to the king to soften his policies against the Protes-

81. Later in the sixteenth century, the monarchy used the printing press as part of the dissemination process. There is a textual and practical difference between hearing the king's word for a day or two in town and having it in one's hand as a pamphlet; the message lasts longer as a book.

82. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 3: 23, no. 7559.

83. Francis I. *Lettres patentes contre les Lutheriens* (Lyon: n.p., 1534 [sic]). Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: R I 931 (8).

84. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 321.

tants; the king then complied with the Edict of Coucy.[85] Regardless of why the king issued the Edict of Coucy, the fact remains that the edict, arguably, openly and significantly marked the beginning of the crown's inconsistent policies against the Protestants as national policy.[86] The edict suspended the hunt against the partisans of the new sect and permitted the return of the fugitives on the condition that they abjure their errors in six months. The edict was registered on July 29, 1535 in the Parlement of Paris, on November 17, 1535 in the Parlement of Provence and five days later, it was registered in the Parlement of Grenoble.[87] His pardon did not last long.

The monarchy continued to address matters of administration in regard to the growing number of heretics. The crown addressed the region of Provence on April 19, 1536; the Parlement of Provence was ordered to immediately seize goods that have yet to be confiscated from heretics without delaying their auction.[88] The king followed up on his letter on confiscated property sales by discussing how properties should transfer to the state and how clerks should be compensated by them.[89]

The royal act on confiscated goods was then followed by an exonerating royal edict, which was issued on May 31, 1536 from Lyon. Letters of abolition were granted to those who abjured the errors of heresy for the next six months. The act was registered in Paris on July 29, 1536, in the following months in Grenoble, Bordeaux, Dijon, and Provence.[90] There is debate over why Francis I bothered to issue this decree; it may have been in response to Calvin's dedication to the king in his *Institutes* or from foreign Bernese pressure to soften his policy.[91] The reason is uncertain.

85. Nancy Roelker, *One King, One Faith*, 205. Roelker uses N.M. Sutherland, *The Huguenot Struggle for Recognition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 30-31, 336; and also Victor-Louis Bourilly, ed., *Journal d' un bourgeois de Paris sous le r*ègne de François I (Paris: Picard, 1910), 359-360.

86. Whereas before, the king interceded as personal matters on proceedings against renown humanists. According to R. J. Knecht, quoting N. M. Sutherland, this edict was "the first regulation to introduce the death penalty," for spreading heresy. This appears questionable in light of previous decrees. See Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 321. N.M. Sutherland, *The Huguenot Struggle for Recognition*, 1-39, 333-340.

87. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 3: 109, no. 7990.

88. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 3: 198, no. 8414.

89. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 3: 202, no. 8437.

90. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 3: 209-210, no. 8476

91. Calvin dedicated the book to Francis I in Basel on September 10, 1535. For an English translation, see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1536 Edition*, rev. ed., trans. by Marion D Battles (Grand Rapids: Wm. B.

The unquestionable issue during this period was that the crown's mixed messages of forgiveness, repentance and condemnation were confusing. The crown's Delphic motives were never articulated. Thus the king promulgated decrees as he saw fit.[92]

The Evangelical Push

The Reformation continued to spread. Royal documents demonstrate the struggles of the king as he sought to maintain a purely Catholic administration. For example, the French inquisition had its headquarters in Toulouse since the thirteenth century. During the 1520s, it had recently been troubled by a series of debacles first over constant replacements followed by contestations over who held the office of inquisitor. Once the issue was temporarily settled, humanist heresy charges were made against the inquisitor himself, Arnaud de Badet, during the early 1530s.[93] The king eventually nominated Vidal de Becanis to fill the role. His provisions were given on March 11, 1536 from Crémieu. However, at Marguerite's insistence, the king replaced him with Louis de Rochette, a friar, in December. In less than three years time in office, Rochette and his lieutenant were declared heretics by the Parlement of Toulouse on May 10, 1539.[94] Becanis was recalled into the office of inquisitor and remained there until 1547.[95]

Protestant books were also continually published. Calvin, himself, was more than watchful. During the late 1530s, Calvin was able to exploit the cracks in the medieval persecution system and royal censorship by propagating the Protestant faith through the publication of the *Institutes* in their pocket-sized Latin editions followed by the dissemination of the French vernacular editions in 1541.[96] The printing press was one of many resources that Calvin used while working abroad.

Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986). Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 326.

92. Making laws, even conflicting ones, was well within the king's rights.

93. Raymond Mentzger, *Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc, 1500-1560* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1984), 25-31.

94. Mentzger, *Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc*, 31-32.

95. Mentzger, *Heresy Proceedings in Languedoc*, 32. Judicial administration to try heresy cases was not always properly organized. Toulouse perhaps was entirely too enthusiastic to get eliminate heretics. The king on January 28, 1537 recognized that a false position of a secular judge of heretical affairs was created in Toulouse at the headquarters of the inquisitor. He stated that the office was made in error. See Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 3: 269-270, no. 8761.

96. Elsie Ann McKee writes of the 1541 French edition, "The book itself was more than a translation of the Latin 1539; it was a text of pastoral theology in the language of the common people and consciously directed to them." Elsie

The crown responded to the continual trade of Protestant books and Calvin's *Institutes*. On December 28, 1537, the French crown prohibited the sale of any book printed in any language until the French printer or bookseller delivered a copy to the king's library in Blois. The reason: so that his librarian can examine books and check for heretical elements. The king also forbade the same printers and booksellers from selling abroad without submitting an example to his library.[97] Members of the book trade failed to comply.[98] Another book-related declaration was given from Varennes on March 17, 1538. The king banned the publication of any book without royal approval.[99] The disobedience of the kingdom's printers and booksellers must have been infuriating. The crown authorized the Parlement of Toulouse to set an example of how to prosecute and exterminate heretics rigorously especially against the printers, sellers, buyers, and possessors of heretical books.[100] They had six months to demonstrate their efficiency because on June 24, 1539, the king issued an ordinance to the sovereign courts in the kingdom. It ordered regional Parlements and ecclesiastical authorities to track and apprehend heretics in a cooperative manner, especially members of the "Lutheran cell."[101] The Parlements of Dijon and Grenoble registered the edict on July 24, 1539; Toulouse on August 12, 1539; Bordeaux on August 28, 1539.[102]

Two days after the Parlement of Grenoble ratified the king's ordinance, royal letters were created and sent from Crécy. The letters commanded the lackadaisical parlement to discover heretics and prosecute them as decreed in the ordinance issued in the previous month. It also noted the expedient acquiescence of the parlements in Toulouse, Bor-

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Ann McKee, *Institutes of the Christian Religion: 1541 French Edition* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), x. McKee also discusses the physical differences in the editions in her introduction. McKee, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* vii.

97. This decree lacks a parlement registration date. It was registered in the Châtelet de Paris on March 7, 1538. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 3: 426, no. 9476.

98. Kim, "French Royal Acts," 1: 155-156. On January 5, 1538, internal letters of evocation was sent to the Parlement of Paris that discussed how the property and goods of heretics should be processed. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 3: 438, no. 9531.

99. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 3: 508-509, no. 9854.

100. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 3: 660, no. 10534. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 327.

101. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 327-328.

102. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 4: 14, no. 11072.

deaux and Rouen as counterparts of comparison.[103] The king had a right to be concerned about the Alpine town because the province of Dauphiné was becoming increasingly Calvinistic as Grenoble was also geographically the closest parlement town to Geneva.[104]

In contrast to the leaders of Grenoble, the *parlementaires* of Toulouse were incredibly diligent in their search. Geographically, it was the principal town in the Midi-Pyrenees region, which means it was the closest parlement town to Spain; it also retained the proud history possessing the second oldest parlement in France after Paris. Philip Benedict noted that in the Parlement of Toulouse alone the number of heresy cases increased over the decades: eight cases in 1521-30 and121 cases in 1531-40.[105]

During the 1530s, the French policy to suppress heresy did not change overall.[106] However, the few lapses that temporarily stalled royal persecution were enough to question judicial consistency. The Edict of Coucy alone provided much hope for the French evangelicals living abroad despite its retraction later. Meanwhile, in France, continual state executions forced French citizens to recognize the monarchy's aggressive stance. The king argued before foreign dignitaries that the Reformation was no longer a religious issue but a political one: the Protestants undermined the authority of the Catholic king and created a seditious minority within the kingdom.[107]

Conclusion

About twenty years have passed since the advent of Luther's "Ninety-Five Theses" (1517) to the publication of Calvin's *Institutes* (1536). Promulgated royal acts against Protestantism not only demonstrated the crown's dependence on antiquated tactics but it also showed a struggling medieval monarchy grappling with a new form of early modern mass media. Firstly, the monarchy promulgated decrees that controlled the book trade delegating the Parlement of Paris and the Faculty of Theology as monitors and regulators of heresy. In practice, this failed because the main drive of booksellers was not necessarily to

103. Académie, *Collection des ordonnances des rois de France*, 4: 26, no. 11125.

104. Robert Kingdon, *Geneva and Coming of the Wars of Religion in France, 1555-1563* (Geneva: Librarie E. Droz, 1956), 32. The area eventually created a synod and corresponded with Calvin in Geneva.

105. Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 131.

106. Decrees that were issued to forgive heretics required Protestants to return to the Catholic Church.

107. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron*, 321.

be orthodox but to be profitable. They continued to print Protestant works both in and outside France without proper supervision and control. Secondly, the monarchy failed to use the same means of printing royal decrees as counter measurements to the Protestants' seemingly infinite supply of published works despite the fact that Paris was the second largest printing center in Europe. The monarchy relied on traditional means of issuing decrees and publicizing them locally through town criers. Thirdly, Francis I supported the prohibition of evangelical books without participating in a serious dialogue with the Protestants – his efforts were made null by both the Sorbonne and the Lutheran camp. The French crown in essence used medieval methods in a modern war of media and dissemination.

In addition, the French crown appeared indecisive, if not weak. The king promulgated pernicious edicts that executed Protestants and then retracted them both privately and publicly. The inconsistent policies demonstrated the crown's unreliability as a constant oppressing force against the Reformation. Such capriciousness provided the Protestants a dim hope that the wavering crown will someday favor their movement and frustrated zealous Catholics who saw the king as an abomination to Catholic orthodoxy. Protestantism was able to grow quickly between crevices and nooks of the official persecution against the reformers and the Reformation in France.

Thus, the officially broad religious persecution in France forced Calvin to leave his beloved university and country. He continued to be affected by it. In one of Calvin's letters written to the church leaders in Basle, he describes the persecution in France as "cruel" and "raging." He understood that people were imprisoned for the gospel, and were "in jeopardy of their lives," while the "opposition" was "already drunk with the blood [of the victims]."[108] Calvin encouraged the church leaders to "devote [themselves] entirely to this cause according to the Christian sincerity of [their] hearts....so that these furious men may not be able to counterwork [them]."[109] When the exiled Frenchman finally settled in Geneva in September 1541, he constantly looked west in hope that the evangelical faithful can live in France without persecution.[110] Similarly, he instructed fellow Protestant churches to undertake the struggles of

108. John Calvin, "Letter 16: To the Ministers of the Church of Basle... Geneva, 13th November 1517," in *Selected Works of John Calvin, Tracts and Letters 1528-1545,* eds. Henry Beveridge and Jules Bonnet (Albany: Ages Software, 1998), 61-62, CD-ROM.

109. John Calvin, "Letter 16," 61-62.

110. Kingdon writes a compelling history of Geneva and Calvin's efforts organize the Protestant faith in France before the religious wars. See footnote 103.

their oppressed brothers and sisters to which he labored ceaselessly until his death: to help release the fetters of the Roman Catholic church on his countrymen.