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The Polemical use of the Albigensian Crusade during the French wars of religion.

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From the outset of the Reformation, Catholic authors had sought to draw parallels between Protestantism and earlier heresies. In France, members of the Sorbonne took arguments from controversies against a variety of heretical groups which they applied indiscriminately to Protestantism. Although the Albigensian, or Cathar heresy was mentioned in this context, it was but one of many such heresies used for the purpose of combating Protestantism. The reason the Albigensians received special attention from Catholic polemicists lay with the political specificity of the Albigensian heresy rather than their alleged beliefs: of all other heresies, Catharism alone had been the object of an organised crusade. The comparison between the emerging Calvinist Church and the Albigensian heresy became commonplace during the French wars of religion. At the same time, the Protestant demand for identity and legitimacy was being answered in the shape of martyrologies and histories of the True Church. Protestant martyrologists gradually came to terms with the Catholic comparison with medieval heresy and turned it to their advantage. The historical specificity of the Albigensian Crusade makes it a good example of how the past was appropriated, on both sides of the confessional divide, for polemical purposes.

The Albigensian heresy was undoubtedly the most formidable threat to orthodoxy that France had known before the outset of the Reformation. Unlike any other medieval heresy it was highly organised and had been openly adopted by the political elite of the Languedoc, led by the comte Raymond de Toulouse. The organisation of the Albigensian Church mirrored

that of the Catholic Church, with bishops, archbishops and allegedly, a Pope.¹ Between the sending of the first papal envoys in 1215 to the last burning at the stake in 1329, it had taken more than a century to extinguish all traces of it.² As a consequence of a policy of eradication, very little was known about the Albigensians and their doctrine apart from what the Inquisition had recorded. Consequently, the Cathar heritage of the areas where Protestantism flourished in the Midi was enough to suggest a connection between the two movements which was more than coincidental.

This led Michel Jas, a Minister and historian of the Midi, to argue that there was a continuous heterodox tradition between the end of the Albigensian Crusade and the beginning of evangelism in Languedoc.³ This view is in direct line with the Protestant doctrine of the True Church which argued for the parallel existence of two churches from apostolic times to the beginning of the Reformation. The Protestant assimilation of the Vaudois, who were thought to descend from the 12th century Waldensians, was partly motivated by the need to find historical evidence for this doctrine.⁴ The Albigensians, on the other hand, were not acknowledged by the French martyrologists until much later, when they were associated with the Waldensians. The parallel between Protestantism and the Albigensian heresy first appeared in Catholic polemic of the eve of the French wars of religion for a completely different purpose.

I

The numerous histories of the Albigensian Crusade that were published during the French wars of religion were intended to serve as an example of how heretics could be defeated in battle by a decisive monarch. The comparison between the confessional division

in France and the Albigensian Crusade first emerged in the context of the political events which precipitated the French wars of religion. The untimely death of Henri II in 1559 led to the succession of his 15 years old son François II, who died shortly afterwards to be replaced by the ten years old Charles IX. This situation contributed to the entrenchment of the confessional divide, as both Catholic and Protestant factions accused the other of taking advantage of the young age of the kings. This situation came to a head in March 1560 with the Tumult of Amboise, a failed Protestant coup to withdraw François II from the influence of the Guise faction. References to the reign of Louis IX and the Albigensian Crusade were made in the course of the polemical exchange between pro-Guise authors and Protestant apologists which followed. In defence of the Protestant cause, François Hotman argued in the Histoire du Tumulte d'Amboise that François II was being manipulated by the duc de Guise and renewed the Protestant plea for the summoning of the Estates General. In response, the royal archivist Jean du Tillet resorted to the precedent of Louis IX, who became King at the age of 13 and fought rebellious barons as well as the Albigensian heresy in the early years of his reign.⁵ François Hotman, who was probably the author of a Responce to du Tillet, argued in turn that although Louis IX had come to the throne at an early age, he had remained under the tutelage of his mother, Blanche de Castille, until he was 21.⁶ This heralded the death of François II in December 1560 which led to the succession of Charles IX who was placed under the regency of his mother, Catherine de Medici.

The comparison with the reign of Louis IX, which had originally been intended as a defence of the majority of François II, took on a different meaning during the reign of Charles IX. The example of King Saint Louis, who had led a crusade in the holy land after having defeated the Albigensians in Languedoc, was used to coax Charles IX into leading a crusade

against the Protestant heretics. This argument was made more pressing as conciliatory measures were implemented by Catherine de Medici and Michel de l'Hôpital before the outbreak of the wars of religion. Not only did these measures provoke the wrath of the leading Catholic nobles led by the duc de Guise, but they were also met with unprecedented resistance from the Parlement of Paris and the Sorbonne. The Sorbonne and the Parlement expressed its disapproval through the licensing of inflammatory books, often written by members of these two institutions themselves, which called for punitive measures against Protestants.⁷ During the reign of Henri II, the Sorbonne and the Parlement had been granted considerable powers of censorship to curb the production of Protestant works. These prerogatives could be turned around, however, as it allowed the Parlement and the Sorbonne to officially encourage the publication of books which contravened the Regent's policy of conciliation.

One such book was Jean Gay's Histoire des Scismes et Heresies des Albigeois who plainly compared Protestants to Albigensians and called for a crusade against them. This book would probably have escaped the notice of historians if it had not been at the origin of a diplomatic incident with the court of Elizabeth I.⁸ Indeed, it earned immediate notoriety by comparing the comte de Toulouse, temporal patron of the Albigensians, with Henry VIII and by making multiple marriages a telling sign of heresy.⁹ The English Ambassador in Paris formally asked for the book to be banned and the Constable de Montmorency published an order forbidding printing without the authorisation of the King or his council.¹⁰ This demonstrates that the court was at odds with the Parlement and the Sorbonne as to what could be published and what could not. Moreover, there is evidence that the views expressed by Jean Gay, a member of the Parlement of Toulouse, were shared by members of the Parlement of Paris, notably Jean du Tillet. The Histoire des Scismes et Heresies des Albigeois warned

against the danger of allowing temporal patrons to harbour and protect heretics, an allusion which was no doubt intended for the Bourbon:

Les heretiques Albigeois favoriz, & entretenuz dedans les terres du conte Raymond de Tholoze, & du viconte de Beziers son neveu: Ensemble du conte de Foix leur confederé, se disoient estre Evangelistes, comme font les heretiques modernes.¹¹

The similarity between the respective views of Jean Gay and Jean du Tillet became apparent when the Parlement of Paris refused to ratify the edict of pacification of January 1562. On this occasion Jean du Tillet drafted a remonstrance to Charles IX, on behalf of the members of the Parlement, where he urged him to consider the example of Saint Louis who had chastised the comte de Toulouse:

le Roy saint Loys, aagé seulement de quatorze ans, par la saige conduite de la Royne Blanche sa mere, eut cest heur d'extirper l'heresie des Albigeois, rengea si bien le dernier Raymond conte de Tholoze, que par traicté faict en Avril mil deux cens vingt-huict il le feist obliger a purger sa terre de ladicte heresie.¹²

It is clear that du Tillet was referring to the Prince de Condé, who justified his fears when he assumed the leadership of the Protestant cause in April 1562. As Tours and Orléans fell to the Protestants, Jean du Tillet presented a manuscript history of the Albigensian Crusade to Catherine de Medici which echoed the text of the Parlement's remonstrance. Repeating the arguments he had used after the Tumult of Amboise, du Tillet urged Charles IX, like he had done François II, to follow the example of Saint Louis. But the comparison concerned Catherine de Medici as much as it did Charles IX, as it was the Queen Mother who had dealt with the rebellious barons during the minority of Louis IX.¹³ Du Tillet pressed the point that the Catholic Church and the Crown had been in a

symbiotic relationship for so long that challenging the one necessarily implied armed resistance against the other. Furthermore, he observed that the rebellion of the nobles had been encouraged by contempt for the young age of the King:

Ledit Roy saint Loys son fils aîné, & aagé seulement de premier Decembre 1226.

(qu'il fut couronné & sacré) de unze ans sept mois six jours, sous la regence de la Royne Blanche sa mere, le Comte de Tholoz, mesprisant la jeunesse du Roy & la domination de la Royne, leur commença la guerre.¹⁴

Jean du Tillet's history of the Albigensian Crusade was intended to be a warning to the Protestant nobility, and the Prince de Condé in particular, pointing out the fate of the comte de Toulouse as a deterrent against rebellion: 'La lecture des piteuses cheutes de grandes maisons, autres calamitez & miseres de plus puissans qu'eux possibles les retiendra'.¹⁵ In this statement we find the repetition of Jean Gay's argument: 'plusieurs grands princes, & seigneurs sont tombez en extremes desolations & ruynes, pour avoir favorisé aux heretiques'.¹⁶ The history of the Albigensian Crusade also carried a second message: 'Mais si la rebellion & mespris des jeunes ans du Roy obstinement se couvre de la religion, ou entreprend le changement d'icelle, vous aurez dequoy vous conduire avecques son tres sage conseil'.¹⁷ This passage is an unambiguous call to follow the example of the Albigensian Crusade should the Protestant nobles not heed du Tillet's warning. Throughout the wars of religion, histories of the Albigensian Crusade were reprinted by a number of Catholic authors, carrying a similar message in the face of the royal policy of conciliation.

II

There is evidence that the example of the Albigensian Crusade was used continuously as a statement against religious toleration throughout the French wars of religion. The second edict of pacification of March 1563 was greeted with as much resistance as the first one, and the Parlement of Paris made the provision that it would not become fully operative until the King had reached his majority.¹⁸ In order to take the reluctant Parlement at its word, Charles IX declared his majority in a lit de justice at Rouen in August 1563. The secretary of the Parlement of Paris, Jean du Tillet, had hoped that the coming of age of Charles IX would mark the end of the religious troubles in France: ‘attendant la majorité du Roy qui lors de son seul regard, pourra dissiper tout mal selon la sentence de Salomon’.¹⁹ On the other hand, he had not expected the majority of the King to be used as a ploy to force the Edict of Amboise on the reluctant Parlement of Paris. Shortly before the promulgation of the Peace of Amboise, du Tillet signed a privilège for the publication of another anti-Protestant book by the inquisitor and dean of the university of Toulouse.²⁰ Rotier’s Response aux Blasphémateurs de la Sainte Messe once more referred to the Albigensians and the reign of Louis IX, an argument that had dominated the minority of Charles IX:

Et pouvons estimer que la divine providence a permis ces monstres & perverses sectes entrer en vostre Royaume, afin que vous ayez le lot & gloire à tout jamais les avoir en ce vostre jeune aage chassez & extirpez de tout vostre Royaume ... comme feirent Philippe Auguste, S. Loys, Charles huictiesme, qui en l’aage de quatorze ans commencerent à regner.²¹

This argument was continually used throughout the second and third war of religion, long after Charles IX’s 14th birthday, notably by Gabriel de Saconay in De la providence

de dieu sur les roys de france (1568):

Et si comme [Dieu] donna le pouvoir au Roy Philippes Auguste en l'aage de quatorze ans, de chastier les persecuteurs des Eglises, & au Roy saint Loys au mesme aage, de suprimier la rage & memoire des Albigeois, & à ces deux Roys aussi & à plusieurs autres, la force pour chastier les princes & seigneurs de leur Royaume qui avoyent conspiré contre leurs majestés: aussi a il pleu à sa bonté divine donner la puissance quasi au mesme aage à nostre Roy Treschrestien Charles IX. pour resister à si grandes entreprinses & menees attentees contre la religion divine, & contre sa personne & estat.²²

Although the example of Louis IX was continually used, there emerged during the years 1567 and 1568 another contender for the leadership of the Albigensian Crusade in the person of Simon de Montfort. The shift of emphasis from Louis IX to Simon de Montfort prefigures the disillusionment of the ultra-Catholic party with the reign of Charles IX. The leadership of Simon de Montfort was also more historically accurate: he had been designated leader of the Albigensian Crusade by the Pope and offered the lands of the comte de Toulouse as an incentive for victory. Simon de Montfort was therefore an ideal symbol for those advocating the direct involvement of the Pope in the French wars of religion.

This announced the development of the Holy Catholic League which appeared in embryonic forms in confraternities and crusading movements in 1567 and 1568 which mimicked similar lay movements which had appeared during the Albigensian Crusade.²³ This evolution can be traced to another publication by Jean du Tillet, the Advertissement a la Noblesse (1568), where he described the Crusade as a confederacy of barons under the

leadership of de Montfort:

Nous lisons en l'istoire des Albigeois, que pullulant leur erreur, & se couvrant de
mesmes voiles que font noz conjurez, la Noblesse se croisa sous l'enseigne d'un Conte
de Montfort, & leur feist & continua la guerre jusques à ce qu'ils furent tous deffaicts
& exterminiez.²⁴

The strongest advocate for de Montfort's leadership was undoubtedly Arnaud Sorbin, chaplain of the future Henri III to whom he dedicated his Histoire des Albigeois, et Gestes de Noble Simon de Monfort. Unlike his predecessors, Arnaud Sorbin looked to the duc d'Anjou rather than Charles IX for leadership of a crusade against the heretics:

Le Comte de Montfort par l'armée François
A été le domteur de l'Albigeois soubzmis:
Ton Henry de Valois moissonneur d'ennemis,
(O Sorbin) domtera l'Heresie Gauloise.²⁵

With his victories at Jarnac and Moncontour in 1569, Henri had become the new champion of orthodoxy, and he soon replaced Charles IX as the potential leader of a crusade against heresy. Simon de Montfort was not exclusively compared to Henri de Valois, however, as he was also compared to François, second duc de Guise who had become a martyr and a saint for the Holy Catholic League. A second edition of Arnaud Sorbin's Histoire des Albigeois includes a short companion work entitled Similitude des Regnes du Roy Loys IX where it is François de Lorraine who is compared to Simon de Montfort:

[Louis IX] feit combattre durant sa minorité à toute outrance les Heretiques Albigeois
en Languedoc par Simon de Lycestre Comte de Mont fort: desquels il fut victorieux ...

Le Roy [Charles IX] durant sa minorité a combattu les Heretiques rebelles, par ses Capitaines Messire François de Lorraine Duc de Guise, saint personnage: lequel les a plusieurs fois debellez.²⁶

Both these works recognise Simon de Montfort as the real leader of the Crusade, expressing the need for an alternative leadership for the Catholic cause, but disagree as to whom should take it. The differences between the Histoire des Albigeois and its companion work the Similitude des Regnes thus strangely prefigure the conflict which pitched Henri III against Henri, duc de Guise in the 1580s.

During this period, the theme of the Albigensian Crusade was appropriated by the Holy Catholic League which used it as a polemical weapon against Henri III. Arnaud Sorbin himself was a notorious ligueur and his Histoire des Albigeois was reprinted in 1585 under the evocative title Histoire de la Ligue Sainte.²⁷ Other histories of the Albigensian Crusade which had been published during the first phase of the conflict were reprinted. The inflammatory Histoire des Scismes by Jean Gay which had been censored at the beginning of the wars of religion was reprinted in Paris in 1589.²⁸ Jean du Tillet's manuscript Sommaire de l'Histoire was also published in 1590 by his son who thought that the lessons of the Albigensian Crusade had yet to be drawn:

Me souvenant que feu mon pere voyant ce royaume affligé mesmes troubles qu'il avoit esté il y a plus de trois cens ans, par l'heresie des Albigeois, comme zelateur du bien de ce Royaume, en l'an cinq cens soixante & deux, presenta a la Royne mere de nos Roys, un extraict par luy tiré du tresor des Chartres du Royaume de France, de l'histoire des heretiques Albigeois ... il m'a semblé que les mesmes remedes qui furent lors appliquez à guerir la playe qui affligoit ce Royaume (sinon en tout) au moins en la

pluspart sont maintenant fort a propos, pour donner la guarison a la mesme maladie
laquelle ce Royaume est a present tourmenté.²⁹

III

More than a generation of polemical use of the Albigensian Crusade had promoted the idea that the Albigensians had been forerunners of the Reformation and that Protestants were their offspring. Jean Gay had written that the Albigensians had been exterminated beyond a trace except for ‘les seulz Lutheriens & leurs fauteurs, qui sont leurs enfans diaboliques adoptif’.³⁰ Jean du Tillet had asserted that it was the seed of the Albigensian heresy that had been at the origin of the evangelical movement:

Depuis quarante cinq ans elle a esté resuscitée en plusieurs pays, remplie de
nouvelletez adjoustees selon la coustume de toutes autres heresies, c’est aprochee &
espendue en cedit Royaume, plus en seize mois qu’elle n’avoit faict en tout le temps
precedent.³¹

The most significant link was undoubtedly the geographical identity between erstwhile centres of Albigensianism and contemporary hotbeds of Protestant resistance in the Midi. For example, the Cathar heritage of the town of Lavaur was acknowledged by both a Catholic member of the Parlement of Toulouse, and a Protestant Minister of Montpellier who reported that Lavaur had been called ‘la fontaine d’heresie’ in the 13th century.³² Jean Fornier (1530-1584) was born in Montauban and studied law in Toulouse before trying his hand at poetry in Paris where he was converted to Protestantism in the 1550s.³³ In 1562 he published l’Histoire des Guerres contre les Heretiques based on the chronicles of the inquisitor Bernard Gui (1262-1331).³⁴ Although there is no indication that he was sympathetic to the Reformed faith or the Albigensians, Fornier described

the 1211 siege of Montauban by Simon of Montfort in great detail. Fornier would have suffered from persecution and witnessed the siege of Montauban by the Catholics in 1562 in the same year that his account of the Albigensian Crusade was published.³⁵ Although French Protestants were aware of a connection with the Albigensians, the Reformed Church would not acknowledge it officially until 1572.

Unlike the Hussites, Lollards and Waldensians who were given ample attention from the Protestant martyrologists, the Albigensians were largely ignored.³⁶ For example, Matthias Flaccius Illyricus (1520-1575) only mentioned the Albigensians once in the Catalogus Testium Veritatis (1556) and not in such terms that would suggest affinity with Protestants: ‘Anno Domini 1213. haeresis Albigensium dilatata, totam provinciam coepit maculare’.³⁷ Their inclusion in the Protestant martyrologies stemmed from a confusion between Albigensians and Waldensians which emerged in the course of the 16th century. The first author to make it was John Bale who wrote about the Albigensians and Waldensians on equal terms as ‘men doubtless of a godly zeal and spirit’ in 1545.³⁸ This view was reiterated and elaborated upon in his Scriptorum Illustrium Maioris Brytanniae (1557) where he argued that they had both been upholders of true doctrine.³⁹

For John Bale, the Albigensians and Waldensians were not interesting in themselves but they added bulk to his arguments against the papal monarchy and the Mendicant Orders.⁴⁰ The Waldensians and Albigensians had accused the Pope of being the Antichrist which had become a leitmotiv of the Protestant apocalyptic tradition. The affiliation between the Albigensians and the Waldensians was also championed by the Catholics who made good on Protestant praise for the Waldensians. For example, Jean du Tillet had

written that the Albigensians had branched off from the Waldensians and had shared their doctrine.⁴¹ On the basis of Catholic sources, it was difficult to distinguish the Albigensians from the Waldensians, as the same treatment was applied indiscriminately to all medieval heretics.⁴²

According to the specialist of the Acts & Monuments Thomas Freeman, John Bale was responsible for writing the article concerning the Albigensians which appeared in the first edition of John Foxe's Acts & Monuments.⁴³ Although Bale used Catholic sources whose account of the Albigensians was less than flattering, he chose to dismiss their views as false accusations spread by the papacy against its enemies:

What these Albingensis wer, it cannot be wel gathered by the olde popish histories. if there were any that did holde, teache, or maintaine agaynst the Pope ... the histories of that tyme ... doe so deprave them, and misreport them, suppressyng the truthe of theyr artycles, that they make them and paynt them foorth to bee worse then Turkes and infidels ... Otherwise it is to be thoughte, and so I fynde in some recordes, that the opinions of the sayde Albigenses were sounde ynoughe.⁴⁴

This point had already been made by Flacius Illyricus about the Waldensians in the Catalogus Testium Veritatis where he had argued that because the Waldensians had accused the Pope of being the Antichrist, they had been ascribed false doctrines and persecuted: 'Nam alioqui Waldenses iam annis 400. Papam esse Antichristum docuerunt'.⁴⁵

The first edition of the Acts & Monuments was criticised by contemporary English Catholics writing from the continent, notably Thomas Stapleton who linked the

Albigensians and the Waldensians:

Now for the other secte of the Albanenses of Albigenses, springinge of the loynes of the holye brother Waldo, beside the common and usuall errorrs, of the Waldenses ... they precieuse martyrs with M.Foxe ... Now let Mayster foxe make an accompte of hys holy martyrs, and see howe manie he canne fynde, that have not maynteyned the sayd errorrs, of these Albigenses, Paterans, or Waldenses: and he shall fynde his holie cataloge altogether voyde and emptied.⁴⁶

This direct challenge was answered, this time by Foxe, in the second edition of the Acts & Monuments (1570), in a chapter entitled 'The historie of the Waldenses or Albigenses'.⁴⁷ The phenomenon which led to the inclusion of the Albigensians in the Acts & Monuments announced the continental movement. It was paramount to show the continuity of the True Church from apostolic times to the present through medieval opponents of papal supremacy. This ideology had emerged with Matthias Flacius Illyricus and his Catalogus Testium Veritatis which was nothing more than what it claimed to be: a catalogue of the adversaries of the papacy.⁴⁸

As we have seen, the geographical location of the Albigensian movement meant that it had particular relevance for both Catholics and Protestants of the South of France. Both Catholic and Protestant histories of the Albigensian Crusade had come out respectively from Toulouse (Gay's Histoire des Scismes) and Montauban (Fornier's Histoire des Guerres). They had been pitched against the other as centres of orthodoxy and heterodoxy respectively, both at the time of the Albigensian Crusade and during the French wars of religion. It seemed natural that the first Reformed attempt to deal with the Albigensians should stem from the first national synod to be held South of the Loire. The synod held in

Nîmes in May 1572 was presided by Nicolas des Gallars, while Antoine de la Roche-Chandieu and Théodore de Bèze had been sent from Geneva to attend.⁴⁹ The decision was taken to commission a Reformed history of the Albigensian Crusade for which task the Ministers of Montauban were designated:

Monsieur Berauld, & ses Collegues dans l'Eglise de Montauban seront chargés de retirer de Monsieur Comerard de Thoulouse, l'Histoire des Albigéois, écrite en leur Langue, & Monsieur d'Acier la traduira en François, ensuite il la communiquera au Colloque, suivant les Canons de nôtre Discipline, & la fera imprimer: pour cet effet cette Assemblée enverra des Lettres audit Sieur de Comerard & d'Acier.⁵⁰

Although nothing came from this decision, given the season of massacres which followed Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, it shows the willingness of the Reformed Church to address the question of the Albigensians. Although Jean Crespin had not dealt with medieval heretics during his lifetime, his work was completed by Simon Goulard who bridged the gap between Wycliffe and Hus and apostolic times. The Histoire des Martyrs (1582) was the first of Goulard's four editions, and it was the first to deal with the Albigensians. It includes a section on the Albigensians and Waldensians, although it is much more cautious than Foxe's Acts & Monuments.⁵¹ The affiliation between Protestants, Albigensians and Waldensians had been asserted much more strongly a year before by Lancelot du Voisin de la Popelinière in his Histoire de France:

Donques apres plusieurs & legeres attaques que la Foy commune receut en France ... elle n'a point esté si vivement assaillie que par les Vaudois & leurs successeurs ... qu'on nomma Albigeois ... Lesquels malgré tous les Potentatz Chrestiens semerent environ l'an unze cens & tousjours depuis leur doctrine peu differente à celle des

Protestans modernes.⁵²

The Histoire de France was condemned by the national synod held in La Rochelle in 1581 because the author had deliberately chosen to represent both Catholic and Protestant views impartially.⁵³ His views on the Albigensians seem to have become Protestant orthodoxy, however, as they were relayed by the Peter Wesenbec in his Oratio De Waldensibus et Albigensibus Christianis (1585). Wesenbec (1546-1603) argued for a historical continuity between the end of the Albigensian Crusade in the 13th century and the persecution of Mérindol & Cabrières in the pays de Vaud in 1545.⁵⁴ The same historical link between the medieval persecution of the Albigensians and the emergence of evangelism was later repeated by Jacques-Auguste de Thou in his Historia sui temporis (1603).⁵⁵

It is clear from the articles on the Albigensians quoted so far that very little was known about them and that, in doubt, they were treated as a branch of the Waldensians. As Nicolas Vignier wrote in his Recueil de L'Histoire de l'Eglise (1601): 'il n'y avoit pas grande difference de doctrine entre les Albigeois & les Waudois'.⁵⁶ Although Bale had laid the grounds for using Catholic sources, and despite the plethora of French Catholic histories of the Albigensian Crusade, a Protestant history of the Albigensians failed to materialise. A second Southern synod, held in Montauban in 1594, expressed its willingness to seek historical forerunners to the Reformed Church.⁵⁷

Jean Chassanion's Histoire des Albigeois (1595) was the culmination of the Reformed efforts to rehabilitate the Albigensians. Jean Chassanion (1531-1598) had organised the church of Meaux in 1555, and preached in Montpellier and other parts of

Languedoc before becoming a Minister in Lyon in 1565.⁵⁸ Chassanion pitched his history against Arnaud Sorbin, who had made the connection between the Albigensian heresy and Protestantism in the 1560s. Jean Chassanion had access to a source in Occitan which contradicted some of Sorbin's assertions. It was probably the manuscript secured by the Ministers of Montauban following the decision of the synod of Nîmes in 1572:

Neantmoins il est venu entre mes mains une copie d'un livre escrit à la main, au language du Languedoc, contenant l'histoire de la guerre faite contre les Albigeois, laquelle leur peut servir de justification contre les mechans blames qu'on leur a faussemant imposés ... C'est l'histoire qui a esté divulguée par Arnaud Sorbin l'an 1569 laquelle il dit avoir traduite de latin en François. Je ne trouve point toutefois en mon original le 1^{er} Chapitre de son histoire. Il farcit le second de plusieurs erreurs & blasphemes faususement attribués aux Albigeois, dont toutefois notre moine ne fait mention.⁵⁹

Although Chassanion's source was clearly a Catholic one, he used the argument which had been inaugurated by Bale, that everything that did not coincide with an affiliation with Protestantism could safely be dismissed as false accusations:

Les Albigeois ont esté faususement chargés de plusieurs damnables opinions ... On les a diffamés ... qu'ils faisoient en secret choses vilaines & detestables ... de s'accoupler entre eux homes & femmes pesle mesle en leurs assemblées secretes ... Ainsi il en est avvenu anciennement aux Chrestiens, lesquels on a faususement diffamés d'incestes & mesme d'infanticides ... De semblable vitupere nos premieres assemblées secretes ont esté chargées iniquement, le bruit courant ça & là, que les chandelles esteintes on se mesloit sans aucune discretion & honnesteté.⁶⁰

The accusations of orgies, infanticide and incest had indeed been a common fixture of anti-Protestant polemic in France in the 1550s and 1560s.⁶¹ Like Bale, Chassanion dismissed these accusations, but accepted the assertion that they had been forebears of the Protestants:

Les Eglises réformées du Languedoc et autres païs circonvoisins sont comme la moisson de la semence jettée par les Albigeois. C'est cette Ste Semance laquelle en ces quartiers la du Languedoc, & autre lieux circonvoisins a germé, a poussé hors, & s'est epanouie & ejouye aux rayons du soleil de justice qu'il a pleu a Dieu j epande largement en ces derniers tans ... Come on a veu par le grand nombre des Eglises reformées qui i ont esté dressées depuis le Rhone jusques en Gascogne, avant le massacre de Vassy, & la premiere guerre civile. Cela se voit encores a présent en celes qui subsistent par la grace de Dieu et qui sont tres belles et florissantes, come a Castres d'Albigès, à Montauban (où j'ai servi quelques mois), a St Antonin et en plusieurs autres lieux; à Nimes aussi, et à Montpellier où il a pleu a Dieu que j'aye travaillé des premiers avec sa bénédiction.⁶²

Although Chassanion had not connected the Albigensians with the Waldensians, and had associated them with the True Church on their own merits, his book would have little impact. It was dwarfed to insignificance by a parallel movement, which used the persecutions of the Waldensians and Albigensians indiscriminately, to refute counter-Reformation arguments against the Protestant identification of the Pope as Antichrist.

IV

The renewed interest in a history of the Albigensians and Waldensians was inextricably linked with the Protestant doctrine of the Pope as Antichrist which had been

challenged by Cardinal Bellarmine.⁶³ John Bale and Flacius Illyricus had argued in the 1550s that the persecutions of the Waldensians had marked the beginning of the reign of the papal Antichrist. The persecutions of Waldensians were an intrinsic part of the commentaries on Revelation by François du Jon (1545-1602) in his Apocalypse ou Revelation de S. Jean (1592):

[Le Pape] persecuta les gens de bien, les mit à mort, & anathematiza la memoire & les escrits d'iceux, comme desja aucuns de ses predecesseurs avoyent faict quelquesfois, depuis qu'ils eurent matiere de repaistre leurs meschancetez sous couleur des Vaudois ou povres de Lion, des fraticelles d'Italie, & autres semblables pastures de leur cruauté insatiable.⁶⁴

The same interpretation was reproduced in an annotated Geneva Bible of 1602 which contravened cautions against interpreting the book of Revelations which had been printed in the 1577 and 1588 editions of the Bible, and were repeated at the national synod of 1596.⁶⁵ The fact that these precautions were flaunted indicates the importance of the persecutions of the medieval martyrs to the Reformed arguments against Cardinal Bellarmine.

Philippe de Marnix (1538-98) responded to Bellarmine in his Tableau des Differens de la Religion (1599) where he made the Albigensians and the Waldensians 'the two olives or the two lamps, of which St John spoke, whose oil and light spread to the ends of the earth' (Rev.11.4).⁶⁶ The identification of the Pope as Antichrist was officially sanctioned by the Reformed national synod of 1603 and included in the Confession of Faith of the French Reformed Churches.⁶⁷ This was confirmed at the synod of 1607 which issued a commission for a book on the Albigensians and Waldensians and another on the

Antichrist:

L'Article touchant l'Antechrist inseré au Synode de Gap, pour être le 31. de nôtre Confession de Foi ... a été aprouvé ... comme ... conforme à ce qui a été predit dans l'Escriture ... Monsieur Perrin est exhorté de continuer son travail pour achever la veritable Histoire des Albigéois & des Vaudois ... Monsieur Vignier est prié de mettre la main à la plume pour traiter amplement la Matiere de l'Antechrist, & d'apporter, ou envoyer son Ouvrage au prochain Synode National.⁶⁸

Nicolas Vignier was the son of Henri IV's surgeon, his namesake, who had converted back to Catholicism in 1579.⁶⁹ Vignier was almost certainly the author of a defence of the Reformed doctrine of the Antichrist against Cardinal Bellarmine which was published anonymously in 1606.⁷⁰ In 1608, Nicolas Vignier published a history of the Dominicans and Franciscans which were described as messengers of the papal Antichrist.⁷¹ In 1609, the national synod of St Maixent acknowledged the progress of both Perrin and Vignier whose Theatre de l'Antechrist was sent to Saumur where it was printed in 1610.⁷²

In the face of the criticism of Bellarmine, Nicolas Vignier added the Albigensian Crusade to the persecutions of the Waldensians as characterising the reign of the papal Antichrist. Vignier, like Bale, argued that the Mendicant Orders had been satellites of the papal Antichrist and that as many as a 100 000 were martyred during the Albigensian Crusade.⁷³ Moreover, Vignier argued in L'Antechrist Romain (1606) and the Legende Doree (1608) that the persecution under the papal Antichrist had been worse than at the times of the Early Church:

Mais il [Bellarmine] se trompoit, quand il disoit que les persecutions de la primitive Eglise avoyent esté plus grieves que celles qui s'opposoyent à la doctrine preschés par

les Mendians: Car les persecutions en la primitive Eglise n'estoient que corporelles, ne touchoyent qu'au corps; mais ... celles cy estoyent & corporelles & spirituelles; celles là venans de dehors & de ceux qui estoyent du tout estrangers de l'Eglise de Dieu; Celles-cy suscitées par ceux qui faisoient posession du Christianisme & vouloyent estre estimez les Colonnes d'iceluy.⁷⁴

It should be noted at this point that the Anglican and Reformed doctrine of the papal Antichrist is distinct from the Lutheran apocalyptic tradition based on the prophecy of the four kingdoms of Daniel.⁷⁵ The Lutheran approach relied on the interpretation of the fourth monarchy announced by Daniel as the Holy Roman Empire, itself the successor of the Roman Empire. This interpretation gave a central role to the Lutheran Reformation, portrayed as having defeated the Roman antichrist, and heralding the coming of end-time. The historical specificity of this argument made it difficult for the Anglican and Reformed traditions to use it in the context of the controversy of the papal Antichrist. The central work of Lutheran apocalypticism, the Chronica Carionis, concentrated mainly on establishing the chronology of the fourth monarchy. In the section dealing with the papal antichrist, the Chronica Carionis makes a comparison between the Waldensians and the Mendicant Orders:

En ce siecle là nasquirent en l'Eglise plusieurs ordres de moines, pestes publiques & destructeurs de la vraye religion, de la doctrine Chrestienne, & des sciences liberales. Deux de ces ordres ... Les uns s'appelloyent pauvres de Lyon, les autres humbles d'Italie ... Les Papes condamnerent ces deux ordres: puis comme la superstition est fertile, & une erreur en engendre d'autres, survindrent nouveaux ordres ... leurs principaux fondateurs furent François & Dominique.⁷⁶

This passage contradicts the Anglican and Reformed view that the Mendicant Orders had been created specifically to defend the temporality of the papacy against the attacks of the Waldensians and Albigensians.⁷⁷ Around this time, Goulard supervised new editions of the Catalogus Testium Veritatis and was collecting material to add to the medieval section of the Histoire des Martyrs.⁷⁸ In the third edition of 1608, Goulard reproduced the above passage from the Chronica Carionis apparently unaware of the obvious contradictions with other parts dealing with the Waldensians.⁷⁹ This oversight might be explained by the apparent lack of material on the Waldensians and Albigensians which Goulard noted elsewhere:

Tesmoins les Vaudois & Albigeois vilainement calomniez par les histoires ... Leur histoire merite une diligente recherche, & livres à part, ayant esté ensevelie jusques à present, où pour le moins obscurément & trop briefvement descrite.⁸⁰

The progress of Jean-Paul Perrin, whose commission had been issued at the same time as Vignier's, was recorded in the minutes of the national synods of 1609 and 1612 at which time he was rewarded for his pains.⁸¹ Jean Paul Perrin's Histoire des Vaudois (1618) included a history of the 'Vaudois appellés Albigeois' which was used in Goulard's fourth and definitive edition of the Histoire des Martyrs (1619). Both these works bear the mark of the Bellarmine controversy regarding the Antichrist, and their treatment of the Albigensians and Waldensians is coloured by it. Both the Histoire des Vaudois and Histoire des Martyrs reproduced word for word Philippe de Marnix's interpretation of the Revelation of John:

de façon que d'une part les Vaudois, & de l'autre les Albigeois estoient comme les deux olives, ou les deux lampes, desquelles parle S. Jean, Apocal.11.4. dont la graisse

& la lumiere s'expandit par tous les bouts de la terre.⁸²

Goulard and Perrin clearly identified the Albigensians and the Waldensians as the two witnesses of Rev.11.3 but more significantly Goulard ascribed a precise duration to the reign of Antichrist. Bellarmine, in his efforts to prove that the Pope was not the Antichrist, had attacked the historical interpretation of the Revelation arguing that the reign of Antichrist had not yet taken place. The duration of the reign of Antichrist was inferred from sibylline indications in the Book of Revelations to be '42 months' (Rev.11.2), '1260 days' (Rev.11.3, 12.6), 'three and a half days' (Rev.11.9-11), and 'a time, times, and half a time' (Rev.12.14). Bellarmine had argued that these times were all one and that it corresponded to three and a half years which could not be ascribed to the papal monarchy which had lasted far longer than that.⁸³

Goulard reproduced the now familiar idea that during the medieval persecutions, the witnesses of the True Church had gone into the wilderness and perpetuated the true faith which was passed on to the Vaudois of Mérindol and Cabrières:

Ainsi furent-ils à la longue tellement harassez ... qu'ils furent finalement contrains de se retirer aux deserts ... où ils ont depuis leurs Eglises & predications en petites troupes ... jusques à nostre siecle: ainsi qu'il appert par les declarations que ceux de Cabrieres, de Merindol ... remonstrans que la doctrine, & maniere de vivre qu'ils tenoyent, leur avoit esté enseignée de pere en fils, depuis l'an mil deux cens.

Goulard asserted, in the face of the arguments of Bellarmine, that the time elapsed between 1200 and 1550 was precisely the duration of the reign of Antichrist announced in the Revelation:

jusques à ce que finalement ils furent contraints de se retirer es deserts, suivant la Prophetie de L'Apocalypse, ch. 12. disant que la femme enceinte, qui enfanta le fils masle, & est la vraye Eglise de Dieu, seroit tellement persecutee par le dragon, ... qu'elle seroit contrainte de s'enfuir au desert, où elle seroit nourrie pour un temps, & par des temps, & par la moitié d'un temps, ou bien par l'espace de 42.mois, ou de 1260.jours, qui est tout un mesme nombre, & en prenant un temps pour un an seculier, ou un siecle (c'est à dire pour un temps de l'aage d'un homme, qui est de 100. ans) il revient à 350. ans ... tellement que le susdit temps de 350. ans a esté justement accompli, en comptant depuis qu'ils commencerent à estre persecutez, jusques à la restauration des Eglises, faite de nostre temps par la doctrine de l'Evangile.⁸⁴

Goulard was therefore in direct line with the Reformed apocalyptic tradition, according to which the reign of Antichrist had started with the rise of the papal monarchy. This tradition held that the True Church had existed continuously despite the persecutions of the papal Antichrist, and had come out into the open with the advent of the Reformation to triumph over the Antichrist. It is clear that upholders of this tradition expected victory over Antichrist, and the end of time, to be imminent. The obvious problems with this tradition, both chronological and eschatological, meant that it was soon abandoned to be replaced by a Reformed Millenarianism where the coming of Antichrist was expected to take place in the future:

At the beginning of the century the ideas of the papal Antichrist and the past millenium had seemed mutually supporting; by the end of the century they had begun to undermine one another.⁸⁵

Nonetheless, the publication of these articles in Perrin's Histoire des Vaudois and the

definitive edition of the Histoire des Martyrs ensured that the memory of the Albigensians would be passed on to posterity. Indeed, Agrippa d'Aubigné used Perrin's work for his article on the Albigensians in his Histoire Universelle.⁸⁶ The image of the witnesses of the True Church retiring in the desert was perpetuated through the numerous editions of the Histoire des Martyrs. It was adopted wholeheartedly by the Camisards who escaped persecution in the 'desert' of the countryside of Provence, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. The idea that the Albigensians were indistinguishable from the Waldensians would not be refuted until 1691 when Bossuet wrote the 'Histoire abrégée des Albigeois & des Vaudois. Que ce sont deux sectes tres-différentes'.⁸⁷

V

It is ironic that the inclusion of the Albigensians in the Histoire des Martyrs should have followed from a half century of Catholic efforts to portray them as forerunners of the Reformation. The Albigensian Crusade and the reign of Saint Louis had originally been intended as an example for the Valois monarchs, at a time when François II and Charles IX came to the throne. If the comparison with the Albigensian heresy was later used as a weapon against the Reformed Church, it also carried a clear political message at court against toleration. It is interesting to note how Protestant martyrologists turned the tables on the Catholics and acknowledged the connection with the Albigensians, as the Crusade fuelled their arguments against the papacy. It is as if the Reformed had willingly adopted the language of the Catholics. For example, Jean du Tillet and Jean Chassanion used the same word to describe the relationship between the Albigensians and the Reformed:

l'observance desdites ordonnances nettoya entierement la France de ladite heresie,

toutesfois aucune semence en fut portee au Royaume d'Angleterre.⁸⁸

Les Eglises réformées du Languedoc et autres païs circonvoisins sont comme la moisson de la semence jettée par les Albigeois.⁸⁹

Although du Tillet and Chassanion used it for quite different purposes, the word semence also had an apocalyptic edge, as the book of Revelations echoes the prophecy of Gen.3.15: 'Et je mettrai inimitié entre toi & la femme, entre ta semence & la semence de la femme: icelle semence te brisera la teste, & tu lui briseras le talon'.⁹⁰ These three occurrences of the word semence summarise admirably the evolution of the polemical use of the Albigensian Crusade surrounding the French wars of religion.

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⁸⁰ Ibid., fol. 25^v.

⁸¹ Aymon, Tous les Synodes Nationaux, I, pp. 361, 404.

⁸² Crespin, Histoire des Martyrs (1619), fol. 22^r; Bédouelle, 'Les Albigeois, Témoins du Véritable Evangile', p. 60.

⁸³ L'Antechrist Romain, pp. 199-211.

⁸⁴ Crespin, Histoire des Martyrs, fol. 22^v.

⁸⁵ Howard Hotson, 'The Historiographical Origins of Calvinist Millenarianism', in B. Gordon ed., Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth Century Europe (2 vols, Aldershot, 1996), II, 159-181, pp. 175-6.

⁸⁶ Agrippa d'Aubigné, Histoire Universelle (8 vols, Geneva, 1981), II, p. 178.

⁸⁷ Bédouelle, 'Les Albigeois, Témoins du Vérable Evangile', p. 65.

⁸⁸ Du Tillet, Sommaire de l'Histoire, sig. F4^v [my emphasis].

⁸⁹ Chassanion, Histoire des Albigeois, pp. 250-1 [my emphasis].

⁹⁰ La Bible (1588), fol. 2^r [my emphasis].